Freie und Hansestadt Hamburg
Behörde für Inneres – Arbeitsgruppe Scientology
und Landeszentrale für politische Bildung

Brainwashing in Scientology's Rehabilitation Project Force (RPF)

Published by:

Interior Ministry
Behörde für Inneres – Arbeitsgruppe Scientology
und Landeszentrale für politische Bildung

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Edition: 1.000
October 2000

Printed by: Stamp Media GmbH, Ringstraße 19, D-24114 Kiel

Introduction

The Scientology Organisation, its methods, its business practices and above all its victims and their fate continue to arouse the interest of the public. In recent years various media reports have also highlited one aspect of the Organisation, the ”Rehabilitation Project Force” – or RPF.

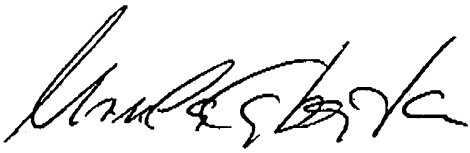
Particularly the reports of former members who have endured the RPF in the US, the UK and in Denmark have made it possible for the author of this brochure, Prof. Stephen A. Kent, to describe what I consider to be inhuman practices within the RPF. If the term ”brainwashing”, so often associated with the Scientology Organisation by the public, applies at all, then it certainly applies to the RPF, as this brochure shows.

The RPF is part of the ”Sea Organisation” (als known as ”Sea-Org”) of the Scientology Organisation. Sea-Org was created in 1967 and according to L. Ron Hubbard, the founder of the Scientology Organisation, it is the ”sole guarantee of the survival of Scientology technology on this planet”. Members of Sea-Org use pseudo-naval ranks and uniforms, an the unit is fully organised along military lines. Sea-Org states that its aim is to ”maintain Scientology as a functioning organisation” and that the members, according to its own publicity, have ”signed a contract of eternal service to Scientology and its aims”. Eternal service is meant literally: Anyone who is a member of this unit signs a contract for a billion years.

When the significance of Sea-Org within the Scientology Organisation is expressed in these terms, it comes as no surprise that Hubbard envisaged special punishments for what he considered to be critical or disobedient members of this unit, punishments that were designed for the ”rehabilitation” of those members. Accordingly the RPF created by Hubbard is essentially nothing more than an ”education camp” of the kind employed by totalitarian regimes.

This brochure continues the work of the Interior Ministry in providing genuine information about the Scientology Organisation. The RPF reveals the true face of Scientology like no other unit. Only those who know what happens or can happen to people in the Scientology Organisation will be able to resist the lure of these glossy brochures.

Consequently I hope that this informative leaflet will have many interested readers.



Ursula Caberta
Head of the Scientology Task Force
Interior Ministry

Leerseite

September 13, 2000

BRAINWASHING IN SCIENTOLOGY'S REHABILITATION PROJECT FORCE (RPF)

Revised and Expanded Version of a Presentation at the
Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, San Diego, California
(November 7, 1997).

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the confinement programs and camps that Scientology operates as supposedly rehabilitative facilities for "deviant" members of its "elite" Sea Organization. These programs, known collectively as the Rehabilitation Project Force (RPF), put coerced participants through regimes of harsh physical punishment, forced self-confessions, social isolation, hard labour, and intense doctrinal study, all as part of leadership- designed efforts to regain members' ideological commitment. The confinement that participants experience, combined with forms of physical maltreatment, intensive ideological study, and forced confessions, allows social scientists to speak of the RPF as a "brainwashing" program.

BRAINWASHING IN SCIENTOLOGY'S REHABILITATION PROJECT FORCE (RPF)

Introduction

As an international institution requiring total compliance from its confined participants, Scientology's Rehabilitation Project Force (RPF) has few parallels among contemporary ideological organizations operating in the Western world. While the controversial organizations known as The Family (or The Children of God) operated analogous programs during the 1980s (see Kent and Hall, 1997), the RPF has existed for nearly a quarter-century. Established in January 1974, the RPF is a program of hard physical labour, forced confessions, and intense ideological study within a prison-like environment. Scientology insists that the program is designed to correct staff members' problems in order to allow them to remain in its elite Sea Org(anization)[1] and operate effectively in it. Critics and many former members insist that its purpose is to break the will of inmates in a manner that minimizes people's abilities to operate outside of the ideological constraints of the organization. They also argue that it provides Scientology with a low-cost labour force because (willing and unwilling) participants receive almost no salaries. In any case, newspapers have reported about the program since at least 1984, with stories appearing in American, British, Danish, and German media. No academic accounts about it exist, however, even though its operation has direct bearing on an issue that many social scientists consider resolved – the extent to which some ideological groups utilize "brainwashing" techniques on their members.

This study argues that brainwashing – "the systematic, scientific[,] and coercive elimination of the individuality of the mind of another" (Scheflin and Opton 1978: 40) – is a social scientifically appropriate concept for analysing Scientology's imposition of re-indoctrination programs within the confinement conditions experienced by inmates in the RPF and its more severe extension, the RPF's RPF. The study constructs this argument using primary documents that Scientology's founder, L. Ron Hubbard, either wrote or disseminated, as well as legal documents, interview transcripts, and media accounts. These documents and other items help identify Scientology's historical and organizational contexts out of which the RPF emerged, and they provide extended glimpses into actual RPF operations in several locations during particular periods. Of

special interest to scholars and inquisitive members of the public is the study's use of Scientology publications from the mid-1950s and late 1960s that specifically discuss brainwashing techniques. Not only, therefore, is brainwashing an appropriate social scientific term to use when describing the RPF, but also it is a term that coincides with Scientology's own descriptions about forcing attitude change within confined environments.

The "Brainwashing Debate" within the Social Sciences

The "brainwashing debate" in the social sciences took place mostly in the 1980s and early 1990s, when several professional organizations, professors, and scholars reacted against American courts accepting arguments that high-demand ideological groups "coerced" members into conversion. Much of the sociological attack targeted psychologist Margaret Singer, PhD, who used a coercive persuasion/brainwashing model to explain to courts how litigants joined and behaved in the groups they now were suing or defending against.

The social scientific attacks concluded that the brainwashing term was valid only if the group in question used incarceration and physical maltreatment against members (see Anthony, 1990: 304; cf. Zablocki, 1998: 231-232) in situations of uninformed consent (Young and Griffith, 1992: 93)[2]. This threefold requirement was a minimalist one, since a brainwashing program also would have to include an intense indoctrination program coupled with personal confessions of past "sins." (Confessions of alleged sins are a key element in people's renunciations of previously held, but now unacceptable, beliefs, along with their associated actions.) Since neither the term's supporters nor detractors provided concrete evidence that even these minimalist activities uniformly occurred in most groups' conversion activities, sociologists and others concluded that "brainwashing" was not an appropriate term for describing how and why people join new or controversial ideologies.

Of these requirements for using the brainwashing term, the single most important one was "extreme physical coercion" (Anthony and Robbins, 1992: 20, 25n.11). If such a condition existed, then it would allow both researchers and the courts to isolate brainwashing from other forms of coercive persuasion. As Robbins and Anthony concluded, "[without] physical force as a boundary, there is no natural or objective cutting point as to when coercive persuasion is potent enough to overcome free will" as the brainwashing model implies (Anthony and Robbins, 1992: 21).

One crucial aspect of brainwashing in litigation has been an effort to specify when courts should allow individuals to use the concept as an excuse for deviant or illegal behaviour. Researcher Dick Anthony (often working with associate Tom Robbins) developed much of the theory in this area, and served as a consulting expert for lawyers defending the Unification Church, Scientology, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), Transcendental Meditation, and the Community Chapel against brainwashing allegations from disgruntled former members (Anthony and Robbins, 1992: 6n.1). Anthony and Robbins concluded that some attempts to utilize brainwashing to justify exemptions from (American constitutional) first amendment protections presuppose that it is a form of "hard determinism," which assumes that

people are confined in ideological systems whose doctrines they must adopt (Anthony and Robbins, 1992: 23). Human behavior explanations that postulate hard determinism, Anthony and Robbins claim, "do not have general, or even substantial acceptance in the relevant scientific communities" (presumably sociology and psychology), and they are "no longer taken seriously in the academic world" (Anthony and Robbins, 1992: 25). Consequently, in the future, Anthony and Robbins hope that researchers will focus upon "the free marketplace of ideas" rather than upon either increased governmental regulation or legal decisions in trials (Anthony and Robbins, 1992: 26). In other words, these respected social scientists believe that research into whether some groups brainwash has concluded that they do not – at least not in a hard deterministic way. This conclusion eliminates any need for discussion about governmental or legal intervention against groups on supposedly now-disproved grounds that they brainwash their members into robots who commit deviant or criminal acts. As sociologist Benjamin Zablocki critically concluded, his colleagues had "blacklisted" the brainwashing concept, and in so doing had ignored its utility for explaining the "exit costs" that people feel who attempt to depart high-demand ideological organizations (Zablocki, 1997; 1998).

RPF Accounts in the Courts and the Media

Remarkably, however, throughout much of this debate, the popular press, some court documents, and at least one court appellate decision described the forced confinement, maltreatment, and uninformed consent that Sea Org members experienced in Scientology's RPF program and facilities. These descriptions were of a brainwashing program used in attempts to retain members rather than in attempts to obtain them, and perhaps for this reason social scientists neglected to address these accounts.

The first public statement about the RPF seems to have appeared in a January 25, 1980 affidavit by former member Tonya Burden of Las Vegas, Nevada, who described it as "a Scientology 'concentration camp'" (Burden, 1980: 8) and from which she escaped after having been in the program for around three months (Burden, 1980: 9-10). Former member Gerry Armstrong supported Burden's general description of RPF conditions in a June, 1982 affidavit, stating that he "personally observed people [including Tonya Burden] in the RPF sleeping on floors, in storage rooms, in the boiler room, and in other sub-human conditions..." (Armstrong, 1982: 3).

Armstrong and two other former members, Laurel Sullivan and William Franks, spoke harshly about the RPF in a 1984 article in the Florida newspaper, the Clearwater Sun. Franks called it "'a horrible thing'" (quoted in Shelor, 1984: 1B), and Sullivan spoke about how "'rough'" the program was, having "'to work in 120- degree heat [in the California desert] with a severe case of colitis'" (quoted in Shelor, 1984: 2B). In that same year, Great Britain's The Sunday Times Magazine carried RPF descriptions from three more former Scientologists – Bent Corydon, Jay Hurwitz, and David Mayo, the latter two having served time in the program:

> Hurwitz said that for the first five days he and others were kept locked up under guard. 'We were brought our food and we slept on the floor.

> We had to use the same toilet facilities in the presence of one another' (Barnes, 1984: 38).

Hurwitz was in the RPF near Gilman Hots Springs, California in the summer of 1982, along with eighteen other senior Scientology staffers (Barnes, 1984: 38-39).

Also in 1984, a British court stated in a written decision that, two years earlier, a woman in Scientology's English headquarters in East Grinstead was "required to do at least 12 hours physical work a day (shifting bricks, emptying bins, etc.)" which "aggravated a chronic back condition" (Royal Courts of Justice, 1984: 27). This same story reappeared in the excellent book written by Englishman Jon Atack in 1990 (Atack, 1990: 341), and then in a newspaper article in 1994 (Bracchi, 1994).

Back in the United States in 1985, former Scientologist Howard (Homer) Schomer responded in deposition to a query about his time in the RPF on the ship, Apollo, by indicating:

> [w]ell, we lived separated from the rest of the crew on the ship. We could not talk to them unless they originated something to us, first. We slept in the lower hold of the ship most of the time on mattresses that were supposed to have been thrown out, but somebody hadn't carried out their [sic] job per se, luckily they wanted – because otherwise, we would have been sleeping on the floor. We ate after the rest of the crew ate, and ate what was left over. Many times we'd have to maybe fry eggs or something because there wasn't enough food left over, make rice. We only were allowed to sleep a maximum of seven hours a night. We were – We had to have five hours of study time because we had to become proficient auditors [i.e., Scientology's version of counsellors and therapists] so we could audit ourselves out of the supposed morass we had gotten ourself [sic] into and the rest of the time we worked on the decks scrubbing the decks and painting the ship and washing the ship and cleaning out toilet bowls and, you know, you name it, we did it (Schomer, 1985: 21).

Even taking into account that this RPF experience took place on a ship in 1974, it still is remarkably consistent with accounts of RPF experiences from later in the history of Scientology and from various parts of the world.

Another former member, Don Larson, told Forbes magazine in 1986:

> he alone brought nearly 300 recalcitrant Scientologists to 'Rehabilitation Project Forces' at Scientology centers around the world over a period of fourteen months, until his departure in late 1983.... In these sadistic detention programs, staff members would be coerced into performing hard labor, eating leftovers out of buckets and sleeping on floors. Some were reportedly kept against their will (Behar, 1986: 318).

The year after the Forbes article, British biographer Russell Miller (1987) published his account of Hubbard's life, which contained nearly a dozen references to the RPF. A summary of Vicki Aznaran's account of her time in the notorious Happy Valley RPF

program in California appeared in a December 22, 1988 edition of the St. Petersburg Times, and Oklahoma newspaper editor, Bob Lobsinger, reprinted the story in the July 6, 1989 edition of The Newkirk Herald Journal (Koff, 1989). Although Aznaran "herself had dispatched dozens of others to the RPF for misdeeds against the church" and "had personally done stints in the RPF on her way up the Scientology ladder,... this time was different, she said. A uterine infection gave her a fever, and the guards wouldn't let her leave to see a doctor" (Koff, 1989: 6).

A 1989 California appellate court decision indicated that, "continuously for three weeks," former Scientologist Larry Wollersheim had been "'baited and badgered'" to enter the RPF, which the judge mentioned as "evidence [that] Wollersheim accepted some of his auditing under threat of physical coercion" (California Court of Appeal, 1989: 9274).[3] The accounts of Franks, Sullivan, and former Sea Org staff member Hana Whitfield appeared again in a series on the organization that the Los Angeles Times published in 1990 (Welkos and Sappell, 1990). The article indicated, "[t]he RPF provides the church with a pool of labor to perform building maintenance, pull weeds, haul garbage, clean toilets or do anything else church executives deem necessary for redemption" (Welkos and Sappell, 1990: [25]). In the same year as the Los Angeles Times series, Jon Atack's thorough study of his former group contained significant RPF information (Atack, 1990: 206, 341, 358, etc.; see also Atack, n.d.: 9-10).

Germans read about the RPF in a December, 1994 article when former American members, (Robert) Vaughn Young and Stacy Young, spoke about it in an interview published in Focus magazine (Gruber and Kintzinger [Interviewers], 1994: 79), and then Robert Vaughn Young referred to the RPF as a "prison camp" (Straflager) and a "Gulag" in an article that he wrote for Der Spiegel in September, 1995 (Young, 1995: 107; see Kent, 1999a: 158-159). The following year, the RPF received attention in a study about Scientology produced by former member Bent Corydon (1996). Next, in the Summer of 1997, Germans once again learned about the "modern concentration camp" ("modernes Konzentrationslager") as former Danish Scientologist Susanne Elleby described the RPF that she endured in Copenhagen (Kintzinger [Interviewer], 1997: 52).

That same year, Mannheim journalist and author Peter Reichelt provided German audiences with extensive information about RPF operations in California, including the fact that top Scientology leadership apparently had sent one of Hubbard's sons (Arthur) to the RPF and then retrieved him after he escaped (Reichelt, 1997: 284-285, see 273-285; A. Tabayoyon, 1994: 21 para. # 104). In early 1999, Reichelt and his partner, Ina Brockmann, produced a documentary for German television that showed Scientologists blocking their way as the two researchers attempted to drive to the RPF facility in Happy Valley (near San Jacinto), California (Brockmann and Reichelt, 1999) – a scene that North Americans saw two months earlier on ABC News's television program, 20/20 (ABC, 1998). Six days before the 20/20 program, the American television network, Arts and Entertainment (A&E), ran a two-hour Investigative Reports program on Scientology that contained several dramatic RPF accounts. Not surprisingly, the German parliament's commissioned study on "sects and psychological groups"

footnoted information about the RPF in a section discussing social control and manipulation (Enquete Kommission, 1998a: 77 n.135; 1998b: 150 n. 135).

The most recent media account about the RPF was a lengthy article that appeared in the newspaper distributed in the area in which the Happy Valley facility operates. It juxtaposed accounts from former Scientologists who had been in the Happy Valley RPF facility with denials of abuse from Scientology officials (Thurston, 1999). Most interesting in this article were the comments by former member Mary Tabayoyon, who spoke about her RPF experience as being " 'very degrading. There was constant yelling and constant accusations of [sic] what you were doing or feeling. There was no kind of rehabilitation for me. It was a nightmare'" (quoted in Thurston, 1999: A3). Taken together, these legal and media sources strongly suggest that the RPF is a brainwashing facility according to the requirements that Anthony (1990) and Young and Griffith (1992) specify, but no social scientists pursued an investigation.

Methodological Issues

Perhaps one reason that social scientists have not examined the brainwashing dynamics of the RPF is because its study presents some unusual methodological obstacles that they must overcome in order to obtain appropriate information. First, Scientology has made out-of-court settlements with former RPF victims, and these settlements include agreements that they will not speak critically and publically against the organization. I know of at least five people – two Americans, two Canadians, and one New Zealander – who entered into such agreements.

Second, Scientology keeps confidential the key series of documents that define the RPF's operation. These documents appear in the Flag Order 3434 series (containing at least fifty-six separate issues), and only a small number of them have leaked out to researchers. Consequently, it remains impossible to trace the development of the RPF program through the organization's most relevant documents, which means that scholars' best information sources remain the accounts of former members.

Third, former members who went through the RPF are difficult to find and, once found, often are reluctant to speak with a researcher. The difficulty of finding former RPF inmates stems partly from the fact that the program's purpose is to feed repentant (and, according to some accounts that I cite, emotionally broken) Sea Org members back into the organization. Consequently, many potential informants remain in Scientology under threat of being either excommunicated or sent back into the RPF itself for talking negatively about their time in it. Moreover, as RPF participants they spent countless hours confessing to alleged sins and crimes, and they fear that the organization would use these confessions against them if they were to talk. Indeed, the RPFers who complete their programs must write or sign a statement before they leave that praises the RPF and extols its virtues. For all of these reasons, I was able to use information only from one active Scientologist who had been an RPF inmate. Under the name, "SB," this person had posted his RPF story on the news group, alt.religion.scientology, and then he followed his initial account with answers to questions that others posted to him. With this Scientology member and other current ones, I remain concerned that any criticism or negative statements that informants might have made

about their experiences likely would have had dire consequences for them. "SB," however, knew the risks, and his comments were for everyone to read.

For this study, therefore, I interviewed eight people who had been on RPFs in different parts of the world, plus I collected court documents, affidavits, and correspondence from fifteen more. In addition, I interviewed a person who had witnessed the RPF in operation (but had not participated in it), and collected accounts (through personal correspondence, anonymous newsgroup postings, and legal documents) from ten additional individuals who also claim to have seen inmates on the program. In addition to the information by and from these thirty-four people, I collected primary Scientology documents and publications that discuss the RPF, along with accounts of it from the popular press. Among the documents that I have collected are copies of items from the RPF file of Susanne Schernekau (now Elleby), which she took with her when she departed the program. I also have viewed video footage that Peter Reichelt shot in Clearwater, Florida in December 1997 and August, 1998, which shows RPF members at work on Scientology facilities (see Tongi, 1998).[4] The picture that emerges from these sources varies according to (sometimes important) details, but the overall picture concerning the operation of the programs remains remarkably consistent.

Ideational History of the RPF

Five (often overlapping) activities of social control seem universal in the RPF information that is available from non- Scientology sources. These activities are: (1) forcible confinement, (2) physical maltreatment (through such things as hard exercise, physically demanding chores, poor diet, limited time for hygiene, and inadequate sleeping arrangements, etc.); (3) social maltreatment (through restrictions in verbal and written communication with others, degradation, very low pay, etc.); (4) intensive study of ideology; and (5) forced confessions of past alleged 'sins.' The goal of these activities is the alignment of the RPF inmates with the ideology of Scientology as directed by its leaders. This alignment comes about after the program has eliminated people's abilities or desires to criticize policies or the leaders who oversee their implementation. Remarkably, a 1955 booklet that Hubbard himself almost certainly wrote described psychopolitical techniques of subduing people and populations to totalitarian rule, and some of the techniques foreshadow the RPF policies that subsequently he ordered and approved for use against his own elite corps.

Hubbard's Brainwashing and Psychopolitics Manual

The booklet was entitled, Brain-Washing – A Synthesis of the Russian Textbook on Psychopolitics, and one version was "published as a public service by the Church of Scientology" ([Hubbard [probable author], 1955: back cover). The introduction purports to be a speech by the famous chief of the Soviet secret police, Lavrenti Beria, to "American students at the Lenin University" about how to subvert societies through the imposition of "psychopolitics" on populations under the guise of "mental healing" (Hubbard [probable author], 1955: 3). The entire text is fraudulent (Kominsky, 1970), and all indicators point directly to Hubbard as the author.[5] In any case, Hubbard wrote

about the "brainwashing" booklet to his followers (Hubbard, 1955a: 309-310; 1955c: 312-313; 1956: 328), claiming that "unless the basic philosophy of the brainwasher is understood," auditors will have difficulty handling clients who had suffered the techniques (Hubbard, 1955a: 309). More probably he was trying to both discredit psychiatry and endear his organization to the American government (with the claim that Dianetics and Scientology could reverse the effects of Communist brainwashing and thus was a powerful political tool). Certainly Hubbard's desire to secure Dianetics and Scientology as a weapon against Communism would explain why he wrote the FBI about the booklet in mid-December, 1955.[6] It also would explain why The Church of Scientology published the slim volume "as a public service" (back cover of Hubbard [probable author], 1955).

Obsessed with issues of controlling and subduing people and nations, the "brainwashing" manual is Machiavellian. Most probably, key ideas that Hubbard (presumably) wrote about in the brainwashing manual became policies and procedures in the RPF nearly twenty years later. The manual's own definition of psychopolitics, for example, indicated that it was "the art and science of asserting and maintaining dominion over the thoughts and loyalties of individuals, officers, bureaux, and masses, and the effecting of the conquest of enemy nations through 'mental healing'" (Hubbard [probable author], 1955: 6). Later the text presented a strategy for subversives to use in destroying individuals' opposition to the state, and this strategy involved the destruction of any forms of individuality that might foster doubts against the imposing ideology:

> [t]he tenets of rugged individualism, personal determinism, self-will, imagination, and personal creativeness are alike in the masses antipathetic to the good of the Greater State. These wilful and unaligned forces are no more than illnesses which will bring about disaffection, disunity, and at length the collapse of the group to which the individual is attached (Hubbard [probable author], 1955: 9).

Having identified individuality as a threat to "the Greater State," the solution was simple:

> It is the mission of Psychopolitics first to align the obedience and goals of the group, and then maintain their alignment by the eradication of the effectiveness of the persons and personalities which might serve the group toward disaffection.... Psychopolitics makes it possible to remove that part of his personality which, by itself, is making havoc with the person's own constitution, as well as with the group with which the person is connected (Hubbard [probable author], 1955: 10).

In essence, the State had to establish its own goals as the only acceptable ones, then destroy aspects of people's personalities that might lead them to individualistic expressions that would be out of alignment with those goals. This outline for totalitarian conformity transformed into the reality of the RPF.

Hubbard's Discussions of Brainwashing in the Late 1960s

During the late 1960s, Hubbard discussed brainwashing at least four times in various talks and writings, and these discussions always were consistent with the basic techniques of personality destruction and goals-realignment discussed in the "brainwashing" manual of 1955. The book, All About Radiation, bridges the 1960s and the 1950s, since Hubbard took his comments from a 1957 "Congress on Nuclear Radiation and Health," published them that same year, then reissued the book in 1967. This publication included a section entitled "What Brainwashing Is":

> Brainwashing is a very simple mechanism. One gets a person to agree that something might be a certain way and then drives him by introverting him and through self-criticism to the possibility that it is that way. Only then does a man believe that the erroneous fact was a truth. By gradient scale of hammering, pounding and torture, brainwashers are able to make people believe that these people [i.e., the victims] saw and did things which they never did do (Hubbard, 1957: 84; also quoted in Hubbard, 1976b: 55).

As he had indicated in 1955, people could be brainwashed (he believed) by giving them an external goal or fact, then breaking them down (through stress) until they believed it.

On December 20, 1969, which was roughly two years after the reissue of All About Radiation, Hubbard discussed brainwashing again, but added a twist. Now he defined it as the "subjection of a person to systematic indoctrination or mental pressure with a view to getting him to change his views or to confess to a crime" (quoted in Hubbard, 1976b: 55). Not only, therefore, did Hubbard indicate that he knew how people forced others to change their minds on vital issues, but also he thought that people would give (presumably false) confessions if their captors would "brainwash" them through severe stress. Again these insights bore fruit in the RPF environment.

Additional glimpses into Hubbard's reputed knowledge about brainwashing come from a March 1969 Scientology article in the organization's Freedom newspaper. At the time of initial publication, the article entitled "Brainwashing" did not reveal its author, and only after 1992 were researchers able to verify that it came from Hubbard himself (see Church of Scientology International, 1992: 757). The article contained a long excerpt from a politically conservative writer, Robert G. Ridgway (followed at the end by Hubbard's comments), and one section of Ridgway's commentary contained a section subtitled "Nervous Breakdown." It described techniques designed to break down individuals and then build them up into the externally defined goals of the group:

> 'The first part in the technique of brainwashing is an artificially induced nervous breakdown, which breaks the line with the individual's past experience and casts him adrift in a sea of suggestibility. This is brought on by exhaustion, confusion, continuous physical pain, and fear and anxiety. This destroys human individuality and identity by fracturing

> fixed habit patterns and employing the useful fragments, cemented by suggestion, to rebuild an entirely different personality. Memory is diffused. Logic is confused, and judgement is distorted in the absence of reference and discipline. The person has lost control of his mind – it is then that suggestion is most effective. The victim is grateful to be oriented again. He appreciates any purpose or direction given to him. He feels he has been led back to sanity, [but] in reality his soul has been stolen. This was done to American fathers in Korea and their sons in Vietnam' (Ridgway, quoted in [Hubbard], 1969: [4]).

Similar to Hubbard's writing in the previous decade, this article identified the necessity of destroying individuality (accomplished here through inducing nervous breakdowns) and then aligning the shattered personality with officially provided purpose and direction.

Hubbard (we presume) had made a similar argument about breaking down people in the brainwashing manual of 1955, although he stressed the role that forms of degradation can play in the breakdown process. The manual stated:

> There is a curve of degradation which leads downward to a point where the endurance of an individual is almost at an end, and any sudden action toward him will place him in a state of shock. Similarly, a soldier held prisoner can be abused, denied, defamed, and degraded until the slightest motion on the part of his captors will cause him to flinch. Similarly, the slightest word on the part of his captors will cause him to obey, or vary his loyalties and beliefs. Given sufficient degradation, a prisoner can be caused to murder his fellow countrymen in the same stockade. Experiments on German prisoners have lately demonstrated that only after seventy days of filthy food, little sleep, and nearly untenable quarters, that [sic] the least motion toward the prisoner would bring about a state of shock beyond his endurance threshold, and would cause him to hypnotically receive anything said to him. Thus, it is possible, in an entire stockade of prisoners, to the number of thousands, to bring about a state of complete servile obedience, and without the labour of personally addressing each one, to pervert their loyalties, and implant in them adequate commands to insure their future conduct, even when released to their own people (Hubbard [probable author]: 1955: 41-42).

Again, techniques involving attempted attitude changes through severe stress became reality in the RPF, which Hubbard created less than five years after publishing an article on brainwashing that contained Ridgway's comments about nervous breakdowns.

Organizational Forerunners to the RPF

During the very period when Hubbard wrote about brainwashing in the late 1960s, he also established a number of formal structures within Scientology designed to both punish perceived deviants whose job performances were deficient and train people for

necessary jobs that the organization needed. Having been at sea from late 1967 (Atack, 1990: 176-177), Hubbard's punishment and training programs reflected the needs and conditions of maritime life. On January 4, 1968, for example, Hubbard created what he called the "Mud Box Brigade," which was a punishment assignment to any Sea Org member whom Hubbard determined was "a freeloader who is loafing on post and drifting with the wind" (quoted in Hubbard, 1976b: 341). The unsavoury jobs involved cleaning the area where the ship's anchors dragged in mud (the mud boxes), along with "fuel lines, water lines, bilges, etc." (quoted in Hubbard, 1976b: 341). These were difficult, dirty, and somewhat dangerous assignments, but within a few years they would be taken over by inmates in the RPF's internal punishment program, the RPF's RPF.

Certainly by early 1969, Hubbard had in place two training projects – the Deck Project Force (DPF) and the Pursers Project Force (PPF), but he abolished them on March 25, 1969 (Hubbard, 1969). Apparently the DPF had trained Sea Org members on various ship duties, and the PPF presumably trained people in areas of ship finance and supply (see Hubbard, 1976b: 429). Likewise, some time before early April, 1972, Hubbard had a training program for household services called the Stewards Project Force (SPF [Hubbard, 1972a; 1976b: 501]). He also had a program called the Estates Project Force (EPF), which (as we reconstruct from a later document), did such work as painting and sweeping (Hubbard, 1977: 1). Until the advent of the RPF, the EPF also received Sea Org members for (what Scientology called) "retreading." These staff needed constant supervision, were causing obvious problems, or were performing their jobs without enthusiasm (i.e., were suffering from "robotism" [Boards of Directors of the Churches of Scientology, 1977: 1]).

Former high-ranking Scientologist Jesse Prince recounted what life was like on the Los Angeles EPF in late 1976 and early 1977. His entry into this program was part of his indoctrination and training as a Sea Org recruit. In retrospect, the major differences between it and the RPF was that EPFers neither had to run everywhere, nor did they wear coloured arm bands to designate their progress in the program (Kent Interview with Prince, 1998: 7). The 'normal' schedule on the EPF involved renovation work (roofing, putting up drywalls, etc.) for up to ten hours a day (Kent Interview with Prince, 1998: 5), plus five hours of daily study. Daily study included reading Hubbard's Sea Org Executive Directive publications and other pertinent documents (Kent Interview with Prince, 1998: 10, 12), identifying the enemies of Scientology (Kent Interview with Prince, 1998: 11), and receiving instruction into the importance and (supposedly) lofty goals of the Sea Org itself (Kent Interview with Prince, 1998: 11). Each of the three meals took a half-hour a piece. In order to weed out "plants" or spies that Hubbard feared might try to infiltrate the Sea Org, EPFers underwent interrogation sessions (called sec-checks or security checks, that I discuss later [Kent Interview with Prince, 1998: 7]), and the thirty-to-forty people on the program suffered physical punishments (such as sit-ups, push-ups, or running) for supposedly committing infractions (Kent Interview with Prince, 1998: 8-9).

By early 1972, Hubbard apparently had reinstituted the DPF, and it had a function beyond mere training. In addition to new recruits, the DPF received Sea Org members

who were questioning authority. In the peculiar logic and language of Scientology, these people had "interiorized." That is to say, "the person is finding counter-intention in the environment which coincides with his own (this is **reasonableness**), and his attention becomes directed to his own counter-intention rather than to his objective" (Hubbard, 1976b: 437, quoting a Flag Order from September 23, 1969 [emphasis in original]). Said plainly, these people were questioning aspects of Sea Org life, and were finding things in the external world to reinforce their internal doubts. Consequently, the DPF was "to rehabilitate and exteriorize their attention" by getting them to do work assignments (Hubbard, 1972a; see 1976b: 133). Again said plainly, the intent of the program was to get a person to stop looking inward and (re)learn to accept the orders that the organization and its leaders demanded.

With this goal in mind, Hubbard imposed a system of rewards and punishments called "ethics" on people within the DPF that parallelled the system under which ordinary Sea Org members operated. Overseeing DPF ethics was a person who had the title, the "Deck Project Force Master-At-Arms [DPF MAA]," and he or she was responsible for making "ethics real to DPF members by removing counter-intention and other-intention from the area, and by getting each DPF member to crank out products with an honest uptrending statistic" (Hubbard, 1976b: 133; quoting a Flag Order from February 20, 1972). In other words, the MAA was to remove any ideas that were out of alignment with Scientology's goals through the use of the reward-and-punishment "ethics" system. Lateness, poor work performance, negative attitude, etc., were "out-ethics" actions that warranted the MAA to assign the offender to a lower ethics condition, which involved penalties on a gradient scale of severity. The offender had to work off these hours-long penalties or "amends" after the normal eight-to-ten hour work day (see Boards of Directors of the Churches of Scientology, 1973). Supposedly the completion of these amends taught people about the consequences of not showing continual increases in the output of their jobs, which supposedly was due to personal intentions that allegedly were out of harmony with Scientology's demands. In the DPF MAA's ethics assignments we can hear the echo of Hubbard's ideas about brainwashing, which he first discussed in 1955 and elaborated upon in the late 1960s. This staff member was to physically wear down people when trying to get them to renounce their private doubts, with the intention of getting them to completely embrace the collective goals of the organization.

Apparently the DPF's regime of hard work in harsh conditions continued into the early 1980s, since the account of Birgitta Dagnell about her time on the DPF in Denmark bears remarkable similarities to RPF accounts. According to her own statement, she was among the eighty-two former Guardian Office members sent into the Danish DPF by the new leadership of the Office of Special Affairs in 1982. The crowded conditions, the poor food, the exhausting hours, the assignments involving "cleaning toilets, corridors[,] and hotel rooms[,] or some painting and construction work" (Dagnell, 1997: 3) were the same for RPF inmates in other parts of the world. So were the "gang-bang sec checks" (which I discuss later) and the demand that "we 'recognized' that we really [were] that bad and evil" (Dagnell, 1997: 4), which she experienced during what she thought were going to be auditing sessions.

The Creation of the RPF

The RPF built directly upon the punitive, some might say, "brainwashing" role that the DPF had developed. Hubbard's motivations for establishing the program in January 1974 included personal retaliation. Having gone ashore in late 1973 to ride his motorcycle on Tenerife in the Canary Islands, Hubbard took a spill and sustained injuries. Recovering on board his flagship, Hubbard blamed the accident on unnamed crew members whom he believed were not carrying out his orders with sufficient diligence. In response, he ordered the creation of the RPF,[7] with the intention of assigning to it anyone who had a "'counter-intention' to his orders or wishes..., along with all troublemakers and back-sliders" (Miller, 1987: 321; see Kent interview with Pignotti, 1997: 6; Kent interview with Ernesto, 1997: 2).

Researchers do not have copies of the first three Flag Orders (i.e., Sea Org policies) establishing the RPF, but do have the fourth one, which is a May 30, 1977 twice-revised version of a January 7, 1974 issue. Some time between its inception and late May, 1977, the RPF had assumed the punitive functions previously handled by the EPF and, presumably, the DPF. Sea Org members entered the RPF if they had dramatic indicator reads (called "rock-slams") while being counselled or "audited" on Scientology's confessional and lie detector machine called the E-meter (which gives readings about galvanic skin responses). Such indicator- or needle-jumps supposedly revealed "a hidden evil intention on the subject or question under discussion or auditing" (Hubbard, 1975: 357). Others received RPF assignments for poor production on their jobs or posts, poor personality indicators (presumably such as depression, grumbling, and doubting Hubbard or his techniques), and obvious trouble making (Boards of Directors of the Churches of Scientology, 1977: 1).

In considerable detail the RPF document laid out the framework of forcible confinement, physical and social maltreatment, intensive re-indoctrination, and forced confessions that were (and are) central to the program's operation. Certain passages, for example, outlined the basic rules about forcible confinement. Inmates could not leave the facility, and could travel between buildings only when they were accompanied by security guards (Boards of Directors of the Churches of Scientology, 1977: 10). Physical maltreatment occurred within the confines of sometimes demanding and dangerous work to which they were assigned. Specifically inmates had to carry out eleven maintenance functions–interior and exterior building cleaning; bathroom cleaning; general painting; internal building renovations; storage, passageway, and stairway cleaning; other "large scale" projects outside of sleeping, kitchen, or eating areas; "garage cleaning"; "elevator and elevator shaft cleaning"; engine room and boiler room cleaning; furniture set-ups for events; and "garbage disposal." They also could receive special assignments from specific Scientology personnel (Boards of Directors of the Churches of Scientology, 1977: 3). They were supposed to get seven hours sleep (Boards of Directors of the Churches of Scientology, 1977: 4), and they were allowed to call on a Scientology Medical Officer (who need not be a medical doctor) only if they were running a temperature or suffered an injury that required medication or treatment (Boards of Directors of the Churches of Scientology, 1977: 6). Inmates were allowed to eat normal meals unless doing so deprived Sea Org members who were not

RPFers (Boards of Directors of the Churches of Scientology, 1977: 9). Their use of bathrooms and showers was restricted (Boards of Directors of the Churches of Scientology. 1977: 11), and, "at RPF expense," inmates were allowed "[a] minimum number of circulating fans" in their study and sleeping areas "where there is NO other circulation of air easily available" (Boards of Directors of the Churches of Scientology, 1977: 11 [emphasis and capitals in original]). By adding together the time allotments that inmates had to perform various duties, we can deduce that each day people were supposed to receive seven hours sleep, study and audit for five hours, take one-half hour for each of three meals, spend thirty minutes a day on hygiene, and perform physical work for ten hours.

Policies involving social maltreatment were numerous. Inmates had to wear black or dark blue boilersuits (i.e, a type of heavy work-clothes [Boards of Directors of the Churches of Scientology, 1977: 1]). They were barred from all normal social activities in the facility or the community (Boards of Directors of the Churches of Scientology, 1977: 2-3, 11), and any problems that this restriction might cause regarding non-Scientology commitments required an immediate report to superiors (Boards of Directors of the Churches of Scientology, 1977: 3). As the policy succinctly stated, "[a] member of the RPF is a member of the RPF and of nothing outside of it, till released" (Boards of Directors of the Churches of Scientology, 1977: 3). Depending upon inmates' stage of progress, pay was either one-quarter or one-half the normal Sea Org rates, "unless withheld or fined by a justice action" (Boards of Directors of the Churches of Scientology, 1977: 9; see 9 and 10).[8] Inmates' sleeping quarters were isolated from those of other Sea Org members, and were supposed to conform to fire, health, and safety regulations (Boards of Directors of the Churches of Scientology, 1977: 10). Inmates could not speak to regular Sea Org members, public Scientologists, or members of the public unless they had to in order to avoid "impoliteness" (Boards of Directors of the Churches of Scientology, 1977: 10). A spouse could have a conjugal visit with his or her partner one night a week in an authorized area provided that the person's RPF progress was satisfactory (Boards of Directors of the Churches of Scientology, 1977: 10). Likewise, spouses could visit with their partners or school-age children once daily during meals or at night if their progress was satisfactory and they refrained from discussing their RPF situations. Inmates could arrange additional meal visits with preschool children (Boards of Directors of the Churches of Scientology, 1977: 10).

Intensive study of Hubbard's ideology was a basic part of the program, with inmates allotted "5 hours study or auditing" daily (Boards of Directors of the Churches of Scientology, 1977: 4, see 6). Some evidence indicates that RPF inmates in the mid-1970s could complete the program in several months, but later accounts indicate that people frequently took over a year, and they served RPF sentences more than once during their Scientology careers. Scientologist "SB," for example, alleged that when he entered the Los Angeles RPF (probably in the late 1980s or early 1990s), "[s]ome RPFers were going on 4 years when I arrived and I just couldn't believe it" (SB, 1998b: 1).

The Creation of the RPF's RPF

On April 24, 1974, a Flag Conditions Order established the RPF's RPF. This program received people who were on the RPF but not progressing satisfactorily, or who thought that their assignment to the RPF was humorous. As Hubbard reported in his "management technology" dictionary:

> [t]he first **RPF's RPF** assignment was made because the person considered their [sic] **RPF** assignment amusing, an award [sic] and was therefore unable to recognize a need for redemption or any means to effect it. Until such time as the person recognized this need and of their [sic] own self-determinism requested to be included in the **RPF** redemption actions, the [RPF's RPF] restrictions applied" (Hubbard, 1975: 451 [emphasis in original]).

People on the RPF's RPF were segregated from the RPF inmates in their work assignments, eating, sleeping, roll-call, and other activities. They were not paid, did not receive auditing, were not to receive more than six hours sleep, and received triple ethics penalties for offenses. Reflecting the fact that the RPF's RPF began on a ship, inmates in the program were allowed to work only "on mud boxes in the E/R [engine room]." Moreover, they were allowed to communicate only with the person in charge of the RPF, and could "not join **RPF** fully until acceptable amends [were] made to all **RPF** members" (Hubbard, 1975: 451 [emphasis in original]).

Remarkably, this summary of the RPF's RPF is available in a Scientology dictionary to which members of the public have easy access. Not surprisingly, however, this same information does not appear in Scientology's latest dissemination effort – its World Wide Web site. Sponsored by the Church of Scientology International, it makes no mention of the RPF's RPF and describes the RPF in terms that make it sound like a program of confidence- building and personal reinvigoration. According to the Web site, the RPF is "a second chance" for "Sea Org staff members who would otherwise be subject to dismissal for serious and/or continuous ecclesiastical violations" – an opportunity to experience "complete rehabilitation" for "personnel 'burn out'" (Church of Scientology International, 1996). "Participants" in the program receive "both study and religious counseling on a daily basis to address areas of difficulty in their personal lives." They also "work eight hours a day as a team on tasks which improve the facilities of the Church by which they are employed and improve teamwork and coordination among the participants. The work allows the individual to regain confidence in himself [sic] and the pride of accomplishment." Sea Org members who have gone through the program supposedly "attest to its enormous personal benefit, and express their appreciation for being able to avail themselves of redemption as opposed to dismissal" (Church of Scientology International, 1996). This public relations portrayal of the RPF stands in dramatic contrast to accounts about it that many former "participants" provide after they are no longer under the direct control of Scientology's policies that punish persons who criticize the organization or its doctrines. Each of the topics that the Web page mentions in a favorable light – study, religious counselling/auditing, 'eight hour' work days that rebuild confidence and pride, em-

ployment conditions and pay, and graduates' expressions of appreciation–receive very different interpretations by the former Sea Org members who provided the information for my RPF study.

RPF Consistencies and Variations

While the RPF stories that former members recount show remarkable consistencies over time and distance, variations occur with respect to facilities, personnel, and immediate organizational demands. Virtually all of the accounts, however, illustrate how the RPF attempted to control the bodies of its inmates through a variety of physical demands, abuses, and work obligations while at the same time it attempted to control their minds through extensive auditing, course work, confessions, and success stories.

Assembling the affidavits, interviews, Internet postings, and correspondence that I have collected, I have: two RPF accounts from the Apollo (the ship on which Hubbard lived from 1967 to 1975); seven from the Fort Harrison Hotel complex in Clearwater, Florida; one from La Quinta, California; one from Indio, California; four from Gilman Hot Springs, California (which informants sometimes called either "Hemet" after the nearby town or "Gold" according to the Scientology name); three from the Happy Valley camp near Gilman Hot Springs and the Soboba Indian Reserve; seven from the Cedars complex in Los Angeles; one from an unnamed ship docked near Los Angeles; one from East Grinstead, Sussex (England); one from an RPF forerunner in Copenhagen, Denmark, and one from the actual Copenhagen program. Six informants went through the RPF's RPF – one on the Apollo; two in the Fort Harrison complex; one in the Cedars complex, and two in either Gilman Hots Springs or Happy Valley.

1. Forcible Confinement

Forcible confinement, which is one of the prerequisites for social scientists utilizing the brainwashing term, specifically occurred in ten RPF accounts and two RPF's RPF accounts. Indeed, seven informants had stories about their (sometimes successful) escape attempts from the program and the guards assigned to prevent them from doing so. These accounts stand in stark contrast to Scientology's insistence that "participation" in an RPF program is voluntary.

Beginning May 30, 1977, all Scientologists entering the RPF program were supposed to sign a legal declaration (presumably, which indicated that the person was on the program voluntarily [see Boards of Directors of the Churches of Scientology, 1977: 9]). An undated "RPF Waiver" form likely indicates what such a legal declaration said:

> I, _____, do hereby agree that the sole reason the RPF was created is so that the individual could redeem himself [sic] and become a productive staff member.
>
> Having been fully informed of what I have done or been accused of to warrant my assignment to the RPF, I further agree that I enter this program with full agreement and of my own choice[.]

> I understand that I may at any time during the program decide to quit the program, knowing that should I do so, it is the policy of the Church of Scientology to dismiss or expel me from the Church of Scientology.
>
> Knowing that I am rightfully transferred to the Rehabilitation Project Force, I understand that if I choose not to undertake the program, I accept the alternative of dismissal from the Church of Scientology.
>
> I further agree that I undertake this program on my own responsibility, and may hold no one else responsible for accidents or occurrences on the RPF (Anonymous, n.d.)

The document was to have been signed, dated, and witnessed. Indeed, as the form suggests, some people apparently do "route out" of Sea Org amidst their RPF assignments, and Scientologist "SB" routed out from the RPF's RPF in the unusually short time of two weeks after indicating that he wanted to do so (SB, 1998c: 1).

Forced, however, to choose between expulsion from a group to which people had devoted their lives or banishment from what they consider to be the "only road to total freedom," people's "choice" to enter the RPF hardly seems voluntary. More dramatically, however, many former inmates insist that their entry into and continuation in the RPF program was coerced. For example, Dennis Erlich's experience in the RPF and the RPF's RPF at the Fort Harrison in late 1978 reputedly began with two "guards" arriving to escort him to the program. He did not resist them because "it was sort of implicit that [if] you wanna [sic] fight you're gonna [sic] get the shit kicked out of you..." (Kent Interview with Erlich, 1997: 9). On the other side of the continent at roughly the same period, Pat had (she related) "two big burly men" show up and say, "'you're going on the RPF...'" (Kent Interview with Pat, 1997a: 19). Jesse Prince indicated that he had been in the Sea Org only for a short time when "five huge Mongoloid idiots" (as he angrily called them) "physically dragged me, feet dragging on the ground" into the RPF while he was "kicking and screaming" (Kent Interview with Prince, 1998: 15). "I did not want to continue with the organization, but they made me continue..." (Kent Interview with Prince, 1998: 15). This RPF was on the seventh floor of the newly acquired Cedars Sinai Hospital building in Los Angeles, and as renovations continued on it the structure "was surrounded by barbed wire fence, and it was patrolled by German Shepherd dogs. So there was no escape" – or at least no easy escape, since Prince went on to recount a few people who made it out (Kent Interview with Prince, 1998: 15). Former member David Mayo told an equally dramatic story in an affidavit, insisting that "[o]n August 29, 1982, David Miscavige, and others, acting on the orders of L. Ron Hubbard, kidnapped me and subsequently kept me captive and physically and mentally abused me for six months" (Mayo, 1994: 2-3).

Other people spoke about either being forcibly confined themselves (for example, Whitfield, 1989: 6) or seeing others who were. On the west coast, Jesse Prince insists that he saw a metal cage in the RPF's RPF in the basement of the Cedars Sinai building where the inmates "were locked up at night to ensure that [they] wouldn't try to escape" (Kent Interview with Prince, 1998: 18). On the east coast, Dennis Erlich joked about his RPF assignment, and, in accordance with Hubbard's policy, wound up in the

RPF's RPF in Fort Harrison's basement. Guarded down there for ten days, Erlich states that he spent the first day or two "locked in a wire cage..." (Kent Interview with Erlich, 1997: 8). When Nefertiti (which is the presumed former member's alias) found herself in the RPF's RPF in the same basement a decade or so later, she met a woman (she claims) who was "in her thirties, feverish, [her] entire body poured with sweat [and] was wearing chains. She had a chain about twenty inches long linking her two ankles so she had to do small hasty steps" (Nefertiti, 1997: 3). Tonya Burden swore, "under pains and penalties of perjury" (Burden, 1980: 12), that she "personally observed a person chained to pipes in the boiler room in the Fort Harrison building for a period of weeks" (Burden, 1980: 10). Likewise, in an affidavit, Hana Whitfield swore that, while she was on the RPF in the Fort Harrison, Lyn Froyland was assigned to the RPF's RPF and "was chained to a pipe down there [in the basement] for weeks, under guard. She was taken meals and allowed toilet breaks, but no other hygiene" (Whitfield, 1994: 42).

The most extensive account of confinement comes from former member Andre Tabayoyon, who wrote about the Gilman Hot Springs base (on which RPF members worked) having a security system that included "the perimeter fence, the ultra razor barriers, the lighting of the perimeter fence, electronic monitors, the concealed microphones, the ground sensors, the motion sensors and hidden cameras which were installed all over the area–even outside the base" (Tabayoyon, 1994: 8 [para. # 28]). Tabayoyon reported that he worked on the base's security system in 1991, but back in January 1983, unwilling RPF inmate Julie Mayo found her freedom blocked by a guarded fence at Gilman Hot Springs. Taking what may have been the only escape option she had, Julie Mayo waited one morning until the guard opened the gate to allow someone to walk across the street for breakfast, and slipped out to the road, unnoticed, before it closed (J. Mayo, 1996: 8-9). If Jesse Prince's account is accurate, then many of the Scientology staff at Hemet were heavily armed, as were the guards for the Happy Valley RPF (Kent Interview with Prince, 1998: 49).

Other escape stories indicate that RPF victims were, essentially, imprisoned in situations where they had not given consent (much less informed consent) for their captors to hold them. Vicki Azanaran, for example, "and two other victims escaped from Happy Valley onto the Sobo[b]a Indian Reservation where they were pursued on motorcycles by guards of Happy Valley. Vicki and the other victims were rescued by residents of the reservation who picked them up in a pick-up truck and spirited them to a motel in the City of Hemet" (Aznaran and Aznaran, 1988: 12).

Former member Pat escaped by using several elaborate ruses. First, she concocted a story that convinced guards to allow her to use the telephone. Then she called a non-Scientology friend and gave explicit instructions about where her friend should be the next night (Kent Interview with Pat, 1997b: 3). The next night, she concocted a second story that managed to get her near to the street where her friend was waiting. Manipulating the guard who was with her, Pat managed to get enough distance from him so that she got inside the car:

> slammed the door shut and said, 'Go!.' [My friend] hit the door locks and [the friend] stepped on the gas.... It was an awful, awful time, and

> there I was in this car not knowing where I was going, forty cents in my purse.... But I couldn't be there anymore; I couldn't be there another minute. I couldn't handle another second of the degradation (Kent Interview with Pat, 1997b: 4).

As the car roared away, Scientologists who witnessed her escape screamed at her. Apparently as punishment for having let Pat escape, the man assigned to watch her ended up in the RPF's RPF (Kent Interview with Prince, 1998: 31). According to Jesse Prince (who had been in that RPF at the time), one RPFer somehow managed to get over the barbed wire fence surrounding the new Los Angeles facilities (that were under renovation) and got away (Kent Interview with Prince, 1998: 25). Apparently another escapee returned to the area of the building complex several days later, and shot to death his wife (Kent Interview with Prince, 1998: 29).

Additional escape accounts exist, all of them indicating that many people were in the RPF program against their wills. Nevertheless, some people allowed themselves to be talked back into the program (or into a related program) by Scientology retrieval teams sent out to bring them back. As Anne Rosenblum recounted, for example, she escaped the RPF from the Fort Harrison in Clearwater by slipping out of sick bay and jumping over a wall (Rosenblum, n.d.: 6). She fled to the house of a Scientology friend who, apparently, informed the organization, and (along with four Scientology 'escorts') convinced her to return and "route out" of the Sea Org through standard Scientology procedures. In a confused emotional state, she returned to the Fort Harrison and remained under guard as she went through a number of Scientology hearings in preparation for the organization releasing her.[9] Hubbard happened to offer a general amnesty to RPFers at this moment, and she and several others accepted the offer. She indicated that the organization ran her and the others through security checks "concerning whether we were taking any Scientology data with us, what our intentions were when we left etc." Scientologists searched her luggage for any items that she might have been trying to remove, then had her sign an affidavit that listed all of her alleged crimes "of this lifetime," which the organization culled from her supposedly confidential auditing files (Rosenblum, n.d.: 7).

Robert Vaughn Young told me:

> I escaped down the river bed one night. Planned it for a long time. Got into Hemet and they [i.e., members of Scientology retrieval team] found me there at a motel. And this is where you get into the power of the organization – and without anyone laying a hand on me, I was convinced to go back to the RPF (Kent Interview with Young, 1994: 22).

On a second escape attempt, however, he was not so lucky – he got caught (Kent Interview with Young, 1994: 22). Apparently Hana Whitfield also escaped the RPF (in Clearwater), but she, too, re-entered after pressure from Scientologists who found her (Whitfield, 1989: 7).

Current Scientology opponent Lawrence (Larry) Wollersheim also was caught trying to escape from the RPF that operated on a ship in 1974. (Presumably this ship was in the Los Angeles area, and almost certainly it was the Excalibur that was docked at a

pier in nearby Long Beach [see Wakefield, 1990: 2; Schomer, 1985: 23]). As a court decision in his favour determined:

> [u]ltimately, Wollersheim felt he could bear the [RPF] regime no longer. He attempted to escape from the ship because as he testified later: 'I was dying and losing my mind.' But his escape effort was discovered. Several Scientology members seized Wollersheim and held him captive. They released him only when he agreed to remain and continue with the auditing and other 'religious practices' taking place on the vessel (California Court of Appeal, 1989: 9274).

The court used this example as "evidence" that Wollersheim "accepted some of his auditing under threat of physical coercion" (California Court of Appeal, 1989: 9274). While it would be unwise to generalize from these accounts and suggest that all inmates in RPF programs were in them involuntarily, certainly some of them had not consented or chosen to be there.10

2. Accounts of Physical Maltreatment

Undoubtedly the physical maltreatment that many people experienced in various RPF programs was a factor in their desire to escape. I hesitate to say that all people experienced physical maltreatment, since one informant who went through the RPF at the Fort Harrison Hotel said that the daily schedule "was not bothersome" and that he "got enough sleep" (Kent Interview with Ernesto, 1997: 16, 17). He admitted, however, that he was not assigned the heavy physical work, but only cleaned and emptied garbage (Kent Interview with Ernesto, 1997: 16). Similarly, Scientologist "SB" wrote, "[b]eing on the RPF wasn't terribly difficult for me. I was in good shape physically and actually enjoyed the chance to do some laborious work..." (SB, 1998a: 2). Later, however, he responded to a message by conceding, "I won't lie, the RPF is damned tough business and you are almost certainly right that some former (and current) RPFers feel very abused and terrorized" (SB, 1998f: 2). Indeed, others experienced a wide range of (what they considered to be) physical abuses.

A. Excessive Exercise – The Running Program

Forced running was a universal aspect in the RPF, but leaders also used it as a specific punishment. According to a person who was on the Apollo, Hubbard devised the "running program" as a punishment against a member whom he thought "needed some discipline." He ordered the member "to do fifty laps around the prom[enade] deck. [The member] did about twenty and declared [that] he had done fifty. I remember distinctly, and he got away with it" (Kent Interview with Ernesto, 1997: 5). With the advent of the RPF, running quickly became a standard punishment.

The location of the running punishment, of course, varied according to the location of the RPF program. Monica Pignotti, who was in the RPF on the Apollo (along with Hubbard's now deceased son, Quentin [Pignotti, 1989: 19]), wrote a particularly clear description of the running punishment that she experienced in the early months of 1975:

We had to scrub down the entire bathroom, including all the bulkheads (walls) and ceilings. After we cleaned an area, it had to pass a white glove inspection. If the glove came up dirty, the person who cleaned the area had to run laps from bow to stern of the ship (about 1/5 of a mile each). One time, when my senior wasn't satisfied with the way I cleaned a bathroom, she ordered me to 'take a lap.' I protested because I thought she was being unfair and her reply was, 'Don't Q&A [question and answer] with me. Take two laps.' I objected again and she said, 'Take four laps.' This went on until I was up to about 10 laps, which I eventually had to do (Pignotti, 1989: 23).

Using the "technical" language of Scientology, Pignotti had been put on "rocks and shoals" – penalties for Sea Org members (Hubbard, 1976b: 449).

From her Fort Harrison RPF experience, Anne Rosenblum indicated that the "rocks and shoals" punishments often included sit-ups and push-ups in addition to running laps "up and down the garage ramp" (Rosenblum, n. d.: 2). Dennis Erlich also reported "having to run up and down the parking structure..." (Kent Interview with Erlich, 1997: 16). In the Cedars complex in Los Angeles, rocks and shoals involved "running the stairwells" or taking "laps around the entire complex" (Kent Interview with Pat, 1997a: 27). Running laps also was an essential aspect of making amends for violations of Scientology's so-called "ethics" among RPFers in the Copenhagen program (Schernekau/Elleby, 1990g: 2; 1990h; 1990k; see 1990i). The most difficult running punishments apparently took place at either the Gilman Hot Springs or Happy Valley RPF programs, where formerly high ranking Sea Org members had to run around either a tree or a pole for twelve hours a day (see Kent Interview with Prince, 1998: 45 [on Happy Valley]). Julie Mayo indicated that she "was put on a running program for 12 hours a day, 7 days a week, and made to run around a tree in all types of extreme desert conditions" (J. Mayo, 1996: 7). Her husband, David, reported that he "was forced to run around a tree in the desert in temperatures of up to 110 degrees for 12 hours a day, 7 days a week for 3 months..." (D. Mayo, 1994: 3). Vicki Aznaran made a similar claim about having "to run around an orange telephone pole from 7:00 a.m. until 9:30 p.m. in the evening, with 10 minute rests every one-half hour, and 30 minute breaks for lunch and dinner" (Aznaran and Aznaran, 1988: 9). The age of RPFers apparently had no bearing on their obligation to run, since Scientologist "SB" mentioned that "[t]he RPF 'shuffle' was coined as many older RPFers couldn't possibly run that much, but at least had to give the illusion [that] they were [running]" (SB, 1998b: 1).

B. Physically Demanding and Tiring Chores

Labour was a central aspect to RPF programs, usually involving maintenance and renovation. On the Apollo, RPF inmates performed a number of cleaning jobs – scraping and painting; scrubbing decks; etc. (Kent Interview with Dale, 1997: 6). While on the RPF's RPF, Monica Pignotti was made "to go down and clean muck from the bilges. That was my job all day long.... [A]nd I had to clean all this sludge out and then paint – paint it.... I was on it for five days..." (Kent Interview with Pignotti, 1997: 26). Another dirty (as well as dangerous) cleaning job that befell a person on the RPF's RPF was "routine cleaning of 'Rat's Alley'[,] which is probably the grossest thing you can pos-

sibly imagine and I mean that literally. I've seen adult people faint from the smell" (SB, 1998b: 1). "Rat's Alley" earned its nickname because (according to Scientologist "SB") it was a dimly lit, narrow tunnel beneath a food preparation area containing drainage pipes and a maze of other pipes, some of which were extremely hot. When Scientologists acquired the building it had been rat-infested, but now food particles and standing puddles of water kept the area infested with cockroaches. RPF's RPF inmates who cleaned the area had to roll around on carts because space was so tight, but even then "it was so low in some places, that it wasn't uncommon to get yourself stuck between your cart and a hot water pipe. Believe me, I have 2 scars on my back from that!" (SB, 1998h: 2). Apparently the smell was so bad in "Rat's Alley" that Scientologist "SB" (who was ill at the time):

> actually had a small 'blackout' for about 2 minutes and I slumped on my cart. My twin [i.e., partner] saw me and shook me awake and I had quite a few roaches on me. My twin [who was 16 or 17 years old at the time] also got a few in his hair once while rolling through some higher water and his head was a little low and it rolled through the goop and picked up some roaches (SB, 1998h: 2).

In a subsequent newsgroup posting on alt.religion.scientology, "SB" surmised that the "standing water was so foul, it is barely comprehensible" (SB, 1998i: 2). Despite these foul conditions, "SB" indicated that once he was cleaning in "Rat's Alley" for five hours (SB, 1998h: 3).

While an account from the RPF in East Grinstead spoke about "chipping the crust off cooker parts or painting stones" (Forde, 1996: 3), activities such as garbage disposal (Royal Courts of Justice, 1984: 27), and cleaning bathrooms (Pignotti, 1989: 23; Rosenblum, n. d.: 1), hallways (Rosenblum, n. d.: 1) and stairways (Nefertiti, 1997: 10) were much more common. Vicki Aznaran reportedly dug ditches (Aznaran and Aznaran, 1988: 11), and Pignotti was part of an RPF team that did photo shoots for pictures that appeared in the 1978 publication, What is Scientology? (see Church of Scientology of California, 1978). Gerry Armstrong assembled course packs (Superior Court of the State of California, 1984: 1462), but he also performed another common RPF assignment – building renovation.

In the period around April 1979, Armstrong worked on a team that was renovating a house that was to be the dwelling of L. Ron Hubbard (Superior Court of the State of California, 1984: 1475). Andre Tabayoyon (1994: 24 [para. # 116-117, 120-122]) spoke about RPF "slave labor" (as he called it) building and renovating numerous dwellings and buildings used by Scientology leaders and their movie star friends. Sea Org members in the Danish RPF performed renovations on Scientology's buildings in Copenhagen, which we know from commendations that RPF teams received for their accomplishments. One commendation (from November 23, 1989) praised the RPF members by stating, "[t]he ceiling, walls[,] woodwork[,] and carpet is [sic] done to a good standard" (presumably of the Nordland Estates Hotel [TCO Estates, 1989]), while another (from September 21, 1990) acknowledged the RPFers' good paint job of the boiler room and pipes in the building in which the staff slept (Crivellaro, 1990). RPF

member Susanne Schernekau/Elleby even complained about the messy jobs that the Estates Project Force (EPF) workers left behind on renovations, which the RPF had to complete (Schnernekau/Elleby, 1990b).

The most dramatic renovation accounts came from Jesse Prince and Pat, whose RPF teams (they stated in separate interviews) were involved in major building renovations in southern California in the 1970s. As Pat summarized:

> the pressure kept mounting every day with the renovations. Every day that passed there was greater pressure to get renovations done... until it got to the point that we were – and I swear to God this is true – we worked thirty hours on, three hours off. We worked shifts of thirty hours at a time.
>
> ... (Kent Interview with Pat, 1997a: 25).
>
> [W]e would work so many hours, Steve, that I, I remember [that] I would pass people and I – and we'd be in a dark room with a screw gun laying drywall in a completely dark room and I would pass and I would stop because I saw sparks flying off this thing and I'd go, 'hey, what's going on?,' and the person would just look at me with this dazed look saying, 'Oh, I, I don't know. I'm just looking at the sparks.' I mean, we were delusional we were so tired. I remember trying to construct a sentence and being unable to do so. You know, saying – knowing that I had to say, 'I need that screw driver,' and saying, 'I need that fence for the sandwich that isn't purple.' [...] I was unable to be at all coherent (Kent Interview with Pat, 1997a: 26).

Prince indicated that he was on that work schedule for eight months, "and people were literally dropping like flies from exhaustion" (Kent Interview with Prince, 1998: 16). Pat's and Jesse Prince's thirty hour work shifts were unusual – Robert Vaughn Young spoke about twelve hour work days (Kent Interview with Young, 1994: 18) – but Monica Pignotti reported that once she had to work "for thirty-six hours straight with no sleep" because Hubbard had ordered the whole ship to be cleaned (Kent Interview with Pignotti, 1997: 14).

C. Poor Diet

The heavy workload should have warranted a high calorie diet, but several of the former RPF inmates complained about the quality of the food. Despite what Tonya Burden identified as an 18 hour workday, she indicated that often she "received only 'rice and beans' and water" for her meals (Burden, 1980: 10). Apparently Nefertiti ate what she called "soups or pigswills," only occasionally flavoured with milk (Nefertiti, 1997: 9). Pat complained that "we were fed really dreadful food," which she went on to clarify as "very institutional, very poorly prepared," and which included "scraps and what was left over" (Kent Interview with Pat, 1997a: 24). Pignotti reported the common refrain that her RPF cohort ate after the rest of the staff was finished, but the leftovers that they consumed came from the kitchen and not items found on people's plates (Kent Interview with Pignotti, 1997: 14; see Kent Interview with Dale, 1997: 6).

Margery Wakefield, however, who was on the RPF ship that was docked in Long Beach, California, indicated, "[s]ometimes we had to eat food that other people had left on their plates" (Wakefield, 1990: 2). Poor diet may have been a contributing factor to Larry Wollersheim's loss of fifteen pounds during his six weeks on the RPF (California Court of Appeal, 1989: 9269). Likewise, Scientology's alleged experimentation with a protein diet mixture, combined with the hard labour, may explain why Jesse Prince reported that he dropped 40 pounds during his first RPF experience (Kent Interview with Prince, 1998: 19-20). Among the accounts of former RPFers, only Scientologist "SB" reported, "[a]ctually, we ate half decently. The truth is, we sometimes got special favors from the galley crew because they knew we were the ones [who] cleaned the place and we helped them" (SB, 1998i: 1).

D. Issues of Hygiene and Medical Care

Worn down by a rigorous work schedule, and possibly weakened further by marginal diets, RPF members were especially susceptible to illness. On the Apollo, RPF members apparently had trouble keeping their clothes dry (Kent Interview with Dale, 1997:6). On land, many RPF victims probably had a similar problem, but now the dampness was the result of perspiration from wearing work clothes in hot climates. Hana Whitfield, for example, complained about having to wear heavy jumpsuits or boilersuits in the hot Florida weather (Whitfield, 1989: 5-6). Despite the obvious need for baths or showers, Whitfield revealed that "[w]e were not allowed to shower longer than 30 seconds" (Whitfield, 1989: 6). While in the RPF, Nefertiti saw firsthand the problems that excessive sweating could cause women, and she included a pertinent story in her recollection of her forcible confinement experience:

> We all suffered from heavy sweating. I recall this young woman suffering from an important [sic] infection which had been developing under her breasts. Instead of healing, the wound had been expanding to such a degree that purulent blisters had reached her navel (Nefertiti, 1997: 9).

Nefertiti was not the only former member to report having seen a woman on the RPF with a severe skin problem – former member Lori Taverna told city officials in Clearwater, Florida that she "saw a few people who looked very sick[, including o]ne [who] had sores all over her body, open sores" (City of Clearwater Commission Hearings, 1982: 2-151). Remarkably, RPFers in the Cedars Sinai complex in the late 1970s were forced to perspire, because (according to Jesse Prince), "we were required for one hour a day to put on rubber suits, rubber sweat suits and run for an hour straight, and sweat in these damn suits." (Apparently this requirement was a precursor to Scientology's Purification Rundown, which uses saunas as part of a program claiming to rid the body of chemical and radiation residues [Kent Interview with Prince, 1998: 20].) Another medical and hygienic problem that women encountered was "not having enough cash to buy a box of Tampax [tampons]" (Nefertiti, 1997: 11).

Health consequences for people were many, varied, and sometimes life-threatening. David Mayo, for example, claimed "I was refused medical and dental treatment" while on the RPF, and "after escaping captivity I lost six teeth and required thousands of dollars of dental work to save the rest of my teeth" (Mayo, 1994: 3). Most seriously,

Andre Tabayoyon recalled working on "dangerous machinery" while on the RPF's RPF and seeing a distressed co-worker "thrust his finger into the machine which cut his finger off" (Tabayoyon, 1994: 10 [para. # 42]). Recalling some of the consequences of the thirty-hour work shifts in the Cedars Sinai renovation project, Jesse Prince indicated that "some people went what they call psychotic – just kind of lost their minds – no longer could associate who and what they were, where they were, [or] what they were doing, and had to be put in isolation, because they were crazy" (Kent Interview with Prince, 1998: 16). Apparently one exhausted man who was working with power tools close to Prince, walked over to him "and part of his finger was gone, and he said, 'look what just happened'" (Kent Interview with Prince, 1998: 17).

E. Sleeping Conditions

Beyond these real and immediate issues related to hygiene and medical care, many people spoke about issues related to sleep. They complained (in retrospect) about their sleeping conditions – the conditions of the mattresses; ventilation in the rooms; crowded conditions; and inappropriate sleeping areas. From different times and different locations, people spoke about the deplorable condition of the mattresses on which they had to sleep. Remembering the circumstances for sleeping on the Apollo, Dale recounted that "we were given mattresses but the mattresses we were given were old, filthy mattresses that... had to be cleaned up.... A lot of them smelled..." (Kent Interview with Dale, 1997: 6). Reflecting on her period of gruelling work shifts, Pat recalled that "when our thirty hours were up we'd get to sleep. We would go to the roof of one of the buildings where it was cold and there were these damp, disgusting mattresses that we would just fall onto and sleep" (Kent Interview with Pat, 1997a: 26).

Mattresses frequently rested either on the ground or the floor. When, for example, Robert Vaughn Young was in isolation in a converted chicken coop on the Gilman Hot Springs property, he indicated that "there were some old mattresses that g[o]t thrown down on the floor. You know, you talk about a crash pad..." (Kent Interview with Young, 1994: 20; see A. Tabayoyon, 1994: 9 [para. # 35]). Adelle Hartwell was at one of the Indio facilities at the same time that her daughter was there in the RPF. Someone in charge of the RPF (presumably) put the mattresses of the RPF people outside, and around the same time the daughter fell ill. "During the heat of the day I would see her moving her mattress from one shady spot to another to try and keep out of the blazing sun and 115-degree heat. I have never seen illness treated this way" (Hartwell, n.d.: 3). Like the sick daughter, Vicki Aznaran may have meant that her mattress was not on a frame when she stated that she and others were made to "sleep on the ground" (Aznaran and Aznaran, 1988: 11). When he spoke about the sleeping conditions at Happy Valley in the late 1980s, Jesse Prince complained that he was "sleeping on the floor, on a blanket, on a wooden floor. I tell you, there's [sic] literally scorpions, rattlesnakes, [and] black widows everywhere, 'cause we're in the damn desert, in an undeveloped area" (Kent Interview with Prince, 1998: 43). Certainly accounts from the Fort Harrison RPF indicated that people slept on mattresses strewn on the floor, usually in cramped, poorly ventilated rooms (Armstrong, 1982: 3; Nefertiti, 1997: 12; Rosenblum, n. d.: 3; Whitfield, 1989: 5). Ventilation was so bad the first time that Monica Pignotti

was on the Apollo's RPF that "we slept out on the decks on towels because it was so stuffy down there [in the RPF] and it was really horrendous conditions..." (Kent Interview with Pignotti, 1997: 18).

Even when RPF members had beds or bunks, significant problems remained. While in an RPF program on a ship, "Wollersheim and others were forced to sleep in the ship's hold. A total of thirty people were stacked nine high in the hold without proper ventilation" (California Court of Appeal, 1989: 9274). At the Fort Harrison, Dennis Erlich and other RPF inmates slept in bunks on the third floor of the outdoor parking structure that adjoins the hotel, so they inhaled exhaust fumes from cars (Kent Interview with Erlich, 1997: 3). Apparently the women's sleeping facilities were nearby, because Anne Rosenblum wrote:

> [i]n December, 1978, we were moved to a storage area in the garage. It was a partly wooden, partly cement, enclosure built against one of the garage walls. It was built to be a storage area, but as the RPF grew so large, it was made the RPF's girl's sleeping area. Wooden bunks were built, that were about 1/2 to 1/3 the size of a regular twin bed. The bunks were built 3 and 4 stacks high, and were put in there side-by-side. Our 'mattresses' were pieces of foam cut to fit the bunks. It was like crawling into a hole to get into bed. You couldn't even sit up because of the bunk above you, and it was difficult to try to turn over because they weren't wide enough. The worst problem was that being in the garage, we inhaled all the car fumes when cars would go through, in addition to the noise of cars that [people taking courses] and staff would make driving in and out (Rosenblum, n. d.: 3).

It seems remarkable that health, zoning, or safety inspectors never discovered these inappropriate sleeping quarters at the Fort Harrison, but Hana Whitfield explained that "all RPFers were practised and skilled in transforming their normal RPF sleeping areas into what looked like a regular furniture storage space, and doing so in a very short period of time" (Whitfield, 1989: 6).

3. Social Maltreatment

A. Boiler Suits; Formal Address to "Superiors;" Armbands

The line between physical maltreatment and social maltreatment was not always clear, yet certain activities involving such occurrences as degradations, restrictions in verbal and written communication, and very low pay seem distinctive enough to warrant mention. RPF degradations were many. They included having to wear jumpsuits or boiler suits (Kent Interview with Pat, 1997a: 22; Kent Interview with Young, 1994: 18; Superior Court of the State of California, 1984: 1432; Whitfield, 1989: 5), and having to refer to everyone as "sir" (Rosenblum, n. d.: 2; Whitfield, 1989: 5). (By the late 1980s, the thirty or so inmates in the Happy Valley RPF were allowed to wear black shorts because of the extreme desert heat (Kent Interview with Prince, 1998: 45). Susanne Schernekau/Elleby in Copenhagen even had to write a letter to a superior (addressing it "Dear Sir") in an attempt to get a second jumpsuit and requisite cap, since

she was wearing the only suit that fit and it needed washing (Schernekau/Elleby, 1989a). In addition, RPFers were prohibited from walking – running only (Rosenblum, n. d.: 1). By the late 1980s, different coloured arm bands – including white and gold – visually identified people's progress through the RPF program (Schernekau/Elleby, 1990a). According to former RPFer, Jesse Prince, people in the RPF's RPF in the late 1970s wore black strips of cloth on their arms (Kent Interview with Prince, 1998: 18). By (presumably) the late 1980s and the early 1990s, people on the RPF's RPF reportedly wore orange arm bands; new RPFers wore black arm bands; RPFers who had a few "privileges" (such as having dinner with family members) wore white arm bands; and persons who could sleep with their spouses one night a week displayed gold arm bands (SB, 1998b: 1).

B. Restrictions on Speaking and Writing

Many people indicated that their ability to communicate with others was severely curtailed, although they expressed the restrictions with slightly different emphases. Dale seemed to express the basic restriction most directly when he informed me, "[y[ou could not talk to anybody [who] was not on the RPF unless you were spoken to..." (Kent Interview with Dale, 1997: 5; see Kent Interview with Pat, 1997a: 23). Englishman Peter Forde stated that someone on the RPF was "allowed to speak with only 1 person at all (the MAA [or Master-at-Arms]," who directly oversaw the program (Forde, 1996: 3; see Pignotti, 1989: 24). Julie Mayo insisted that she "was not allowed to talk to the rest of the staff or even make a phone call" (J. Mayo, 1996: 8).

These restrictions on communicating included one's mail and telephone calls. Gerry Armstrong's accounts of RPF surveillance and communication-censorship were amplified by Robert Vaughn Young, who wrote in a newsgroup that he underwent interrogations over the contents of letters exchanged with his wife while he was incarcerated in the RPF program (Armstrong in R. V. Young, 1997: 1-2; see S. Young, 1994: 29). In an affidavit, David Mayo swore that "I was not permitted to make or receive phone calls and all letters I wrote were read by Scientology security guards" (Mayo 1994: 3). Susanne Schernekau/Elleby in the Danish RPF had to write requests to the head of the RPF (the RPF i/c [in charge]) when she wanted to either mail a letter to her parents (Schernekau/Elleby, 1990c) or to telephone them (Schernekau/Elleby, 1990j). Moreover, after having seen her husband only two times in about four months, Schernekau/Elleby still had to seek permission from the person holding the title, "RPF In-Charge," to see her husband at the upcoming Christmas party (Schernekau/Elleby, 1989b). Dramatically, Nefertiti recounted meeting a woman on the RPF's RPF who was there because "she had sent a letter to her husband – [a] member of the cult[–] revealing some details about the RPF. One is not supposed to talk about the gulag. She had violated the gulag's law of silence" (Nefertiti, 1997: 4).

C. Media and Book Restrictions

Communication restrictions extended to include the media. While on the RPF, people were not allowed to listen to the radio, watch television, or read magazines and newspapers (Kent Interview with Pat, 1997: 23; Rosenblum, n. d.: 2). These restrictions

probably were based upon the written policy that people "[m]ay not have with them in the RPF ANY drugs or alcoholic beverages, radios, TV, taped music, musical instruments, chess games or any such entertainment or luxury, or consume such when on authorized visits to spouse or child" (Boards of Directors of the Churches of Scientology, 1977: 11). Consequently, when the RPF Master-at-Arms (MAA) found two novels in Susanne Schernekau/Elleby's handbag, she found herself assigned to Scientology's "ethics conditions" doing "amends" for having committed a supposedly serious infraction of rules. The harsh reaction that she experienced from possessing two novels, and her own acceptance that her possession of them constituted a serious violation against RPF policies, provides an important window into the totalism of the RPF program. The program demanded the right to oversee totalistic control over RPF inmates, and the inmates felt extreme pressure to accept such restrictive control as a valid part of their "rehabilitation" program.

Apparently the RPF MAA went through Schernekau/Elleby's belongings, since Schernekau/Elleby wrote a letter (probably on or around October 1, 1990) to him about what he found:

> Dear Sir, it is true that there were 2 books in my handbag.
>
> The only reason why they were there is the following: when I arrived to [sic] the RPF I had my songbook in my jeans jacket pocket as I always ha[d] it with me and these two novels are the best ones I have and they were always with me – either in the white bag and when that broke I moved them to the black handbag.
>
> As I told [the RPF Bosun] last night – it can sound like a justification to avoid any trouble but it is the truth.
>
> That I am doing [ethics] conditions [i.e., reparations for policy violations] is just because I knew it is out-FO [i.e., against Flag Orders] to [sic: in] the RPF and I want for my self to ensure it is cleared up fully (Schernekau/Elleby, n. d.).

Clearly Schernekau/Elleby did not question the prohibition against possessing novels while on the RPF, since she accepted that their discovery caused an ethics situation that had to be "cleaned up." As she began working through the "ethics conditions," she accepted blame for having the material. In her October 1, 1990 "Condition write-up of Treason" (with 'treason' as the lowest level of ethics conditions), Schernekau/Elleby reported:

> Tonight the MAA found 2 books in my bag[,] which is out FO [against Flag Orders] and against LRH's [Hubbard's] intention with retraining S.O. [Sea Org] members.

Addressing the standard command that all people on the level of treason had to answer, "Find out that you are," Schernekau wrote:

> I got the RF [routing form] from the [S]ection i/c [i.e., the lowest level RPF supervisor] that the MAA had found 2 books in my bag and that there also were [sic] the songbook in my jacket. I went ahead justifying

> the cycle [i.e., the concluded books-discovery event] but looking at it I see that it was contrary to RPF FO's [Flag Orders] and is not speeding up redemption and graduation. (I have not been reading them. I just had them there as they are my favorites and I didn't want to loose them[.])
>
> I am a[n] RPF member who really wants to speed up and get thru the program – in ethics and in FO with only that intention (Schernekau/Elleby, 1990d).

Already contrite, Schernekau/Elleby admitted that she had two novels but attempted to minimize the 'seriousness' of her infraction by insisting that she never read them.

In her "Condition of Doubt" write-up that she did the next day (October 2), Schernekau/Elleby stated about the books- incident that she took "an honest look to [sic: at] the situation and I saw that the intention and the objectives were to keep self determin[ed?] protection on [sic: of] my mest [i.e., her material possessions]." She determined that this attempt to protect her material possessions "is endangering the group over all" (Schernekau/Elleby, 1990f: 1). She revealed the absolute rigidity with which people had to follow the RPF rules by adding, "I join the RPFers who really study the RPF FO's w[ith] no MU's [i.e., misunderstood words] and who keeps them in as they are and who does not add to them personal ideas and feelings" (Schernekau/Elleby, 1990f: 2). In plain language, Schernekau/Elleby wanted to be counted among the RPF inmates who completely understood the RPF policies and who followed them precisely – without feelings and without expressing her personal opinions about them. Clearly she understood the absolute obedience that the program demanded of her, and she responded accordingly.

By the time that Schernekau/Elleby wrote the next report on her upgraded ethic status of "liability" for having been caught with two novels (and a song book), she confessed, "I have committed a severe out FO [i.e., violation of a Flag Order] and I want to ensure that it's fully handled." As part of her efforts to fully handle it, she studied six Flag Orders about the RPF, and by doing so realized what core mistake she had made that (allegedly) led to the infraction (Schernekau/Elleby, 1990g: 1). She then "went with the FO [Flag Order] to my room and I took out anything which could be questionable w[h]ether or not out FO's [i.e., that might have violated an RPF restriction stated in a Flag Order], and I get them carried up to the attic." To further demonstrate how sincere she was in her efforts to conform, she mentioned what appears to be a self-inflicted punishment: "I did 8 laps" (Schernekau/Elleby, 1990g: 2). When she discovered something going on inside the RPF that was against a Flag Oder policy, she reported it to her superiors. Finally, in an act that confirmed the extent to which she now placed the RPF above herself, she indicated, "I wrote a KR [knowledge report] on myself re: the things which could be questionable which I located in my room" (Schernekau/Elleby, 1990g: 2). One interpretation about this entire incident is that RPF staff used a small expression of Schernakau/Elleby's individuality as an opportunity to attempt to rebuild her into a compliant, de-individualized person who reflected the organization's ideological totalism.

D. Salaries

For all of the deprivations that RPF members suffered, they still received almost no salary. During his 1977 period in the RPF, for example, Armstrong indicated that he received about $4.30 a week for a hundred or more hours work (Superior Court of the State of California, 1984: 1463). Likewise, "[i]n the RPF," Robert Vaughn Young revealed, "I got paid five dollars a week for fourteen months" (Kent Interview with Young, 1994: 24), which was the same amount the Pignotti collected (Kent Interview with Pignotti, 1997: 17). Anne Rosenblum only got $4.00 a week (Rosenblum, n. d.: 3). While in the Cedars Sinai RPF in 1977 and 1978 for eighteen months, Jesse Prince never received more (he said) than about $7.00 (and sometimes nothing) for working perhaps a hundred hours a week. After he returned, however, to Sea Org duties he received back pay totalling nearly $3,000.00 (Kent Interview with Prince, 1998: 32, 36).

4. Intensive Study of Ideology

When neither punishments nor pressing work assignments interfered with study time, RPF inmates spent up to five hours a day studying Scientology doctrines and participating in numerous auditing and security checking sessions. Each person worked with a co-auditor or "twin,", and one had to complete the RPF's auditing course as well as successfully audit one's partner through it (Rosenblum, n. d.: 2). It seems likely that the purpose of this intense study was to infuse the person with Hubbard's teaching at the same time that another aspect of the RPF was operating – forced confessions. That is to say, as one was studying what Scientology considers to be the uncompromising truth, he or she also was receiving continuous messages (through the forced confessions) about being weak, guilty, and completely dependent upon the leader's doctrines for direction (see Kent, 1994).

The required study items and auditing actions became highly structured, with a 1980 checklist of "RPF Graduation Requirements" listing seven pages of courses, readings, educational demonstrations, essays, auditing, and confessions that inmates had to complete successfully in order to "graduate" from the program (Boards of Directors of the Churches of Scientology, 1980: 1-7). The checklist for just one course, for example, required that RPF inmates read ninety-two Hubbard bulletins, orders, and miscellaneous writings; perform ten demonstrations of concepts; listen to six tapes; perform twenty-six drills; write two essays; participate in ten hours of auditing; plus complete three additional auditing assignments (Board of Directors of the Churches of Scientology, 1974).

5. Forced Confessions

An intimate aspect of the ideological re-exposure, therefore, involved RPF inmates repeatedly confessing to alleged sins, crimes, and evil intentions (see Kent Interview with Dale, 1977: 9). According to Monica Pignotti, these forced confessions took two forms. First, while "on" the E-meter:

> [t]hey had prepared lists that they called security checks where they would ask you all kinds of questions on every possible thing a person

> could have done wrong – any possible thing you could think of in your life or... against the organization. 'Have you ever stolen anything? Have you ever had any unkind thoughts about L. Ron Hubbard? About Mary Sue Hubbard? About Scientology?.... Have you ever committed murder?' Just a whole list where anything [might] read on the E-meter. And the auditor would say, 'What are you thinking of right now?' and you would have to answer the question until... the meter didn't read anymore....
>
> [T]he other one that they did a lot of was repetitive commands: 'What have you done? what have you withheld? What have you done? What have you...' it was said over and over and over (Kent Interview with Pignotti, 1997: 15; see Superior Court of the State of California, 1984: 1487-1490, see 2545-2546).

People confessed to all manner of crimes, including ones allegedly from past lives (Nefertiti, 1997: 12). In essence, Scientology's supposedly "religious" tool – the E-meter – became the functional equivalent of a secular lie detector (see Kent Interview with Erlich, 1997: 11).

An important practical distinction between auditing and sec-checking is that Scientology does not consider information revealed in sec-checks to be confidential material (as auditing information is supposed to be). Consequently, RPF inmates likely realized that this information could be used against them at some future time.[11] At least three people, however, who had been though the RPF stated that people on or associated with the RPF were in fact culling people's auditing (or 'pc' or 'pre-clear') files for "crimes" that people had to address (Kent Interview with Pat, 1997a: 29; Superior Court of the State of California, 1984: 2714; Whitfield, 1998: 1).

Sec-checking could, and often did, become very intense and unnerving. Before high-ranking Scientology leaders sent Stacy Young to the RPF, they subjected her to what is called a "gang-bang sec check" involving two or more people angrily and quickly firing questions at someone in what could be an attempt to break down the person emotionally:

> Two very large, strong men..., locked me in a room and interrogated me for hours. During the interrogation, they screamed and swore at me. They accused me of all sorts of crimes against Scientology. They demanded that I confess to being an enemy agent (S. Young, 1994: 28).

Julie Mayo appears to have experienced gang-bang sec checks, but only after she already was in the RPF program. RPF staff pulled in Julie and fifteen other people late one night, and sat her:

> opposite from the three who faced me. I was told that unless I confessed to working for the IRS, the FBI, or other government agency, I was going to: A) be sent to jail; B) lose my eternity; C) be banned from [Scientology] tech[nology] lines forever. When I said [that] I didn't work for a government agency, I was told that they might go lighter on

> me if I confessed to supplying [a person] with a mailing list. I said [that] I hadn't done that either, so [I] was told to go think about it and write my confession (J. Mayo, 1996: 7).

Presumably her husband, David, also went through similar grillings, since he indicated that "I was often awakened during the night and interrogated..." (D. Mayo, 1994: 3). These intense situations around forced confessions appear to differ greatly from the experience (and interpretation) of Scientologist and former RPFer "SB," who indicated, "[t]he idea of 'forced' [confessions] brings to mind 'involuntary' and 'pressured'. Some people may have felt that way, but it really wasn't the case normally" (SB, 1998g: 1).

6. Success Stories

For inmates attempting to complete the program, writing success stories about how the RPF transformed their lives is among the final, obligatory activities. For years prior to the RPF program, Hubbard had in place an organizational requirement that Scientologists were required to provide glowing accounts of Scientology's benefits, so the requirement that inmates had to produce them about the RPF merely was following policy. With public relations in mind, Hubbard wrote in 1968:

> [f]or purposes of *distribution* of Scientology and getting it into the hands of the millions, *standard tech* producing results and being broadcast by word of mouth by pcs [pre-clears – people below a certain level of courses] and students is one of the best programmes. People who have not had the results or wins are not likely to assist distribution and indeed are a liability (Hubbard, 1968: 140 [emphasis in original]).

Hubbard also realized that "win" stories provided invaluable information about how people felt concerning their Scientology experiences, so he wrote that "*Success* is the final police point of an org. All [s]tudents and pcs *must* go to Success before leaving an org even on a 'leave of absence'" (Hubbard, 1968: 140 [emphasis in original]). Success stories about RPF "wins," therefore, simply followed policy, and they also may have provided some protection in the future if former RPFers became critical of their incarceration in the program.

Far less extensive in content or design than the final confessions that Chinese and Western victims of thought reform programs had to write for their "re-educators" in the late 1940s and early 1950s (see Lifton, 1961: 266-273, 473-484), the RPF success stories nevertheless appeared to follow an outline or formula. In them, "graduating" RPFers had to acknowledge their alleged previous deficiencies that justified their RPF assignments, praise the quality of Scientology instruction and training that they have received in the RPF, identify how this instruction and training combined with other aspects of the RPF to positively transform their lives, and thank Hubbard and the organization for their RPF experiences.

A published RPF "success" story from March, 1977, illustrates the formula. A person identified only as "B.G." proclaimed:

> [t]he RPF is the most fantastic process LRH [L. Ron Hubbard] has yet devised. It's pure, no holds barred Scientology. And it's for real. When I walked in the door here several months ago the only thing I knew for certain was that there was no hope. I had totally and utterly betrayed LRH and all SO [Sea Org] [m]embers and Scientologists everywhere. And in so doing [I] had sold my future down the drain.
>
> ..... I found that, as an RPFer I had only two possible courses of action – Win, or die in the attempt, and I had 50 or so tough, dedicated, confront[-]anything fellows making sure I didn't die. While I've been here I've received the best auditing and training I've ever had....
>
> I'm about to graduate now. The greatest single win I've ever had in my existence I got right here. I know [that] Scientology works. I have total certainty on my ability to handle myself and others and on other's ability to handle me and others using LRH's Tech. And I know that the RPF is where it all comes together. It's where the RPF makes it and that's something. Thanks to LRH I have a future – and a damn bright one too! (Sea Organization, 1977: [5]).

Having followed the formula – (acknowledging a pre-RPF crisis, praising RPF training and techniques, glorifying Hubbard, and claiming a successful completion of the program), this person probably was released from the RPF within a matter of days. Indeed, s/he may genuinely have believed that s/he benefitted from the program. As Scientologist and former RPFer, "SB," concluded, "I did get gain from doing it as many others have. Most RPFers are not hateful and bitter people. In fact, we often had good times, despite the circumstances" (SB, 1998b: 2).

Children And Teens on the RPF

Numerous indicators point to the probability that teenagers and pre-teens are subject to the RPF program. These indicators include: accounts from several former adult members; an internal Scientology document that refers to a children's RPF program; a reporter's account in a newspaper article; and television footage that apparently shows teenagers on the RPF program in Los Angeles unloading from a bus.

1. Accounts About Children and Teens from Former Adult Members

Two adults who had been in the RPF on the Apollo reported that they knew of a pre-teen who was in the program. Monica Pignotti stated that a twelve year old girl was in the RPF during the same time that she was (Kent Interview with Pignotti, 1997: 30). Likewise, Dale related that he saw an eleven-year old girl (whom he knew) on the Apollo's RPF after he himself had been in it (Kent Interview with Dale, 1997: 4). An additional account of a child on the RPF came from Pat, who insisted that she knew a six-year-old (whom she named) who went into the program in Los Angeles because he was "out 2-D" – Scientology's term for either sexual problems or family difficulties (Kent Interview with Pat, 1997a: 32). Finally, a former Sea-Org member who uses the pseudonym, Steve Jebson, posted on the alt.religion.scientology newsgroup that he

had "personal knowledge" about a twelve or thirteen year old boy being assigned to the RPF's RPF in Los Angeles (Jebson, 1997).

2. References to Children on the RPF in a Scientology Document

This testimonial evidence identifies that children and teenagers were in various RPF programs with adults. An internal Scientology document, however, indicates that Hubbard had established a special RPF for children and subsequent Scientologists in leadership positions reinitiated the program (presumably after it had lapsed for some reason). The available document is a poor-quality photocopy written by Nedra Cohee in 1989, who was working with the program for Sea Org children called the Cadet Org. Cohee's stated purpose for producing the letter was that s/he felt the "need to re-institute the Children's RPF..." (Cohee, 1989). As background to the request for renewing the program, the author discussed its history:

> In 1976 when the Commodore [i.e., Hubbard] re-established the Cadet Org, he also included the childrens [sic] RPF as apart [sic] of this.... In 1986-87 when myself and [another person] put back in the advices concerning the Cadet org, the re-instituting of the Childrens [sic] RPF was very instrumental as one of the successful actions done which 10X'd [knocked out?] the Cadet Org at that time.... The Childrens [sic] RPF was run per the FO's [sic: Flag Orders, which are similar to Sea Org policy letters] on the Childrens [sic] RPF (3434 series)... (Cohee, 1989).

If this passage is accurate, then Hubbard himself established the Children's RPF in 1976, and policies exist about its operation in the Flag Order 3434 Series dedicated to the RPF in general.

The one page letter or memo also provides insight into the lives of children in and associated with the Cadet Organization. Cohee wrote that there were "several Cadets and blown Cadets [i.e., runaways] who need to go to the children's RPF." While most of the Cadets were improving and "producing," "a very small percentage are enturbulative [i.e., disruptive] sources and are sabotaging efforts to set the scene right." One boy (named in the text) was a special problem, and:

> he needs to be moved off everyone's lines [i.e., taken out of the organization's daily operations] and put into the Childrens [sic] RPF. [He] recently took a razor blade and cut X's in his skin up and down both arms. He is psychotic in PT [present time] and needs close supervision (Cohee, 1989).

In summary, some of the children in the Cadet Org were disruptive to the point of running away, and one obviously troubled youth was self-mutilating. Cohee's response, however, was to advise that the boy should receive close supervision in the Children's RPF program, but never recommended professional counselling or other professional assistance for him.

3. Television and Newspaper Accounts of Teenagers on the RPF

Additional evidence that a Children's RPF operated in or near Los Angeles appeared in an unlikely source – an August, 1989 news broadcast from television station KOCO in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The news broadcast (of which I have a video copy) was the first in a series on Scientology's Narconon program – a reputed drug rehabilitation program that had begun to operate on an Indian reservation near Newkirk, Oklahoma. (Apparently the series ran in August 1989, but the television station was unable to provide me with an exact date. The announcer refers to events, however, that led me to conclude that it ran on August 21.) In one segment, reporter Larry Blunt was on the sidewalk presumably near the main Scientology complex in Los Angeles, having just completed an interview with Scientology spokesperson Linda [sic: Leisa] Goodman. The camera moved around to a scene unfolding across the street and some distance away, and Blunt offered the following commentary about what was captured on film:

> Shortly after that exchange [with Goodman], a Scientology bus loaded with young people dressed in black pulled up. They jogged into the Scientology complex. A recent defector of [sic: from] Scientology told me they were from the Church's Rehabilitation Project Force. They were found to be a problem, and need an attitude adjustment (KOTO, 1989).

This film segment is over in a matter of seconds, but viewers are able to count at least thirteen teens (two or more who appear to be females), all wearing dark suits (with short sleeves and short pants). Of course, the dark uniforms and the jogging requirement are standard for people assigned to the RPF. While the Scientology organization may insist that adults in the RPF program are there willingly, it is difficult to imagine this justification (or excuse) applying to teens whose presumed ages would suggest that they should be under the care of parents or guardians.

A final indicator that teens are RPF inmates comes from a 1984 newspaper article published in the Clearwater Sun:

> The young man – by all appearances a teen-ager – crouched on the dark, narrow stairway as he scrubbed the sixth-floor landing in the former Fort Harrison Hotel, the 'flag Land Base' headquarters of the Church of Scientology.
>
> 'Are you in RPF?' queried a reporter.
>
> 'Sir?' he asked quietly, peering up from his work.
>
> 'Are you in RPF?'
>
> 'Yes sir I am.'
>
> RPF is the Rehabilitation Project Force (RPF), which, depending on who is speaking, is either a businessman's approach to improving an employee's lagging job performance or a form of punishment for Scientologists who are banished to serve penance for their misdeeds and 'bad thoughts.'

> Two others – adult men who, like the youth, were dressed in blue shorts and faded blue shirts – worked two floors below, also cleaning the stairs. They spoke not a word. Former Scientologists say that those in RPF 'are not to speak unless spoken to.'
>
> Those who have spent time in the RPF at the Fort Harrison tell a harrowing tale of long hours at work – as much as 100 hours a week – and of months of humiliation and mental abuse at the hands of other Scientologists.
>
> But their vivid recollections of hard work and abuse contradict current Church of Scientology statements that the RPF is 'an entirely voluntary' program (Shelor, 1984: 1B).

Of course we cannot be certain of the young inmate's age, but it appears that youth is no barrier to serving time in Scientology's forced labour and re-indoctrination program.

The Impact on Some Scientologists Who Saw the RPF in Operation

Three very revealing accounts exist by people who were Scientologists and had brief but disturbing encounters with RPF inmates. Their accounts provide some indications of the cumulative impact the brainwashing and confinement efforts had on the people who experienced them. One account was from former member Joe Cisar, who:

> stumbled into the RPF's RPF one time in the tunnels below the Cedars complex in L.A. There w[ere] about a dozen people who apparently had been sleeping in these tiny rooms. (There were a couple of blankets on the floor.) Both men and women [were down there]. A man was cutting a woman's pant leg with a knife while she was wearing the pants, and he had sliced her foot. Blood was running down her ankle onto her foot and was puddling on the floor. She looked up at me and gave me... what I would consider to be an insane smile and said, 'I caused my foot to be in the way of his knife.' Two or three of the people who were crouching and laying about on the floor looked up at me as if it were some kind of wonderful joke. I backed out the way I came in. One of Scientology's big promotion schemes is to tell people that they need to be 'at cause.' These people weren't at cause over anything[. T]hey had degenerated back to the Middle Ages.
>
> That's what I knew about the RPF when the Scientology ethics officer told me to report down there for indefinite duty. I told her [that] they could get me down there, but I'd put several of them in the hospital first, and reminded her that I was a Viet Nam veteran. I was one of the few Sea Org members who had managed to hang onto [his or her] car, and I left that night (Cisar, 1997: 3).

One wonders what would have happened to Cisar had he not seen the conditions of these inmates prior to his own RPF assignment.

A second glimpse into L.A.'s RPF comes in the story of former member Moira Hutchinson, who did kitchen duty in order to finance her studies at the Cedars complex. Consequently, she saw the RPF inmates come in for meals, about which she wrote:

> They would come in to eat after everyone else had left. I found this deeply disturbing. Everyone was dressed in dark blue overalls[. T]hey did not walk[;] they shuffled with their heads always bowed low, and no one would utter a word.
>
> I became pretty close with an officer in the ASHO [American Saint Hill Organization] whose husband was on the RPF. I remember her telling me, very excitedly, that she was to be allowed to share her half-hour meal breaks with her husband. When she told me this, she had not seen him for a year (Hutchinson, 1997: 6).

Although brief, this account is in keeping with what others have said about the RPF program. She even claims that, under false circumstances, she was sent to the East Grinstead facility in England and "was kept there for a whole week so that I could complete a program very similar to the RPF where I had to write down all of my transgressions committed against the church and carry out menial physical duties" (Hutchinson, 1997: 2, see 5).

The third dramatic glimpse into RPF life came from Ann Bailey, who was involved in moving Scientology into its newly acquired former hospital (called the Cedars Sinai complex) in the summer of 1978. After the move, which taxed her physical endurance, she found herself assigned to guard the secret, upper level doctrinal (Operating Thetan or OT) documents that were in a room without a door. They were in the former hospital's old morgue, and she sat there for hours amidst the lingering "smell of death and chemicals and dissection" (Bailey, n. d.: 60). Then:

> [s]uddenly during the third hour I was aware of shadows in the corridor beyond me. [T]hey were people. Slowly I realized that an entire group of people lived and worked down there. I was so tired [that] it took me a long time to realize who they were. Then it hit me. [They were t]he Cedars RPF. They lived and worked down in this stinkhole. This was their Org. Then I really found out what had happened to them. Filthy, tired, skeletons appeared before me and started begging to see the OT folders. I thought I looked bad, but I looked beautiful compared to them. They crowded around me pushing and shoving, then the mood turned ugly. They started hitting each other to get into the room behind me. I realized what had happened. They had been totally broken. They were animals, not humans. I saw four of my friends, one a Class Nine OT, fighting to get by me. They were punching each other in the face, pulling hair, kicking. And way down in this cellar no one could hear them, no one cared.

> Someone suddenly hit me hard. I realized [that] they were turning their anger on me[. T]hey would beat me up to get the folders. I guess in periods of deep stress we all go a little insane – [s]urvival of the fittest. From somewhere in my tired brain, strength came. I stood up with all my TR's [i.e., Scientology communication drills] as in as they had ever been, [and] all my training on control of groups came back. 'Friends,' I said. 'Believe me, I am your friend. By some strange fate I am not with you on the RPF. But believe me if you don't get out of here right now, I know [that] you will be punished. Go now before it's too late.' And they ran away into the dark. When I sat down I was trembling all over. Because the real intent of my message had been for them to get out of the hospital. Leave Cedars. But I don't think any of them got the message (Bailey, n. d.: 61-62).

She was out of Sea Org in a week.

Brainwashing as a Practice in Scientology and a Concept in Sociology

Taken together, the effect of these actions and pressures on people who experience them can be profound. In environments where the Scientology organization and its leadership attain (in many circumstances) totalistic control over RPF inmates, researchers should expect to see a high degree of conformity among recent RPF graduates. Certainly Monica Pignotti was correct when she concluded that "[t]he lesson we were to learn on the RPF was to obey orders without question, regardless of how we felt about it or who was giving the orders" (Pignotti, 1989: 23). Pat's conclusion was even crisper when she answered that the RPF's purpose was "just re-indoctrination – just to break you down" (Kent Interview with Pat, 1997b: 5). I go one step further and add that the final intent of the RPF was (and is) to re-mold people into the closed ideology of Scientology, where members identify their goals and their strategies with those of the organization. Working in conjunction with forced confinement and various forms of physical and social maltreatment, the intensive study of ideology combines with obligatory confessions to severely weaken people's own moral structures and the values that represent them. When successful, therefore, Scientology's brainwashing leads people to accept the moral code and ideational model of founder L. Ron Hubbard. As Gerry Armstrong realized, people on the RPF necessarily "bec[a]me so compliant that they thanked their punishers for the punishment, and wrote... success stor[ies] (to be used against them in the future if they ever realize [that] they had been abused and sought redress for that abuse)" (Armstrong in Young, 1997: 5). Indeed, writing such a story was a prerequisite for completing the RPF program.

The implications of this study are modest yet significant for the social sciences but much greater for contemporary political and legal discussions. Social scientists need to acknowledge that at least one contemporary ideological organization utilizes brainwashing in an attempt to retain its members. While this study cannot answer crucial questions about the long term implications for people who have been through this particular brainwashing program (compare Schein, 1961: 284), no doubt exists that

Scientology's founder gave considerable thought to brainwashing techniques and imposed them on those of his followers whom he believed were harbouring thoughts or performing actions against him or the organization. The "brainwashing" term, therefore, has validity within some social science discourse.

POSTSCRIPT

The RPF and Scientology's Hollywood Stars

Social implications exist concerning the findings of this study, specifically for one of America's largest and most profitable industries–entertainment. Scientology boasts about the Hollywood stars who are proud to be members and who often serve as spokespersons for various Scientology causes. It seems likely, however, that inmates working in RPF programs built or renovated facilities that some of the Scientology movie stars use, including the renovation of the Celebrity Center in Los Angeles (SB, 1998d: 2). (Scientologist "SB" claims to have met both Tom Cruise and Lisa Marie Presley while working as an RPFer on these renovations [SB, 1998a: 2; 1998d: 2].) Equally serious is the probability that at least some of these prominent stars know, or ought to know, about the abusive RPF program but have not spoken out against it.

The March 5, 1994 affidavit by former Scientologist Andre Tabayoyon was especially damaging to the reputation of Scientology celebrities, since it outlined the extent to which RPF labour built or renovated facilities that they used at Scientology's Hemet, California base. Reputed facilities included a movie theatre, apartment cottages ("built for the use of John Travolta, Kirstie Alley, Edgar Winters [sic: Winter], Priscilla Presley and other Scientology celebrities" [A. Tabayoyon, 1994: 23 para. 120]), "Tom Cruise's personal and exclusive apartment," and an elaborate gym in which Tom Cruise worked out (A. Tabayoyon, 1994: 23-24, paras. 117, 120-122). (For the organization's part, Scientologist and lawyer, Kendrick Moxon, disputed Tabayoyon's claims that "'inmates' or 'slave labor'" operated on the Hemet property, and he asserted that "[n]o special apartments or facilities were ever built on the Church's property for the exclusive use of Tom Cruise or any other celebrity..." [Moxon, 1994: 4] In a 1993 interview, Cruise stated, "[i]n the last two years or so, I only remember going to the Gilman Hot Springs location once, for a day and a half" [Cruise, 1993]). While Tabayoyon acknowledged that Scientology celebrities "are carefully prevented from finding out the real truth about the Scientology organization" (A. Tabayoyon, 1994: 23, para. 120), they are acting irresponsibly if they do not inquire into the probable human rights issues (especially related to labour) involved with the people who constructed and/or maintain the exclusive Scientology facilities to which they have access. Indeed, the only indication researchers have that any movie star has enquired about RPFers is Mary Tabayoyon's conclusion that Scientology officials let her and others out of the RPF (after she had been in it for a year) because Tom Cruise's questions "about the group during one of his visits to Gilman Hot Springs... prompted the higher-ups to reassign them to regular posts" (Thurston, 1999: A2). We do not know what Cruise asked or even how Mary Tabayoyon knows that he did, but her husband's conclusions nevertheless ring true about how Cruise presumably benefits from RPF labour when

he stays at the Gilman Hot Springs complex: "[u]sing RPFers to renovate and reconstruct Tom Cruise's personal and exclusive apartment at the Scientology Gold base is equivalent to the use of slave labor for Tom Cruise's benefit" (A. Tabayoyon, 1994: 24, para. 120).

The fact that Cruise probably queried about RPF workers suggests that it may not always be possible to shelter the movie stars from the harsh realities of the RPF world. Remembering back to late 1977, Jesse Prince spoke about an encounter between Travolta and RPF members. Travolta's hit movie, Saturday Night Fever, just had been released, so someone with contacts to Travolta and his office arranged for a private showing of it to the RPFers as a reward for all of the hard work that they had performed. Moreover, the RPFers were supposed to meet Travolta himself:

> And he came to us, being all wonderful and great and grandiose.... I will never forget the look on his face when he saw us. We must've looked like something from one of those prison camps, one of the German prison camps, because he looked at us and... he was utterly unable to speak. He just stood there. He was supposed to talk to us, and tell us all this shit, and he literally stood there in horror (Kent Interview with Prince, 1998: 25).

Despite what must have been a disturbing encounter with RPFers, Travolta continues to serve as an official public relations officer for the Scientology organization.

Even one of Hollywood's newer faces – Juliette Lewis (b. June 21, 1973) – may know about the RPF, and if she does, then says nothing about it. Her alleged knowledge of the program stems from the fact that her step-mother seems to have served time in it. This information came from the (now former) high-ranking Scientologist, Jesse Prince, who (during one period while he was assigned to the RPF) reportedly drove busloads of children (including the young Lewis) to the Cedars Sinai complex in order for them to see parents who were in the RPF (Kent Interview with Prince, 1994: 44-45). If Prince's account is accurate, then she must have some idea about the harshness of the RPF program, if only because she experienced many of the restrictions that the program imposed upon a person who (at the time) was a member of her own family.

If these allegations are true, then they likely will provide impetus for German boycotts of the movies in which Scientology stars perform, like the unsuccessful attempt In August, 1996 by the youth wing of the Christian Democratic Union to organize a boycott of Tom Cruise's movie, Mission Impossible (see Demick, 1996). Certainly the boycott attempt occurred long after information about the RPF was in the German press, but I cannot determine whether the effort's organizers knew about the allegation that RPF forced labour built and maintained some of Cruise's recreational facilities. Presumably the United States Department of State's press spokesperson, Nicholas Burns, did not know of the allegations when, during an official briefing, he criticized the boycott effort and praised Cruise and his film:

> ...[W]e note the call by a youth wing of one of the major [German] political parties for a boycott of the film, 'Mission Impossible,' because its star, Tom Cruise, is a Scientologist. We here in the State Department

> gave that [movie] four stars, two thumbs up. We think it's a good movie. We would encourage Germans to watch it, and we don't think it's proper to see that movie banned anywhere in the world. It's a good product of Hollywood – American cinema (United States Department of State, 1997: 5).

The Bavarian State Minister of the Interior, however, Dr. Gunther Beckstein, knew of the allegations in early 1997, since he referred to the Andre Tabayoyon affidavit in an impassioned response to thirty-four Hollywood 'personalities' (many of whom had connections with Cruise [see Spieler7, 1997]) who criticized Germany's opposition to Scientology.

In a letter published in the International Herald Tribune in early January, 1997, these entertainment leaders "drew a parallel between efforts to boycott performances by actors and musicians who are Scientologists to the book-burnings staged by the Nazis in the 1930s. It urged [Chancellor Helmut] Kohl 'to bring an end to this shameful pattern of organized persecution'" (Drozdiak, 1997). Beckstein blasted back:

> 'The Hollywood VIPs who criticized the Federal Republic of Germany's stance position against Scientology in an "open letter", would be better off expressing their outrage at the inhumane practices taking place in Scientology's own penal colonies.... All they need to do is look a little more carefully in the greater Los Angeles region.' Former members of Scientology report that the camps, known as the Rehabilitation Project Force, are for leading Scientologists who do not perform as the organization wishes. One Vietnam veteran [i.e., Andre Tabayoyon] stated that the brainwashing and punitive methods used in these camps were reminiscent of those practiced by the Vietcong and the Chinese during the Vietnam War (Beckstein quoted in the Bavarian State Ministry of the Interior, 1997).

German politicians such as Beckstein who oppose Scientology's quest for religious standing are well versed in the existence of the RPF programs, and they are aware that the program still exists (Hessische Allgemeine, 1997). They also have little patience for ill-informed American meddlers into German governmental and social affairs.

RPF and American Law Enforcement

Beckstein's challenge to American entertainers and their business associates – that they look within their own borders for human rights abuses before criticizing a German situation that they do not understand – also has a message for the American law enforcement community. Undoubtedly the waiver or release that many RPFers sign before entering makes American police agencies reluctant to intervene, and it is impossible to know how many former or escaped inmates lodge formal police complaints. Moreover, the Deputy District Attorney for the Gilman Hot Springs area, Alina Freer, did not find any evidence that people were being held against their will when she viewed the Happy Valley facility (although researchers know nothing about the amount of warning that Scientology might have had about her visit [Thurston, 1999:

A2]). Nevertheless, on at least three occasions, police may have failed to take advantage of crucial intervention or investigative opportunities. In one instance around the summer of 1977, "a guy named Bill" reportedly "climbed that barbed wire fence [around the new L.A. headquarters], got chewed up by the dogs, and actually got away." As Jesse Prince related, Bill returned with the police to get his things, and when he arrived he was met with, "I don't know, ten attorneys, dressed impeccably, there to explain it all away." He picked up a small sack of clothes, and left – without any law enforcement intervention against the RPF program (Kent Interview with Prince, 1998: 25-26).

More dramatically, Prince recounted that he was asleep in the RPF "in a place where there was no light... because there was no electricity" when the FBI raided Scientology's Los Angeles building in 1977. Agents came into the area with flashlights shining and guns drawn, and (as Prince stated), "[t]hey woke me up from my sleep with a gun at my head" (Kent Interview with Prince, 1998: 24). No one, however, asked (or begged) to leave with the agents, but Prince insisted that "[w]e were pretty numb," suffering from malnutrition and psychological assault (Kent Interview with Prince, 1998: 24). Besides, the FBI's search warrant was for documents, not inmates.

Finally, some months after I undertook my initial study of the RPF, I grew sufficiently alarmed at what I was learning that (in mid-April, 1997) I mailed information about the program to an agent in the Violent Crimes and Major Offenders Office of the FBI in Washington, D.C. (Kent, 1997a). I never received even an acknowledgement of receipt, so in 1999 I followed up with a letter to the FBI's Chief of Staff, Agent Robert Bucknam (Kent, 1999b). Once again I received no answer, nor have I ever received a reply to a letter about the RPF that I sent to a member of the United States Congress, Representative Mary Bono (Kent, 1999c).

The RPF and Human Rights Issues

Contrary to the judgements of some social scientists, the brainwashing term has validity in the discourse of politics and legal debates, in this case about human rights. Without question the RPFs' operations violate a number of human rights statutes, which the United Nations proclaimed in both its 1948 resolution entitled The International Bill of Human Rights (United Nations, 1996b), and its 1996 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (United Nations, 1996a).

First, Scientology's procedures involving committees of evidence, sec checking, gang bang sec checking, and the two RPF programs almost certainly violate Articles 9 and 10 of the Bill. Article 9 protects people against "arbitrary arrest, detention or exile" while article 10 guarantees "a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his [sic] rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him" (United Nations, 1996b: 23).

Second, Scientology's invasive probing into people's thoughts through sec checking and obligatory confessions almost certainly violate Articles 18 and 19 of the Bill that deal with both "the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion" and "the right to freedom of opinion and expression" United Nations, 1996b: 25).

Third, the various Scientology practices and procedures that restrict communication by RPF inmates probably violate Article 17 of the Bill, which states that "[n]o one shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on his honour and reputation" (United Nations, 1996b: 49).

Fourth, the conditions of the RPF and the RPF's RPF almost certainly violate Article 7 of the Covenant, which discusses "the right of everyone to the enjoyment of just and favourable conditions of work..." (United Nations, 1996a: 38). The article specifically identifies fair wages, "[a] decent living for themselves and their families..., [s]afe and healthy working conditions..., and [r]est, leisure, and reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay...." (United Nations, 1996a: 38). Indeed, many Sea Org jobs themselves may not meet these reasonable standards of propriety, safety, and fairness.

Fifth and finally, the extreme social psychological assaults and forced confessions that RPF and RPF's RPF inmates suffer almost certainly violate Article 12 of the Covenant, which recognizes "the right of everyone to enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health" (United Nations, 1996a: 18).

These and probably other serious human rights issues swirl around Scientology programs that have tax exemption and operate within the boundaries of the United States. With these serious issues in mind, the American human rights criticism of Germany's opposition to Scientology is the height of diplomatic arrogance. By granting Scientology tax exemption, the United States government is cooperating with an organization that appears to put citizens from around the world at significant mental health and medical risk (see Kent,1996: 30-33). The human rights issues become even more significant with awareness that children and teenagers have been in various RPF programs, and still appear to be so.

ENDNOTES

1. Begun in 1967, the Sea Org is comprised of members who have signed billion year contracts with the Scientology organization, but (more realistically) work for years doing "whatever their assigned task may be in the furtherance of the objectives of Scientology." Often these tasks are related to the "delivery of the most advanced levels of Scientology" (Church of Scientology International, 1992: 360).

2. Uninformed consent means that people who agreed to enter programs did not know either about the techniques that they would undergo or about the demands under which they would live and work. In a phrase, people who give uninformed consent do not know what they are getting into.

3. Interestingly, Dick Anthony consulted for Scientology on this case, yet even after the legal decision he continued to deny the social scientific utility of brainwashing in the context of Scientology (see Anthony and Robbins, 1992: 6n.1).

4. The earlier footage shows someone in an RPF "uniform" (i.e., long-legged black work-trousers, a short-sleeved black "T" shirt) working in a corner on the roof of Scientology's Office Of Special Affairs building, with two other workers (probably on the Estates Project Force [EPF], judging by their clothing) working not far away. A strong possibility exists that the RPF inmate was on the RPF's RPF (which I will discuss) and is being guarded by the two EPF members. The August 1998 footage shows what appear to be RPF people (wearing blue "T" shirts with black bands around their right biceps and either knee-length or long black trousers) working on the back of a Scientology building, with some additional people running from place-to-place as RPFers are required to do.

5. Some of these indicators are unusual phrases such as "pain- drug-hypnotism" (Hubbard [probable author], 1955: 33 and "P.D.H., or Pain-Drug-Hypnosis" (Hubbard [probable author], 1955: 37, 39. This phrase does not appear in standard English language dictionaries, but it is in one of Hubbard's Scientology dictionaries (Hubbard, 1975: 296). Other direct indicators that Hubbard wrote the brainwashing manual include its: attack on psychiatry, discussions of hypnotism, and the "stimulus-response" pattern in conditioning (Hubbard [probable author], 1955: 35; Hubbard, 1975: 407, etc.). The most telling indicator, however, of Hubbard's authorship is the fact that one version mentions Dianetics in the text while another replaces the "Dianetics" mention with "Church of Scientology." The (presumably earlier) Dianetics mention was as follows: "The psychopolitical operative should also spare no expense in smashing out of existence, by whatever means, any actual healing group, such as that of acupuncture, in China; such as Christian Science, Dianetics and faith healing in the United States; such as Catholicism in Italy and Spain; and the practical psychological groups of England" (Hubbard [probable author], n.d.: 49). "Dianetics and faith healing" is replaced by the "Church of Scientology" in (Hubbard [probable author], 1955: 49.

6. Apparently researchers received copies of Hubbard's correspondence with the FBI through Freedom of Information inquiries, since I have a photocopy of a letter (dated December 16, 1955) that Hubbard sent to the FBI in Washington, D.C. along with a

copy of the "brainwashing/psychopolitics" booklet. He concluded his letter by saying, "[s]hould you run into this manual on how to brainwash people you will now be able to recognize it as printed and distributed by an anti-Communist group for their [sic] research."

7. I remain unclear about the extent to which the RPF was Hubbard's brainchild. Hana Whitfield, for example, insists that Hubbard did not merely authorize the RPF's creation – he created it himself. As she related to me by e-mail, "In January, 1974, I was head of AVU, the Authority and Verification Unit, on board the [Scientology flagship] Apollo. Kenneth Urquhart, LRH Personal Communicator, came to my office carrying screeds of hand-written pages. He handed them to me and said [that] they were several Flag Orders, authored by Hubbard and dictated to Ken. Hubbard had had an accident and could not write or type. Ken told me to read them, [and] let him know my opinion, then send them to Mimeo for publication and distribution. He said he needed a witness if questions ever arose as to why he had written them over Hubbard's name. I was horrified by their content; the first one established the FLAG RPF onboard. It was given the number 3434 in Mimeo" (Whitfield, 1998: 2). Another person, however, who was informed about Hubbard's inner circle, indicated that Urquhart designed the RPF after Hubbard instructed him to handle people on the ship who "were not pulling their weight" (Kent interview with Ernesto, 1997: 2). It may be that these two accounts are compatible. Perhaps Urquhart designed the initial RPF design, gave it to Hubbard, and Hubbard dictated back to him a final version that Urquhart showed to Whitfield.

8. The normal Sea Org stipend rate was $17.50 a week in the early 1970s (Kent Interview with Fern, 1987: 10) and reportedly was about $30.00 a month in the 1990 (Harrington, 1997a). It may have increased to $50.00 a week in 1993 or 1994 (Harrington, 1997b), although exact amounts may vary according to the organization's net income, one's job, the "ethics" level of people, and possible commissions that some positions can earn (NUKEWASTER, 1997).

9. According to former Sea Org member, Hana Whitfield, routing out of the RPF involved several obligatory steps. First, the person wanting to leave was isolated from other RPF members, presumably so that the person could not 'infect' others with the desire to exit. The person ate separately, and sometimes even slept away from the other RPFers. Second, this person remained under constant guard. Third, the person routing out had to pass security checks to the satisfaction of technical superiors in the RPF along with other Scientologists of rank. Consequently, as higher ranking Scientologists send back questions that they wanted the person to answer, security checks sometimes extended over days. On any day, a security check session could have extended for up to ten hours (with quick bathroom and food breaks). Fourth, as the RPFer was undergoing these 'routing out' procedures, RPFers in good standing went through the person's auditing files and culled all examples of crimes, transgressions, or misdeeds. Fifth, these examples (combined with information revealed in the security checks) became an attachment to a long waiver that the person had to sign that supposedly absolved Scientology and its leaders from any future legal action against it for things that might have happened to the person while he or she was a member. Sixth, after signing the waiver and list of crimes and misdeeds, a guard allowed the person to

gather up personal effects and then escorted him or her off Sea Org premises. I thank Hana Whitfield for this information (Whitfield, 1998: 1-2).

10. The range of options is extremely limited for those Sea Org members who supposedly have a choice about entering the RPF. If they refuse to enter the RPF after being assigned to it, then they will be expelled from Scientology, labelled "insane" and an enemy of the organization, and banned from Scientology courses and auditing forever. They also may be presented with a bill (called a "freeloader's bill) for all of the courses that they took without having to pay because of their Sea Org status. This information comes from a number of sources. I own a photocopy of a "Rehabilitation Project Force RPF Waiver" (which does not contain any other identifying information), and "it is the policy of the Church of Scientology to dismiss or expel" anyone who quits the program. Hubbard discussed a "freeloader" in one of his standard dictionaries (Hubbard, 1976b: 225). Hubbard's definitions of "insane," "insane acts," and "insanity" dovetail with the stated reasons that the he used to make RPF assignments (see Hubbard, 1976b: 281-282; 441).

11. A 1961 policy that Scientology reprinted in 1976 stated that a person about to administer a sec check should tell the target individual, "[w]hile we cannot guarantee you that matters revealed in this check will be held forever secret, we can promise you faithfully that no part of it nor any answer you make here will be given to the police or state" (Hubbard, 1961: 276). Use of the E-meter as a de facto lie detector rather than a reputed religious device raises interesting issues about legality. An American District Court decision from 1971 (affirmed in 1973 [United States Court of Appeals, 1973]) indicated, "[t]he E-meter should not be sold to any person or used in any counseling of any person except pursuant to a written contract, signed by the purchaser or counselee, which includes, among other things, a prominent notification as specified immediately above" (United States District Court, 1971: 365). Reference to the earlier "prominent notification" was the requirement that the E-meter was to "bear a prominent, clearly visible notice warning that any person using it for auditing or counseling or any kind is forbidden by law to represent that there is any medical or scientific basis for believing or asserting that the device is useful in the diagnosis, treatment or prevention of any disease" (United States District Court, 1971: 364). It remains an open question, therefore, about the legality of Scientology using it outside of "priest/penitent confidentiality" as a de facto, scientifically sound lie detector.

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