

Degrees of Embellishment: Scientology, L. Ron Hubbard, and His Civil Engineering Credentials Fraud

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ABSTRACT: This article enters the debate about credibility issues related to (alleged) professional qualifications earned by the founder of Dianetics and Scientology, L. Ron Hubbard. For years, many critical commentators accepted the conclusion that Hubbard falsely claimed to have been a Civil Engineer—a claim often associated with another false claim, that he had a Bachelor of Science degree in engineering or a related field. Recently, however, American religious scholar J. Gordon Melton inspired independent scholar Ian Camacho to re-examine the Civil Engineering credentials issue. In doing so, Camacho concluded that publishers and others within Dianetics and Scientology circles (and occasionally persons outside of those circles)—but not Hubbard himself—were responsible for Civil Engineering credentials claims around Hubbard. In any case, however, Hubbard had enough practical experience and very limited educational training to warrant the professional designation, especially in an era when professional standards still were in flux. In response, I argue that Hubbard deliberately deceived his followers and the public about having a Civil Engineering degree, likely motivated by some combination of status deprivation, probable narcissism, and/or marketing needs around the supposedly scientific nature of his ideological creations. While I commend Camacho for the scope of his research, I re-examine and refute major claims that he made about authorship and deception, and by doing so I reassert the previous position (held by many investigators) that Hubbard was involved in fraud around Civil Engineering credentials.

KEYWORDS: Dianetics, Scientology, L. Ron Hubbard, Religious Fraud, L. Ron Hubbard's Civil Engineering Credentials.

Introduction

In an article published in *The Journal of CESNUR* in July/August 2018, independent scholar Ian Camacho made two sets of claims (Camacho 2018) to which I pay special attention here. First and foremost was his claim about L. Ron

Hubbard's relationship with a credentials attribution that appeared in various biographies and biographical statements about him. Many of these biographies and statements represented that Hubbard was a PhD (written in various sources as Ph.D., PH.D., or PhD.) and civil engineer (C.E.), but Camacho's research led him to conclude that Hubbard himself never actually made these claims—only his acolytes and publishers did.

As a profession:

Civil engineers conceive, design, build, supervise, operate, construct and maintain infrastructure projects and systems in the public and private sector, including roads, buildings, tunnels, dams, bridges, and systems for water supply and sewage treatment. Many civil engineers work in planning, design, construction, research, and education (Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor 2019).

If Hubbard had been a civil engineer, then presumably he would have had professional training in one or more of these areas.

Second, Camacho criticized, by name, several prominent journalists, scholars, and researchers who (in his opinion) had been either dishonest or incompetent when they had written (incorrectly, he believed) that Hubbard in fact had made these claims. The people he named were Gerald “Gerry” Armstrong; Jon Atack; Dorthé Refslund Christensen; Paulette Cooper; Kjersti Hellesøy; L. Ron Hubbard, Jr.; Stephen A. Kent; Jodi Lane; George Malko; Russell Miller; Hugh Urban, and Lawrence Wright (Camacho 2018, 29). Added to this list of researchers who accepted that Hubbard had lied about being a civil engineer are Kevin Anderson, Q.C., who wrote a report on Scientology for the Australian government, and reporters Richard Whitehead and Peter Younghusband. In his 1965 report, Anderson indicated that Hubbard used “the letters ‘B.S.’ and ‘C.E.’, intending to convey the impression that he has so graduated. In fact, he has no such qualification” (Anderson 1965, 40). Whitehead and Younghusband reported that George Washington University [GWU] “says he was there from autumn 1930 to spring 1932 and has never received any degree whatsoever in civil engineering, nuclear physics, or any other subject” (Whitehead and Younghusband, 1966). Both Camacho's evaluation of these previous researchers and his research-based conclusions provide me with opportunities to reflect upon the research process itself, and in doing so I offer caution to researchers whose hubris may lead them to believe that their conclusions are final, definitive statements—the truth—on any research question.

I could not have written an article of this length and complexity without the help of numerous people, to whom I express my thanks and appreciation. Some of them include: Gerry Armstrong, Jon Atack, Chuck Beatty, and Victor Lillo for providing me with useful materials and concepts; Susan Raine and Victor Lillo for editing; George Washington University archivists in the Gelman Library, Shelly Buring, Brigitte Kamsler, and Vakil Smallen; and Karen Hallett of the University of Alberta Library Interlibrary Loans department for helping me obtain several sources. Special thanks go to several former Scientologists who wish to remain anonymous, and especially George Shaw and Louise, the latter two people who provided me with extraordinary levels of support and material.

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The Ephemeral Nature of Research Accomplishments

In this response to Camacho's research conclusions concerning Hubbard's identification as a civil engineer, I in no way diminish them by referring to observations concerning the ephemeral nature of research accomplishments made by a foundational figure in sociology, Max Weber (1864–1920). These observations refer as much to my own research and publications as they do to Camacho's. They appeared in a speech that Weber delivered at Munich University over a hundred years ago. Reflecting on the topic, "Science as a Vocation," Weber reminded his audience how self-reflective scientists view their work, their achievements, and their careers:

In science, each of us knows that what he has accomplished will be antiquated in ten, twenty, fifty years. That is the fate to which science is subjected; it is the *meaning* of scientific work, to which it is devoted in a quite specific sense, as compared with other spheres of culture for which in general the same holds. Every scientific 'fulfilment' raises new 'questions'; it *asks* to be 'surpassed' and outdated. Whoever wishes to serve science has to resign himself to this fact. Scientific works certainly can last as 'gratifications' because of their artistic quality, or they may remain important as a means of training. Yet they will be surpassed scientifically—let that be repeated—for it is our common fate and, more, our common goal. We cannot work without hoping that others will advance

further than we have. In principle, this progress goes on *ad infinitum* (Weber 1918, 138 [italics in original]).

I will omit discussing the irony that serious researchers still quote this essay a century after Weber delivered it (suggesting, perhaps, that *some* science [or at least, some reflections on it]) continues indefinitely into the future. Much if not most research, however, will be overshadowed and surpassed.

Writing more recently about progress in scientific theories, Stephen Cole indicated, “since so many theories which were once thought to represent truth, are now seen as incorrect, there is no reason to believe that what we currently see as truth will not later be seen as incorrect” (Cole 2001, 39). Now, it may be overstated to imply that Camacho undertook scientific (rather than historical) work on an aspect of Hubbard’s biography, but he did imply that his findings were the culmination of truth. As the title of his first article indicated, the scholars whose work he criticized had “degrees of truth”—Scientology critics and scholars had identified Hubbard as (falsely) claiming that he was a PhD and civil engineer, but his own findings were the truth about these issues. The truth that he believed he had uncovered was that the civil engineering credentials-claims were “transcription errors” that had evolved into “misattribution of authorship” (Camacho 2018, 28). As, however, Max Weber, Stephen Cole, and others have realized, “truth” uncovered in the research process can be ephemeral.

A similar path unfolds for historians as well as professional researchers in the social and natural sciences partly because of the nature of evidence that historians must use. While not wishing to enter into a discussion about all of the research data that historians muster, commonly used data sources are primary material that often is housed in archives/collections and (if informed parties are still alive) personal contacts (interviews, correspondence, etc.). Camacho used both. He reported that he communicated with archivists, editors, and other researchers, but (often from these people) most of his material came from archival collections (yet not from the Scientology organization itself, whose officials seem to have been uncooperative).

Scouring through his sources for the first of two articles about Hubbard’s civil engineering credentials, Camacho did not find any which convinced him that Hubbard directly stated that he was a civil engineer. He realized that Hubbard had done fairly well in a 1930 civil engineering class (earning a ‘B’) at GWU (Camacho 2018, 32), and that the civil engineering designation (C.E). appeared

on the author's page of several Scientology books (often next to an additional credentials claim that Hubbard had a PhD). He was unable to find, however, any document, book, lecture, or publication which convinced him that Hubbard himself made the civil engineering claim. Camacho checked publications by three academics, three investigative writers/reporters, and six independent scholars and researchers on Scientology, and saw that all of them "accepted the critics' argument that Hubbard and the Church of Scientology intentionally lied about his grades, graduation and civil engineering degree" (Camacho 2018, 29). They did so "in order to portray [Hubbard] as fraudulent" (Camacho 2018, 28). None of them, however, indicated that Hubbard himself apparently never had made these claims, or so Camacho concluded.

In his second article about Hubbard's civil engineering credentials (Camacho 2019), Camacho's conclusions about them was more nuanced. I do not know why his interpretation of the validity of Hubbard's credentials became more nuanced, but it may have been affected by email exchanges with two of the people whom he had criticized in the first article: Jon Atack and Gerry Armstrong (Armstrong 2019a; 2019b):

This paper does not take the position that Hubbard graduated from college with a civil engineer degree, but rather due to his various surveying experiences, civil engineering affiliations, recognition as such by various military and private organizations and the lack of clear licensing laws, the C.E. title was not baseless. Despite this, he did not state that he had a degree or graduated, let alone had good grades, only that he had participated in several survey projects during his short stay at George Washington University—and had not included the other surveying experiences.

To argue that Hubbard lacked any formal training would be inaccurate as he received training in college toward his declared degree and during his period in the United States Navy. Conversely, to argue that he was an official civil engineer, let alone one with a Bachelor of Science degree, would also be incorrect as he did not complete his schooling nor hold proper engineering licenses. One could argue that he knew just enough about civil engineering to be effective when using it and convinced others that he was capable (Camacho 2019, 161).

In this second article, therefore, Camacho accepted that Hubbard was not "an official engineer," did not have any formal engineering or science degree, nor any official engineering license. Apparently, therefore, his civil engineering designation was self-appointed, reinforced by "others" who saw "that he was capable" regarding civil engineering skills (Camacho 2019, 161).

In response to Camacho’s interpretive and evidentiary conclusions about Hubbard’s civil engineering claims, I provide counter interpretations to them. Specifically, I argue that: Hubbard *had* stated that he had “graduated from college with a civil engineer degree” (contrary to Camacho 2019, 160) and that his “surveying experiences” (Camacho 2019, 160) are poorly documented, with little evidence that “he knew just enough about civil engineering to be effective when using it and to convince others that he was capable” (Camacho 2019, 161). Moreover, to the extent that “various military and private organizations” recognized him as a civil engineer, some of that recognition stemmed from his own embellished statements about his professional training. Finally, and crucially, in an area when (according to Camacho), clear licensing laws were lacking, Hubbard avoided the clearest route to earning professional recognition—a university engineering degree. I was among critics who had agreed that Hubbard had committed credentials fraud about being a civil engineer, and what I present in this study reinforces that position.

In rejecting the position that I and others held, which was that Hubbard’s civil engineering claims were fraudulent, Camacho could have stated that we had reached that conclusion simply by relying upon the facts that we had available at the time. After all, “progress in science, as in other institutions, must be a time-specific concept” (Cole 2001, 39). This perspective is in line with an understanding of “normal science” (but also applies to the discipline of history) in which “new and unsuspected phenomena are . . . repeatedly uncovered by scientific research, and radical new theories have again and again been invented by scientists” (Kuhn 2012, 52). Unless researchers know or at least suspect that vital new information exists, then they either may never find it or may stumble across it by accident.

Camacho’s research was catalyzed by statements made about Hubbard’s credentials by American religious interpreter, J. Gordon Melton (Camacho 2018, 29). In essence, Melton offered that Hubbard’s followers (“the church”), not Hubbard himself, were responsible for the credential’s claims (Camacho 2018, 29):

Hubbard claimed to base [Scientology’s] religious conclusions upon systematic, ordered, observation (i.e., research) on the underlying structure of reality. Through the twentieth century, for example, yoga teachers have been most notable for making similar ‘scientific’ claims. In such cases, including Hubbard’s, college degrees are ultimately

unnecessary, though any experiences or formal training possessed by teachers have been cited as one element contributing to their eventual enlightenment.

In fact, Hubbard never claimed the kind of formal academic credentials which the average scientist or physician possesses, nor did he claim to have done the kind of formal research which would typify standard scientific inquiry in physics or chemistry. Also he made no attempt to publish his research in any recognized scientific journal. His research consisted of the many hours of auditing different people, of his own self-examination, and periods of reflection (Melton 2000, 58; see Camacho 2018, 45).

Camacho did not scrutinize these claims, but if he had, then he may have asked more questions about Melton's scholarly rigor concerning Hubbard, his credentials, and his claims about the scientific basis of Scientology.

For example, Camacho accepted Melton's assertions about Hubbard never claiming to have undertaken "formal research," even though such claims existed in the earliest literature about Dianetics, and then carried over into Scientology. In, for example, a 1950 article that Hubbard published on "the mind," he announced,

[c]linical tests have shown that when shock is Dianetically removed immediately after an injury, the rate of healing is enormously accelerated, so much so that burns have healed in a few hours. Malaria and various fevers, when their peak effects are Dianetically removed, improve with great speed (Hubbard 1950c, 4).

Writing over a decade later about Dianetics's successor, Hubbard boasted that "Scientology is today the only successfully validated psychotherapy in the world. Tens of thousands of completely documented cases exist in the files of the Hubbard Association of Scientologists International... It is a precision science. It is the first precision science in the field of the humanities" (Hubbard 1961f, 196; 1961g, 294). Earlier, in 1956, the "Editor" of *Scientology: The Fundamentals of Thought* (who likely was Hubbard himself), answered the question, "Is Scientology Valid?" by replying:

Tens of thousands of case histories (reports on patients, individual records) all sworn to (attested before public officials) are in the possession of the organizations of Scientology. No other subject on earth except physics and chemistry has had such grueling testing (proofs, exact findings) (Hubbard 1956a, 10).

These statements embodied Hubbard's claims that, indeed, Scientology was based upon formal, validated, scientific research.

Whatever 'results' this 'research' apparently produced, Hubbard and an associate failed to convince leading members of both medical and psychiatric

communities of its scientific value. In late 1949 or 1950, a medical doctor and associate of Hubbard, J.A. [Joseph Augustus] Winter (1910–1955), sent manuscripts about Dianetics to two top medical journals, mentioning specifically that, for one of them, he included “case histories” directly from Hubbard himself:

A paper, using the terminology of Greek derivation, and giving a brief resumé of the principles and methodology of dianetic therapy, was prepared and submitted informally to one of the editors of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. The editor informed me that the paper as written did not contain sufficient evidence of efficacy to be acceptable and was, moreover, better suited to one of the journals which dealt with psychotherapy. A revision of this paper, together with some case histories given me by Hubbard, was submitted to the *American Journal of Psychiatry*; it was refused, again on the grounds of insufficient evidence (Winter 1951, 18).

It is incorrect, therefore, to say that Hubbard “made no attempt to publish his research in any recognized scientific journal” (Melton 2000, 59). Hubbard and an associate *had* tried, but editors from two prestigious journals had rejected the submissions because they contained insufficient evidence about their techniques’ healing claims. Melton simply was wrong about Hubbard’s disinterest in scientific recognition for Dianetics and Scientology techniques, and (I argue) he was additionally incorrect about Hubbard’s supposed disinterest in formal, academic and/or professional degrees.

Melton continued his discussion about the issue of Hubbard’s credentials, laying out a position that Camacho would expand upon in his own work:

It is the case that some biographical sketches of Hubbard published by the Church of Scientology contained mistakes and implied credentials for Hubbard which he did not possess (and had never claimed). In its most recent publication, it has moved to correct those errors (Melton 2000, 75 n. 6).

According, therefore, to Melton’s statements, Hubbard had not misrepresented his credentials; presumably overzealous or poorly researching followers within Scientology were responsible for any and all instances of credentials-misrepresentation.

Camacho, therefore, undertook his examination of one credentials issue—involving what appeared to have been Hubbard’s claim that he was a civil engineer (C.E.). Specifically, Camacho searched for any primary Hubbard documents in which the Scientology leader made such a claim. Nothing was unusual about this undertaking. He had found a puzzle: whose position was right about Hubbard’s credentials claims—numerous writers who were critical of Hubbard, or J. Gordon

Melton? Puzzle-solving is standard fare for researchers, seen as “that special category of problems that can serve to test the ingenuity of skill in solution” (Kuhn 1970, 36). However much new ingenuity might play in puzzle-solving, modern researchers understand the sentiment expressed by Sir Isaac Newton’s (1643–1727) famous phrase, “If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants” (see Merton 1965). Camacho, however, seems not to have held this sentiment, since comments about previous Hubbard-researchers suggested that he did not see himself standing on their shoulders but rather stepping on their toes.

This interpretation—that Camacho was scornful of a dozen previous researchers—appears in several comments that he made. He referred to their “incomplete and biased research” (Camacho 2018, 28), which they used “in order to portray [Hubbard] as fraudulent” (Camacho 2018, 28). While he offered that, “to their credit, these critics have addressed discrepancies in the Church of Scientology’s early promotional information about Hubbard,” he immediately added, “where their criticism became dishonest, however, was in evaluating prior to having all the data, rather than trying to seek and understand discrepancy causes” (Camacho 2018, 29). Critics and writers cited each other, and (pointed out Camacho), co-authors Jodi Lane and Stephen A. Kent used Hubbard biographer Russell Miller’s “claims regarding these discrepancies as the basis for diagnosing Hubbard with narcissistic personality disorder” (Camacho 2018, 34). Returning later to the issue of Lane and Kent’s sources, Camacho complained that “Kent [*sic*], however, made the same error as [Paulette] Cooper and [Gerald] Armstrong because Hubbard admitted that he had no degrees in his lectures, [and] he also never claimed to in any of his books” (Camacho 2018, 45).

At the end of his article, Camacho backed away from his earlier allegation about previous researchers’ dishonesty, only to cast an aspersion on their competence. In a somewhat awkward turn of phrase, he concluded,

With this new information, one can better view the evolution of errors over the various series instead of attributing them to dishonesty, which only underscores [Hubbard’s] close friend Robert Heinlein’s (1907–1988) famous razor: ‘Never attribute to malice that which is adequately explained by incompetence’” (Camacho 2018, 54).

Surely, the inclusion of the term “degrees of truth,” in the article’s title was a tilt towards its philosophical meaning of “vagueness” or “fuzziness,” and if it were,

then it would have been the kindest thing he said about his predecessors' research.

The editor (Massimo Introvigne) of the journal in which Camacho published his findings celebrated them as a blow against Scientology's secular critics and Russian Orthodox foes:

Ian Camacho, an independent scholar, in what should be saluted as a scholarly tour de force, dissects a fake news about the founder of Scientology, L. Ron Hubbard (1911–1986), who has been consistently, but falsely, accused of lying about his supposed academic degree in Engineering, including by scholars who should have known better. This would seem a typical *secular* criticism of Hubbard. Yet, it has been used by Russian anti-cultists associated with the Saint Irenaeus of Lyons Center, who merely *claim* to be secular but are in fact part of an armed wing of the most reactionary faction of the Russian Orthodox Church (Introvigne 2018, 6 [italics in original]).

Introvigne repeated this pronouncement in a session honoring Melton at 2019 conference of the American Academy of Religion in Denver, Colorado.

Such derisive opinions, however, of previous scholars' research about Hubbard's credentials prove to have been premature. As happens routinely in science and research, one of Camacho's foundational claims is overturned. Hubbard in fact *had* stated (erroneously, as I show below) that he was a civil engineer (and doing so in a manner which implied that he had some sort of degree in the profession), often in the context of also stating that he had a university PhD (failing to mention that the granting body of this honorary degree [Sequoia University] was not accredited [Smith 2009]). While I certainly realize that future researchers likely will shine additional light on the issue of Hubbard's self-presentation, the new evidence that I am about to present (along with old evidence that I re-introduce) establishes his deception and reinforces previous (critical) scholarship about it.

Background to Hubbard's Degrees

In the first edition of *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health*, Hubbard proclaimed, “the creation of dianetics is a milestone for Man comparable to his discovery of fire and superior to his inventions of the wheel and arch” (Hubbard 1950b, ix). Hyperbolic as the statement was, early practitioners of Dianetics, then Scientology, did believe in the historically original and

scientifically revolutionary importance of Hubbard's work, coupled with the transformative power of their techniques applied to people's lives. In 1952, for example, during a business meeting of Dianetic auditors, a leading figure in the movement, Don G. Purcell (1907–1959), extolled:

In many medical cases Dianetics works better than medicine. In psychotic cases Dianetics works better than psychoanalysis. In many other kinds of human problems Dianetics works better than the presently accepted methods. It is just a question of time until the knowledge is conveyed to the public and public confidence is built for Dianetics. From a financial viewpoint, not to mention the humanitarian viewpoint, I think that Dianetics is potentially one of the greatest things that has ever been discovered (Don Purcell, in *Hubbard Dianetic Foundation* 1952, 162).

Other early practitioners went further, announcing,

Dianetics has come of age in Scientology, and nothing in man's history has approached the magnitude of this practical structure of knowingness [*sic*] (John Noyga and Helen O'Brien, quoted in O'Brien 1966, 59).

Possessing this supposedly extraordinary knowledge, Dianeticists and Scientologists felt entitled to recognition commensurate with their (self-asserted) intellectual and scientific achievements. They had no doubts that their discoveries equaled, indeed surpassed, those taught in colleges and universities, but those institutions did not recognize them or even (with very rare exceptions) teach their techniques. (I note, but do not attempt to verify, a fulsome statement attributed to Hubbard “that the Virginia Medical Institute is treating 30 per cent of its cases with dianetics; that ‘the Missouri State Institution’ is doing most of its work with dianetics, and that Pierce’s General Hospital in Beaumont, Texas, won’t permit a doctor to operate in the place unless he and everybody around him is firmly grounded in dianetics” [Hubbard, quoted in Hyman 1950]). Moreover, Hubbard had a credentials problem, never having graduated from a higher education institution, and having failed university courses in analytical geometry, German, differential calculus, and molecular and atomic physics (see Camacho 2018, 32). His university transcript indicates that his faculty had placed him “on probation for deficiency in scholarship September 1931” (see Hubbard’s transcript, reproduced in Camacho 2018, 32).

In response to these early issues around credentials, Hubbard's response was threefold. First, he embellished and outright lied about his academic training in civil engineering. Second, he successfully attempted to get individuals and organizations to accept his credentials claims, using those accepted claims to

elevate his status among the public, various outside organizations, and adherents to the two organizations—Dianetics and Scientology—that he founded. Third, Hubbard used his fraudulent civil engineering claims in efforts to market Scientology as a viable and reputable scientific, medical, religious, and/or mental health system.

Hubbard's Civil Engineering Claims

The primary purpose of Camacho's first article about Hubbard was to argue that people around Hubbard (his book publishers, followers who wrote brief biographies about him, etc.) were responsible for credentials-claims that he was a civil engineer, not Hubbard himself. We gain insight, however, into the debate around the responsibility for these claims by taking a wide and long view of Hubbard's association with civil engineering, some of which Camacho also did.

Biographer Russell Miller provided important background. In September 1930, Hubbard "was admitted as a freshman to the School of Engineering at George Washington University, with a major in civil engineering—a discipline suggested by his father" (Miller 1987, 47). Actually, Miller may have understated the role that the father played in the son's selection of a major, since (in a 1952 lecture) Hubbard informed his audience that:

My father, a naval officer, decreed that I would study engineering and mathematics and so I found myself obediently studying the physical sciences at George Washington University in Washington, D.C. A course called 'Atomic and Molecular Phenomena' had been instituted there. Today we call it Nuclear Physics. I was fortunate enough to be an early student of that subject in what I believe was the first course in nuclear physics formally taught in the United States (Hubbard 1952a, 4).

Note that two of his father's directed areas of study (engineering and mathematics) appear later in Hubbard's life as areas in which biographies stated (incorrectly) that he had either degrees or advanced academic training. Moreover, the class in "Atomic and Molecular Phenomena" (precisely, "modern physical phenomena; molecular and atomic physics," which he failed) was *not* the same as a course in nuclear physics—a specialization that developed rapidly after the major discovery of the neutron later in 1932, after Hubbard's course was over. While research that provided bases for the area of nuclear physics had gone on throughout the early twentieth century (if not before), the defining discovery of

the neutron in 1932 was a benchmark that many physicists use to identify the beginning of that field. (See the discussions in Weiner, assisted by Hart [eds.] 1972, 7–9, 251–52, cf. 12–3). This discovery seems to have taken place in the summer of 1932 (Weiner, assisted by Hart [eds.] 1972, 9), well after Hubbard had failed his course.

Miller added that “he was photographed for *The Cherry Tree*, the university yearbook, standing in the back row of the student chapter of the American Society of Civil Engineers” (Miller 1987, 47). Different sources say that Hubbard either dropped out (see Camacho 2018, 54) or flunked out of the university, but whatever happened, he left with bad grades after the second semester that ended in 1932 (see Miller 1987, 57). In any case, for the one civil engineering course (which he took in the second half of the 1930–1931 semester), he earned a “B” (on a scale that ranked “A” as highest and “F” as lowest [see Camacho 2018, 32]). (As an interesting aside, an intern in Scientology’s spying and intelligence division of the Guardian’s Office [see Atack 1990, 226–35] compiled a list of documents [in 1975] that its agents stole from American government files, and in U.S. Army records found something which stated that, in June 1932, “LRH was allegedly cropped from George Washington U. for academic failure.” The intern had entitled his findings, “Time Track of Earliest and Craziest Documents in Government Files” [Zerovnik 1975, 1]).

Despite his overall dismal performance as a student, Hubbard wrote a romanticized account of what life was like as someone who was studying “atomic and molecular phenomena,” which he claimed that, by the 1950s, was called “Nuclear Physics:”

We were the ‘Buck Rogers’ boys, named after a fictional character in the comic books who went romping off to mars [sic] and Venus on no provocation. And indeed, our knowledge of the material universe was for many years of little more value to us than what we cared to write in fiction publications. Man did not believe in nuclear fission. He had never heard of atomic bombs and really didn’t want to hear about them. Until that terrible day when Hiroshima went up in a radioactive cloud, nuclear physics remained a ‘Buck Rogers’ activity (Hubbard 1952a, 4).

Hubbard offered this statement in a February 6, 1952 address that he presented in Wichita, Kansas, glossing over that fact that he had failed his physics class and failed to return to university after a second year of dismal grades, but he discussed his image as a Buck Rogers boy later in a 1957 book in an even more misleading way (as I discuss soon).

Worth mentioning, too, is that in the same public address in 1952, Hubbard referred to himself as an engineer—one of many self-appointed, arrogated, engineering designations. Early in his presentation, he attempted to use modesty as a literary vehicle to elevate his own self-importance, which included mention of his (false) engineering credential:

I wish to announce tonight what may be the successful accomplishment of the knowledge and skills necessary to alter the basic nature of Man and to announce that a series of experiments but recently concluded seem to demonstrate that the savage and criminal instincts of Man can be eradicated, permitting him to attain at last a civilized culture in its true sense. And I wish to announce that this evidently can be done on the individual in less than twenty-five hours with a security of results which I believe have not before been attained.

This announcement is made in all humility and in understanding that it has far-reaching effects. And I do not wish to over-estimate this accomplishment or my role in it, nor do I wish to understate the possible impact of these discoveries upon society. It may be that Man would not welcome such a change. It may be that these discoveries announced tonight may lie a score of years neglected for I am not a Messiah nor an evangelist but only an American Engineer who interested himself in the problems of the human mind and humanity and whatever I have done must be completed by others than myself (Hubbard 1952a, 1 [capitalization in original]).

It may not be a coincidence that his claim to be an engineer gives credence to his report that, recently (presumably), he and others had concluded “a series of experiments” upon which his announcement was based. Camacho (2018, 34) made passing criticism of an article published by Jodi Lane and Stephen A. Kent (2008), which argued that Hubbard demonstrated characteristics of narcissism, but passages such as this one seemingly reinforce that argument (see Freckelton 2016, 36; 2018, 416, 431–32). After all, he claimed to have discovered and developed “the knowledge and skills necessary to alter the basic nature of Man.”

Regardless of whatever retrospective interpretation Hubbard had of his time in the engineering program at GWU, he was quite involved in its social life (see Miller 1987, 48–51). (I am unable to verify Melton’s statement that, at university, Hubbard “led a varied social life that included singing and script-writing on the local radio station” [Melton 2000, 3]. GWU University Archivist, Brigitte Kamsler [who helped me on a number of topics], verified that the university’s radio station began operating in 1929, but records from that early period are very sparse. Moreover, other radio stations existed in the Washington, D.C. area). On April 1, 1931, the college’s newspaper, *The University Hatchet*,

reported that the glider club was attempting to reorganize, this time using “scientific methods of training and management.” Local glider pilots were offering to assist with training; the club had identified a particular glider model that the pilots would use for the training; club members were considering a glider purchase; and Hubbard was the contact person for anyone interesting in learning more (*University Hatchet* 1931a).

By April 29, 1931, Hubbard was one of six members of the George Washington Glider Club, another of whom was Arthur F. Johnson, Dean of the Engineering School (*University Hatchet* 1931b; for brief biographies, see: *Cherry Tree* 1931, 103; *George Washington University Bulletin, The Catalogue Issue* 1931, 14). (Johnson would play a role in Hubbard’s life some years later, as we shall see). By mid-May, we learn that Hubbard was president of the club, and he was “trying his hand at the art of making turns in the air.” With characteristic self-aggrandizing flair, Hubbard boasted that, “although it sounds easy, Ron says that [Albert] Einstein’s [1879–1955] theories are a ‘pipe’ [i.e., something easy] compared to the navigation of a motorless ship” (*University Hatchet* 1931c). Professor Johnson, too, was refining his skills, gleefully proclaiming, “he has never had so much fun in his life” as he has had during his twenty flights (*University Hatchet* 1931c). By July 22, Johnson (who appears just to have been the Acting Dean of Engineering in 1931–1932 [*George Washington Bulletin, The Catalogue Issue* 1931, 14]), Hubbard, and another club member (Ray Heimburger [1911–2007], all of whom were from the School of Engineering), received glider pilots’ licenses by the Aeronautic Branch of the Department of Commerce (*University Hatchet* 1931d; for a picture of Hubbard and Heimburger, see: *Cherry Tree* 1931, 110). He still was president in late November 1931 (*University Hatchet* 1931g), after the club had changed its name to The Buzzards (*University Hatchet* 1931f).

In his final semester in university, Hubbard was on the organizing committee for the engineer’s [*sic*] ball—a gala affair for 500 members of the Engineering School, their friends, and their guests (*University Hatchet* 1932a). Then, shortly before he departed the institution, he “was appointed president of the George Washington student chapter of the American Society of Civil Engineers,” having risen to that position from secretary (*University Hatchet* 1932c).

Clearly, Hubbard self-identified as an engineer, a designation reinforced by his service to the school's engineering community. Also clear, however, was that his extra-curricular activities—with the glider club, the engineer's gala ball, and the engineer society—were among the distractions that he undertook during periods in which he was underperforming in most classes. These social involvements may be the “civil engineering affiliations” and “private organizations” that, in Camacho's mind, helped validate Hubbard's self-appointed civil engineering designation [Camacho 2019, 160]). Since he only took one civil engineering course, these extra-curricular activities seem to have been a significant source of Hubbard's subsequent claims to be an engineer, but, ironically, were obvious impediments to his classroom performance. He was deeply involved with the social world of engineers at GWU, but not with the academics needed to obtain a professional credential. Serving in an engineering society and on an engineering social committee, and flying gliders with an engineering professor and classmates, could not substitute for the hard academic work needed to obtain a civil engineering degree. He had no right to put C.E. behind his name in books and other materials, as his classmates were able to do legitimately after earning it through rigorous academic performance and testing. Later, however, his extensive social activities while a college student paid off during the Second World War, thanks to Professor Johnson.

Also distracting Hubbard from his studies were his writing projects. Between March 4 and May 27, 1931, Hubbard appeared as one of the “senior reporters” on *The University Hatchet* newspaper (the 1931 issues of *The University Hatchet* in which Hubbard was listed among the “senior reporters” were: March 4; March 11, March 18; March 25, April 1; April 15; April 22; April 29; May 6; May 13; May 20; and May 27). In addition to being one of seventeen “senior reporters” for the March 25, 1931 edition, he also was one of two “Special Assistant Editors” for the newspaper's “Historical Supplement.” In 1932, Hubbard published two short stories in the newspaper's “Monthly Literary Review” section (Hubbard 1932a; 1932b), and in May of that year he was “the winner of the recent contest sponsored by the *Literary Supplement* of the *University Hatchet*, with his play, ‘The God Smiles’” (*University Hatchet* 1932d), which the newspaper published on May 24, 1932 (*The University Hatchet* article (1932d) that announced Hubbard's prize indicated that the play would appear in the May 17, 1932 issue, but it came out a week later on May 24 [Hubbard 1932c]). His

glider activities and his reporting had overlapped, since the first notice about the glider club stated that interested parties “may communicate with L. Ron Hubbard “in the *Hatchet* office” (*University Hatchet* 1931a). He simply was not studying nearly enough, while being involved in activities that kept him away from his books and classes.

While still a student (in the summer of 1931), Hubbard participated in a geological expedition to the border of Maine and Canada, about which he wrote five years later:

I have some very poor grade sheets which show that I studied to be a civil engineer in college.

Civil engineering seemed very handsome at the time. I met the lads in their Stetsons from Crabtown to Timbuktu and they seemed to lead a very colorful existence squinting into their transits. However, too late, I was sent up to Maine by the Geological Survey to find the lost Canadian Border. Much bitten by seven kinds of insects, gummed by the muck of swamps, fed on jonny cake and tarheel, I saw instantly that a civil engineer had to stay far too long in far too few places and so I rapidly forgot my calculus and slip stick and began to plot ways and means to avoid the continuance of my education. I decided on an expedition into the Caribbean (Hubbard 1935; see Anonymous 1996, 10; Miller 1987, 50).

After a second academically dismal school year in the 1931 to 1932 semesters, Hubbard succeeded at his avoidance.

Regarding possible meanings to terms that Hubbard used in describing the expedition, Crabtown probably referred to Baltimore, Maryland (because hard crabs from the Chesapeake Bay and nearby waters were a popular food); Timbuktu is an ancient city in Mali. Transits were telescope-like instruments that surveyors used to measure the height of distant objects or points. Jonny cake was a cornmeal pancake, and tarheel was a concoction of maple syrup and molasses. A slip stick was a device that uses a bubble to determine whether a surface is level, but the term also applied to a slide rule, which was a mathematical ruler with a sliding middle section, the numbers on which conducted mathematical calculations. The “expedition to the Caribbean” referred to Hubbard’s 1931 “Caribbean Motion Picture Expedition,” which Russell Miller concluded “had been a disaster” (Miller 1987, 54, see 52–7; also Atack 1990, 60–2).

After Hubbard’s final semester in the spring of 1932, the Caribbean expedition that he mentioned had taken place. During that semester—when

Hubbard would get a “D” in “integral calculus,” another “D” in “electricity and magnetism,” an “F” in “modern physical phenomena; molecular and atomic physics,” and a “B” in “the short story”—he was busy planning his Caribbean “movie cruise among old American piratical haunts” (*University Hatchet* 1932e, 1). We know that he planned this trip during the semester because *The University Hatchet* wrote a rather swashbuckling account of his expectations for it in its May 24, 1932 issue, which would have been around the end of the school year. Hubbard was to lead the cruise of some fifty men, accompanied by his engineering school and glider club friend, Ray Heimburger. With plans to conduct experiments in botany, biology, and entomology, the primary purpose of the trip was to film the men’s search for long-forgotten pirate haunts (*University Hatchet* 1932e). Alas, the trip proved to be a disaster (Atack 1990, 60–63; Miller 1987, 52–57), so it is unlikely that it convinced anyone “that he was capable” (Camacho 2019, 161). This was the same semester in which he served on the planning committee for the engineering faculty gala and was elected president of the students’ engineering society. He appears to have done very little studying, and his failing grades proved it. He certainly had not received appropriate training in civil engineering.

In 1939 (under the darkening cloud of war), Hubbard referred back to his university days in a letter to the War Department in Washington, D.C., written “to offer my services to my government in whatever capacity they might be of the greatest use” (Hubbard 1939, 1). In presenting his credentials to the War Department, he embellished his training by stating:

In 1932 I completed two years of civil engineering at George Washington University, leaving school to head the Caribbean Motion Picture Expedition and, thereafter, finding employment in the making of a mineralogical survey of Puerto Rico for a private company. Concurrent with this, discovering that a slide rule and a typewriter are not always compatible and being worn out with the mathematical agonies of the former, forsook engineering for the highly lucrative profession of writing which, second only to the military, has been paramount in my interests (Hubbard 1939, 1–2).

Despite his poor academic performance, Hubbard offered as a potential reference his old professorial friend from his glider days, “Professor Arthur Johnson, assistant dean of the GWU Engineering School” (Hubbard 1939, 2). (In the *George Washington University Bulletin*, 1929–1930 [1929, 156] and 1930–1931 [1930, 153], Arthur Frederick Johnson was the Chairman of The School of Engineering’s Executive Committee and on the “Active List.” In the *Catalogue*

covering 1931–1932, he was listed among the “staff of instruction” and on “The Dean’s Council” until 1934 [*George Washington University Bulletin, The Catalogue Issue* 1931, 169]. He remained in the “Staff of Instruction” list of 1932 *George Washington University Bulletin, The Catalogue Issue* [1932, 149]. With the help of a George Washington University Library archivist, Shelly Buring [personal communication, August 21, 2019], I determined that he still was among the professors of engineering in 1939 through 1940, which was the period in which Hubbard offered his name as a recommendation source). Likewise, he provided no specifics about the supposed mineralogical survey, and (years later) a search for evidence that it even occurred (much less produced any science) proved impossible to find (Atack 1990, 64; Miller 1987, 56–57). Recent research shows that Hubbard’s 1932 trip to Puerto Rico was an unsuccessful gold mining operation (Owen 2017) Worth highlighting, however, was a single paragraph in the letter, which foreshadowed what was to come in Hubbard’s life:

For the past five years I have been studying, to benefit my work, psychology and all human behavior and my notes on emotional reaction, which are of a pioneering character, are to be published this coming year (Hubbard 1939, 2).

Alas, they were not.

In 1941, Hubbard applied for a commission in the United States Naval Reserve (U. S. N. R)., for duty in Naval Intelligence (Johnson 1941). I have a photocopy of a recommendation letter that his old professorial acquaintance and glider enthusiast, Professor Arthur Johnson, wrote on his behalf. The short letter is worth reproducing in full, because it masterfully excuses Hubbard’s poor grades while praising aspects of his personality. Sent to Lt. Commander Gates, U. S. N. R. at Washington, D. C.’s Navy Yard, the letter read (Johnson 1941a; see Miller 1987, 93):

Dear Sir,

It is a pleasure to recommend Mr. Hubbard for a commission in the United States Naval Reserve for duty in Naval Intelligence.

While he studied engineering under me, he proved himself outstanding in leadership and activities.

He is experienced to an unusual degree, exceptionally alert and poised.

His success in writing prove [sic] his ingenuity and resourcefulness.

He has a fine personality which should make him a credit to Naval service.

These statements are made on the basis of my intimate acquaintance with him.

His average grades in engineering were due the [sic] obvious fact that he had started in the wrong career. They do not reflect his great ability.

Please call upon me for any additional information by which I may convince you of his unusual capability and worthiness of a commission.

Yours very cordially,
[signed] Arthur F. Johnson, Ph.D.,
Professor

Hubbard's application probably was the reason that George Washington University issued a copy of Hubbard's transcript to Lt. Commander Gates on April 24, 1941 (Lerma 2019) (note that the transcript Camacho [2018, 32] produced appears to be more complete than the ones on the Internet from Hubbard's Navy records, since it includes a Spring session 1931 grade of "B" in a civil engineering course on "Materials of Construction." This grade seems to have been cut off on various Internet copies). A few issues, however, arise from Johnson's recommendation, and they are worth noting.

First, we cannot be certain what Johnson meant by saying that Hubbard "studied engineering under me," because Johnson was (in 1932) "head of the department of mechanical engineering" (*The University Hatchet* 1932b, 1). Now, Hubbard had taken a full-year Mechanical Engineering course ("Mechanical Drawing; Descriptive Geometry") in the 1930–31 semester, earning a "B" in the first term and a "C" in the second. Johnson had co-taught that course with Max Allen Lett (*George Washington Bulletin The Catalogue Issue* 1931, 314), but Hubbard took his one civil engineering course with John Raymond Lapham in the Summer School session of 1931 (Summer Sessions, *The George Washington University Bulletin* 1931, 46), earning a "B" (for a brief biography of Lapham, see *Cherry Tree* 1931, 103; see Hubbard's description of the course in Camacho 2018, 43).

Second, Johnson remembered Hubbard's extensive involvement with social activities involving the engineering and glider communities, to which he most assuredly was alluding when he said that Hubbard "proved himself outstanding in leadership and activities." Third, Johnson mentioned Hubbard's penchant for writing, using it to "prove his ingenuity and resourcefulness." Finally, Johnson commented that Hubbard was "experienced to an unusual degree," which was

true. By the time that Hubbard entered university, he had traveled (in varying amounts of time) in parts of the United States, Guam, Hawaii, Japan, China, and the Philippines (Atack 1990, 53–4; Miller 1987, 23, 29). Again, however, what seemed to have impressed Johnson, and which formed the basis of his comments, were Hubbard’s skills in writing, “leadership and activities,” not engineering. If Johnson were to have been “convinced” that Hubbard “was capable” (Camacho 2019) regarding civil engineering skills, he did not indicate this opinion in his letter.

Hubbard’s statement to the War Department in 1939 embellished his education by saying that he had completed two years of civil engineering, while not mentioning that he had failed four courses, received two “E”s in other courses, and six “D”s in still more. Nevertheless, Hubbard was assigned to the Navy’s Hydrographic Office, Bureau of Navigation in 1941, as indicated in two documents that Camacho reproduced (Camacho 2019, 161). Hydrology is the study of fluid movement and storage, and a specialty within engineering is dedicated to it.

Hydraulic Engineering deals with the technical challenges involved with water infrastructure and sewerage design ... [including] the design of water storage and transport facilities.... Machinery which uses hydraulic power is also designed by Engineers in this discipline. Daily activities include designing structural elements that can withstand intense pressures” (Marshall, 2013).

Presumably, this appointment supported Camacho’s claim that “various military and private organizations” had recognized him as a civil engineer. Close examination, however, of the document reveals that he was there only as a “temporary active duty assignment,” which lasted two weeks (September 22 to October 6, 1941). While there, we have no idea what his assignments or jobs were. Later in his Navy career, he applied to the Chief of Naval Personnel for an appointment to the School of Military Government, claiming in part that he was “[e]ducated as a civil engineer” (Hubbard 1944). One year earlier in 1943, however, there appeared what may be Hubbard’s earliest false credentials claim in print about being a civil engineer, years before Dianetics and Scientology.

In the May, 1943 edition of *Who’s Who Monthly Supplement*, which was a “biographical reference service,” the entry for Hubbard contained the (false) credential that he had a “B.S. in Civil Engineering., George Washington U.,

1932” (*Who’s Who Monthly Supplement*, 1943, 90). Camacho was unaware of this 1943 entry, having stated incorrectly in his article:

The 1944 first edition of *Who’s Who in the East*, however, not only had the earliest published public biography of L. Ron Hubbard, but it was also the only version to show him having attended George Washington University from 1930–32 without having graduated.... If Hubbard did submit information to the publishers as his son [L. Ron Hubbard, Jr., a.k.a. Ronald DeWolf] and [Paulette] Cooper have claimed, then Hubbard did so correctly and honestly at the very outset, which directly disproved both of their contingent statements that he lied (Camacho 2018, 39).

As we pointed out, however, at the beginning of this essay, “facts” and “the truth” built upon them change within the sciences and humanities as new research uncovers previously unknown data. An uncovering of new data has occurred here, and it seems to turn Camacho’s argument on its head.

It appears, therefore, that the earliest public biographical account of Hubbard was in 1943, not 1944—a finding that itself would be overturned if someone produces an earlier one. We are unaware, however, of any such account. Simply on the issues of Hubbard’s credentials, this 1943 biography contained at least three errors: he had a Bachelor of Science degree (he did not); it was from George Washington University (he had no degree from that institution); and he received it in 1932 (which is when he quit or failed out of that university with a dismal academic record). With these facts in mind, Camacho’s criticism of Paulette Cooper’s and L. Ron Hubbard Jr.’s claim about Hubbard having provided dishonest information to publishers “at the very onset” is reversed. This evidence seems highly likely to *prove* their claim that Hubbard lied about his civil engineering degree when he first provided autobiographical material for a public biographical book entry about prominent people.

Another implication of the existence of the 1943 biographical statement with its false information is that it seemingly undercuts Camacho’s speculative conclusion that a typist or clerk working for the company that produced biographies had made a “clerical error in 1945” (Camacho 2018, 49), which confused persons writing subsequent entries. This speculation, however, misrepresents what a “clerical error” actually is—a typographical mistake (such as hitting a wrong key), misreading a date on an original document, incorrectly assuming a spelling for a name, etc. These mistakes are errors of copying or editing. The mistakes about Hubbard’s credentials, however, were factual errors in which typists or other staff accurately reproduced statements that they thought

were true. In this situation, using the term, clerical error” is “an excuse to deflect blame away from specific individuals, such as high-powered executives, and instead redirect it to the more anonymous clerical staff” (Definitions 2019). The term, “clerical error,” deflects blame away from Hubbard. The false information in the 1943 entry had to come from Hubbard himself, since he did not have an organization of acolytes around him, as he would after the appearance of *Dianetics* in 1950.

The same inaccurate information about receiving a “B.S. in Civil Engineering George Washington U., 1934” appeared in the 1959 edition of *Who’s Who in the South and Southwest* (Marquis—Who’s Who 1959, 395). This entry is important in a discussion about Hubbard’s probable and willful participation in the perpetuation of a false civil engineering credential because of the way that the publication provided and edited the information in each entry:

Each man or woman so recorded as a Marquis-listed biographee, has been considered by the editors to come under the appropriate selective standards, and invited by them to supply biographical data; as to assure these data revisionary scrutiny periodically. It follows that status as a Marquis biographee is established by so cooperating with the Editors in enlarging the available store of revised-to-date American biographical data, and *not* by the available incidence of publication of individual data (Marquis—Who’s Who 1959, 6 [italics in original]).

Camacho focused on the information-gathering methods for the 1946 publication, *Biographical Encyclopedia of the World*, in order to introduce the possibility that “governments” and “other publishers” rather than Hubbard may have provided inaccurate information about Hubbard’s civil engineering degree claim (Camacho 2018, 40–41), but, for the 1959 biographical entry to which both Hubbard and Scientology referred, the available evidence indicates that biographees cooperated with the publication regarding the content of the entries about them.

Put simply, Hubbard very likely had provided the editors of the publication with autobiographical data, but the data about having a civil engineering degree was fraudulent. Nevertheless, the Scientology organization used this book entry as an independent source to establish Hubbard’s credentials, as we will see (below) in a moment. The inaccurate credentials claim that Hubbard was “[e]ducated at George Washington University, Washington, D.C., B.S. in civil

engineering, 1934” appeared as late as 1981 in book of entries about twentieth-century science-fiction writers (Brennan 1981, 274).

Claims about Hubbard being a civil engineer seemingly increased in frequency as he began formulating what would become Dianetics, then Scientology. We see, for example, this engineering claim in a letter that medical doctor Joseph Winter received from science fiction writer and editor, John W. Campbell, Jr. (1910–1971) about Hubbard. Campbell told Winter that Hubbard “‘has been doing some psychological research.... He’s gotten important results.... He’s not a professional psychoanalyst or psychiatrist.... [H]e’s basically an engineer” (Campbell, quoted in Winter 1951, 3: see Camacho 2019, 159).

In Hubbard’s 1951 book, *Science of Survival*, he quoted a definition of Dianetics from a *Funk and Wagnalls New Standard Dictionary*, Supplement No. 5, which referred to the term itself and its doctrines as having been “‘introduced by L. Ron Hubbard, American engineer” (quoted in Hubbard 1951, ix). Likewise, a 1952 book published by Englishman Derricke Ridgway and copyrighted by Hubbard, also claimed to reproduce the dictionary definition, but (as Camacho [2018, 46] stated) actually altered it to embellish Hubbard’s credentials. The dictionary definition simply had said that Dianetics was the “term and doctrines introduced by L. Ron Hubbard, American engineer” (Funk [ed.] 1951, Supplementary Word List [1565]). The definition in *Self-Analysis in Dianetics*, however, claimed that the “term and doctrines” had been introduced by “L. Ron Hubbard, C.E., D.Sc., American Engineer” (Hubbard 1952c, Frontpiece). One must suspect that either the author of the book (i.e., Hubbard) or the publisher (Ridgway) performed the alteration. (Camacho strongly suggested that Ridgway had done it [Camacho 2018, 46–48], but did not provide definitive evidence). As an interesting aside, the 1959 edition of *Funk and Wagnalls New Practical Standard Dictionary of the English Language* [1959, 624] had a different definition of dianetics. It was “an extra scientific system likening the brain to a computing machine and holding that engrams which cause mental illnesses can be eradicated by psychotherapy.” It may be no accident that the definitional alteration took place in a British (rather than an American) Scientology publication, because the dictionary upon which the alteration was based was an easily and widely accessible book in the United States and likely would have been discovered quickly.

Additional engineering claims soon followed. In the public sphere, Hubbard was convincing “others that he was capable” (Camacho 2019, 161) as an engineer, even if he lacked any professional certification and claimed experience in the field that was unverifiable. In essence, people were convinced that he was capable when in fact he seems not to have been. This dictionary quote exemplifies the value of getting a fraudulent claim accepted by a major, respected public publication: henceforth, fraudsters and/or their agents can establish the liars’ claims by citing respected “outside” sources.

The utility for a fraudster of having fraudulent credentials reproduced in a public source was behind Hubbard’s obvious frustration with an interviewing reporter from Australia (in Scientology’s Saint Hill Manor on January 10, 1963) who (before the interview) had not read the 1959 *Who’s Who in the South and Southwest* entry. That entry, of course, incorrectly stated that Hubbard had received a B. S. (Bachelor of Science) degree in civil engineering from George Washington University in 1934. Camacho reproduced part of the interview, then used that section to show that Hubbard did not claim to have a civil engineering degree. I, however, have a very different interpretation of that section, which I support with an additional section of the interview that Camacho did not provide to readers of his article.

Camacho (2019, 150) identified the reporter as Alan Trengrove (1929–2016), and he found the transcript of the interview on the anti-Scientology website, “Why We Protest.” Initially, the Founding Church of Scientology had distributed it as a “News Release” on November 30, 1963. Camacho quoted Hubbard as telling Trengrove, “Well, I studied in the East when I was a young man and later on took up Civil Engineering and Nuclear Physics at George Washington University” (Hubbard, in Founding Church of Scientology 1963, 6; see Camacho 2019, 152). Camacho followed by reproducing a long extract from pages eleven and twelve of the transcript, from which he concluded that “Hubbard was not referring to having a Ph.D. in C.E. let alone a B.S. in C.E.” (Camacho 2019, 153). Here is the key section:

Rep[orter]: They [i.e., his editors?] said you have a C.E. What’s that? You use that?

LRH: Civil Engineer.

Rep: Civil Engineer. At which University was this, I think it was Princeton, wasn’t it? Is this a University degree?

LRH: CE means Civil Engineer, State-side, that’s all.

Rep: Where did you get that?

LRH: I just told you G.W.

Rep: G.W. Oh, George Washington [University].

LRH: Don't know where *Who's Who* is. You can get all this data out of *Who's Who*. So, what are you doing? Didn't you prepare your story?

Rep: Well, no I didn't I'm afraid. [...]

Reporter: As far as I'm concerned, I've never seen this, but they've asked me what is the Ph.D. Where is it and what form does it take.

LRH: [...] If you want to go and look in *Who's Who in the Southwest Division* [sic] why you'll find all my degrees and pertinences and clubs and everything else. [...] Here we have ...

Rep: What book is that?

L. Ron Hubbard: *Who's Who*. Here we are, Hubbard, Lafayette Ronald. That's A.F. Marquis Company, division of Who's Who (Founding Church of Scientology 1963; in Camacho 2019, 152–53).

In the exchange, Hubbard clearly implied (some would even say, stated) to the reporter that he received a Civil Engineering degree from George Washington University. He could have stated unequivocally that he did not have a degree in Civil Engineering, but instead he went for a copy of *Who's Who In the South and Southwest*, in which, he stated, “you'll find all my degrees . . .” (Hubbard in Founding Church of Scientology 1963; quoted in Camacho 2019, 152). One of those alleged degrees was a B.S. in Civil Engineering from George Washington University in 1934. The last section from the transcript that Camacho quoted had Hubbard showing the reporter the entry about him in *Who's Who*.

What Camacho omitted from the transcript was that, in the middle of the interview, Hubbard called his secretary and instructed the person to direct an assistant to bring him a copy of the *Who's Who in the South and Southwest* book. He wanted to show the reporter a public, respected source which stated that he was a civil engineer with a university degree. As a defensive strategy, therefore, Hubbard then could dodge questions about his professional accreditation by referring the reporter to a book with an article in it about him, which included “all my degrees and pertinences” (Hubbard in Founding Church of Scientology 1963, 12). When showing the biographical entry about himself to the reporter, he did not correct the false civil engineering credential. With that information in print, Hubbard avoided further, perhaps more precise, questions about his civil

engineering degree. Rather than this section of the transcript showing, as Camacho claimed, that Hubbard did not misrepresent having a civil engineering degree, it is clear to me that it shows Hubbard lying about it. The Founding Church of Scientology then extended this civil engineering lie to recipients of the news release about the interview by including a copy of *Who's Who in the South and Southwest* biography as an addendum (Founding Church of Scientology 1963, Addendum b).

Throughout the 1950s, at least eight Scientology-published books had “L. Ron Hubbard, C.E., Ph.D.” on either the covers or in other front matter (Hubbard 1950 [1955]; 1952b; 1952c; 1953a; 1953b; 1956b; 1956c; 1957a, 39 [removed in 1957b]). The second (1953) edition, for example, of a book first published earlier that year, *Scientology 8-8008*, announced, “the work contained in this book is the result of 25 years’ investigation of electronics as they apply to knowledge and human thinking by L. Ron Hubbard, C.E., Ph.D., an American nuclear physicist” (Hubbard 1953a, Foreword). The third edition of the book (published in January 1956) repeated these same claims (Hubbard, 1953b). To clarify a small point here, the 1950 [1955] booklet that I have is *Scientology: The Evolution of a Science*, which says that it was “First Published May, 1950.” In 1950, however, Scientology did not exist. Clearly, the booklet’s title and content were a reworking of “Dianetics: The Evolution of a Science,” by L. Ron Hubbard [Hubbard 1950a]. “Written in early 1950[it] was published first as a magazine article in May, 1950 and published as a book in September 1955 by the Hubbard Dianetic Research Foundation, Phoenix, Arizona” [Hubbard (based on the Works of) 1978, 288]. In the 1950 magazine article, Hubbard explained his interest in the brain’s operations thusly:

My right to enter this field was an inquiring brain which had been trained in mathematics and engineering and which had memory bank full of questions and far-flung observations.

It was the basic contention that the human mind was a problem of engineering and that all knowledge would surrender to an engineering approach [Hubbard 1950a, 47]).

This section re-appeared in the later, re-named version (Hubbard 1950 [1955], 7). It suggests that, in the early 1950s, Hubbard wanted people to believe that he had mathematical and engineering credentials because he claimed that he based his brain research (i.e., Dianetics) on their principles.

The Ph.D. and C.E. identifications in these books, however, did not prove to Camacho that Hubbard (rather than his followers or publishers) made them, even though Hubbard (not his followers or publishers) owned the copyrights to all of them. (Did Camacho assume that publishers in the 1950s did not send page proofs for editing to authors prior to publication?) As late as a fifth printing (in 1965) of a volume first printed in 1956, the biographical statement reported (incorrectly) as fact that Hubbard “graduated from George Washington University with a B.S. degree in civil engineering—among the first to undertake formal study of nuclear physics. He studied government at Princeton and took his PhD. at Sequoia University” (in Hubbard 1956b, “About the Author”).

A statement about Hubbard’s educational record, published around 1956, contained at least a smidgen of truth when it indicated that he “was admitted into the school of engineering of G.W. Never noted for being in class, he yet scraped through the department of higher mathematics, and the department of engineering” (*Certainty* circa 1956, 3). Based upon Hubbard’s abysmal grades and either withdrawal or removal from the university, it certainly was true that he was “never noted for being in class.”

The deception occurred into and beyond the next decade. In 1968, a one-page biography in *Scientology The Field Staff Member Magazine* falsely stated:

with the death of his grandfather, Hubbard, 19 years of age, was brought home by his father to study at the George Washington University in Washington, D.C. He graduated in Mathematics and Engineering from Columbian College to become a member of the first United States course in formal education in what is called today nuclear physics (Hubbard 1968, 7).

It continued into the 1970s, in “A Brief Biography of L. Ron Hubbard,” re-published in *PRO News* from a document originally from circa 1960: “B.S. in Civil Engineering, George Washington U., 1934” (*PRO News* 1970, [1]; see *PRO News* circa 1960). Nearly four years later, a *Flag Divisional Directive* falsely stated, that in 1930, he “enrolled at George Washington University Engineering School in the fall,” and then “[i]n 1932, L. Ron Hubbard graduated from Columbia College at George Washington University and continued writing that never let up” (Goldstein 1974, 2). If these statements were true, then Hubbard would have earned an undergraduate degree in just two years—half the time taken by most students.

Perhaps an initial statement of false credentials about Hubbard being a civil engineer could trace back to a zealous or misinformed book printer or publisher. The fact, however, that this falsehood appeared in various Scientology sources published over a nine-year period indicates that it was not simply a repeated mistake by ill-informed Scientologists. Hubbard saw these credentials claims but did nothing to correct them. Moreover, the location of the “C.E.” abbreviation following Hubbard’s name and before his Ph.D. assertion indicates that Hubbard made it as if it were a professional credential that he had earned. He had not, however, done so. The claims were fraudulent.

Writing as “a nuclear physicist” in 1957, Hubbard revealed how he had spun his deception about training in physics into his deception about being a civil engineer. In essence, he claimed that he became a civil engineer because no work existed for nuclear physicists in the 1930s. Spinning this deception, he reworked comments that he had written about “Buck Rogers boys” a half-decade earlier:

Nuclear physicists were in the 30’s [sic] known as ‘Buck Rogers’ boys—the comic strip character of science fiction—and there was nothing he could be used for. He had no background that could be used in industry.... Any field that he might have entered had no real use for him, so he either employed himself as a civil engineer running a survey or something of the sort, or he turned to some other field of endeavour.

Thus, lacking incentive, the only use I could put this Buck Rogers information to was Science Fiction. Like so many other physicists I wrote science fiction for years and that was the only remunerative use I made of the material (Hubbard 1957a, 45).

As an aside, a later reprint in 1979 of the book deleted the phrase, “Thus, lacking incentive, the only use I could put this Buck Rogers information . . . ,” and inserted, “So after I finished training, the Depression was on in full and the only use I could put this Buck Rogers information . . .” (Hubbard 1957b, 53). Here, Hubbard shifted blame for not applying his supposed “training” in physics from his lack of incentive to the bad economy caused by the Depression. The revised statement glossed over the fact that he actually had no physics training that would have been marketable in any economic environment. Nevertheless, in both renditions of his educational background, he claimed that he had trained in nuclear physics but was unable to find employment in the profession, so he turned to civil engineering and fiction writing. Thus, this tale falsified his romanticized academic training, elevated his brief work on a bug-infested, muddy, and generally unpleasant geological survey into employment as a civil

engineer, and laid the foundation of his science fiction writing on his supposed work as a physicist.

Claims about Hubbard's alleged civil engineering credentials appeared again in 1959, this time when a *Hubbard Communications Office Bulletin* reprinted Hubbard's biography from that year's edition of *Who's Who in the South and Southwest* (discussed above). Among his listed credentials were "B.S. in Civil Engineering, George Washington U.; 1934; student Princeton Sch. Govt.: 1945; Ph.D. Sequoia U. 1950" (Hemery 1959). It is true that the document was sent out under the name of "Peter Hemery, HCO Communications WW [Worldwide] for L. Ron Hubbard" and not by Hubbard himself. Later, however, in 1964, Hubbard (in a letter) referred Scientology's Continental Director of Australia and New Zealand to the *Who's Who in the South and Southwest* entry as containing "biographical information [that] is reasonably accurate" (Hubbard 1964). In that same letter, he reminded the Continental Director, "as you know, prior to the war, in addition to exploration and writing, I participated in several survey and engineering projects—civil engineering. C.E. of course stands for Civil Engineering" (Hubbard 1964).

Around 1960, two short biographies of Hubbard were in circulation, each stating (in a section entitled, "Vital Statistics,") that his credentials included "B.S. in Civil Engineering, George Washington U." (Hubbard Communications Office 1959, 4; *PRO News* circa 1960, 1). While Hubbard owned the copyright to the 1959 biography, his typed name (as his signature) was not on it, which provided Camacho with an opportunity to assert that he was not necessarily the author. A 1961 handout, however, entitled, "What is Scientology?," had Hubbard as the copyright holder (Hubbard 1961i, 1), and it asserted that the movement was "developed by L. Ron Hubbard, C.E., PH.D., a nuclear physicist" (Hubbard 1961i, 1). Hubbard revised this handout sometime that same year, and kept the threefold fraudulent credentials claim in the revision (which he published as a *Hubbard Communications Office Information Letter* entitled "PE [i.e., Personal Efficiency] Handout" [Hubbard 1961f, 196]). He included this *Information Letter* in *The Organization Executive Course* published in 1972, placing it within the policies of his Scientology organization, and enshrining it as part of the group's 'scriptures.' It remained in the updated *Organization Executive Course* publications in 1991, well after his death (Hubbard 1961g, 293). Slightly earlier (in 1972), the American Biographical Institute included

Hubbard in a book entitled, *Community Leaders of America*, incorrectly stating that he had a “BS CE Geo Wash Univ 1934” (American Biographical Institute 1972, 145).

Hubbard’s civil engineering claim in the “PE Handout” document

Presenting a dilemma for Camacho, the 1961 “PE Handout” document contained a statement by Hubbard that he was a “C.E., Ph.D., [and] a nuclear physicist” (Hubbard 1961f, 196). If this document is legitimate, then it undercuts Camacho’s argument that Hubbard never made the civil engineering credentials claim himself. Strenuously, therefore, and on numerous grounds, Camacho argued against its authenticity. In doing so, it appears that Camacho replicated an interpretive pattern that famed historian Barbara Tuchman (1912–1989) warned against in an article about historiography. Camacho let predetermined conclusions cloud his ability to appropriately interpret new information. When discussing historians’ interpretation of data, Tuchman cited an anonymous reviewer from the *Times Literary Supplement* who noted, “The historian who puts his system first can hardly escape the heresy of preferring the facts which suit his system best.” She added, “If the historian will submit himself *to* his material instead of trying to impose himself *on* his material, then the material will ultimately speak to him and supply the answers” (Tuchman 1963, 23 [italics in original]). Contemporary social psychologists now have a name for this kind of research: *motivated reasoning*. (I thank Jon Atack for providing me with both the Tuchman quote and reference to the motivated reasoning concept).

One of the early studies of this phenomenon argued that “motivation may affect reasoning through reliance on a biased set of cognitive processes—that is, strategies for accessing, constructing, and evaluation beliefs.... [T]he motivation to arrive at particular conclusions enhances use of those that are considered most likely to yield the desired conclusion” (Kunda 1990, 480). As the phenomenon relates to Camacho’s repeated insistence that Hubbard did not lie or deceive about being a civil engineer, my interpretation is that Camacho demonstrated motivated reasoning, driving him to misinterpret evidence that seemingly pointed to the opposite conclusion. Specifically, on the issue of authorship of the “PE Handout” document of 1961, Camacho seems to have imposed his pre-existing conclusion on it, which was that Hubbard had not lied about having a civil

engineering credential. Consequently, when confronted with ambiguous sections of the document, he imposed interpretations on them that reinforced what he already had concluded. I specifically address three probable instances of motivated reasoning by identifying data that Camacho believed was reinforcement of his position, but which actually support a contrary one.

A. The Personal Efficiency Course and Its Experimental Abolition

Camacho expressed serious doubts about the legitimacy of a mid-April Scientology document related to the Personal Efficiency Course. If his doubts were well-founded, then he would have established that a statement in the document, in which Hubbard said that he was a “C.E., Ph.D., [and] a nuclear physicist” (Hubbard 1961f, 196; 1961g, 293), could not have been written by Hubbard himself. Consequently, we must spend some time discussing this course and documents related to it, including one in which Hubbard supposedly had abolished the entire course on January 23, 1961 (see Hubbard, 1961a). In doing so, we see that Camacho’s analysis of the Personal Efficiency Course needs revision.

Delivery of the course spread over five evenings, and was designed to introduce people into basic Scientology concepts, lectures, and drills, thereby serving as a gateway into additional courses and services. On February 14, 1961, however, which was after the supposed abolition, Hubbard announced that the “total purpose” of the Personal Efficiency Course was “to explain elementary Scientology and prepare and route people into the co-audit” (Hubbard 1961c; Hubbard 1961/1962, 148). Co-auditing (or cooperative auditing) was “a team of any two people who are helping each other reach a better life with Sen [Scientology] processing” (Hubbard 1975, 78). It also included an evaluation test, which a Scientology Evaluator used in routing the person into courses (Hubbard, 1961c). Apparently, however, in late January 1961, the Personal Efficiency course was failing to fulfil its goal of routing people into co-auditing. Consequently, Hubbard “abolished” the course.

When Camacho mentioned this abolition (Camacho 2018, 52), he stated only that “Hubbard abolished the PE course on 23 January 1961 when the third South African A.C.C. [Advanced Clinical Course] began” (Camacho 2018, 52). Precisely, however, Hubbard had written something slightly different:

As exactly none are enrolling in HAS [Hubbard Association of Scientologists] Co-Audit from PE [Personal Efficiency] after test, although the PE sells well it is experimentally abolished (Hubbard 1961a).

It is unclear exactly what Hubbard meant by having “experimentally” abolished the Personal Efficiency course, but a series of policies that he wrote three weeks later strongly suggests that he *temporarily* abolished the course until he could attempt to reconfigure it to either direct people into co-auditing or have that goal reached through some other way. Even in the *Policy Letter* that experimentally abolished the Personal Efficiency course, he still insisted that “tested persons should be sold (a) Individual Auditing or (b) Co-Audit but always at least Co-Audit” (Hubbard 1961a).

The *course* may have needed re-jigging, but the Personal Efficiency *program* remained in operation. Three weeks after the experimental abolition of the Personal Efficiency program (February 14, 1961), Hubbard wrote a *Policy Letter* about “the Personal Efficiency Foundation” in which he indicated, “The PE Foundation is an entrance point to Scientology. If it fails to pass people from testing to a PE course to Co-audit and from Co-audit to the Academy and HGC [Hubbard Guidance Center] then it is failing its functions” (Hubbard 1961c; Hubbard 1961/1962, 148). On that same day, the organization published a “Six-Department Org Board,” which included the PE Foundation within its Technical Division (Anonymous 1961). The next day, Hubbard (under his own name) published a script that a South African, Peter Greene, wrote for Personal Efficiency Evaluators to use on people after they had taken the Personal Efficiency test (Hubbard 1961d). It seems entirely possible that Greene’s “evaluations script” was the kind of information that Hubbard wanted to re-jig the course, since by April 14, 1961 he published the “PE Handout” (Hubbard 1961f). Somewhat in line with Camacho’s deduction, it also seems entirely possible that Greene heavily influenced, or even wrote, the March 2, 1961 *Policy Letter* entitled, “Automatic Evaluation Packet for PE Evaluation” (Hubbard 1961e; see Camacho 2018, 53). Camacho was correct to identify anomalies in the text itself, but the fact remains that Hubbard’s name appears at the bottom. Moreover, in it he mentioned the pamphlet, “What is Scientology?” (Hubbard 1961i [not to be confused with two subsequent books from 1978 and 1992 that had the same name]), which plays a significant place in our analysis of Hubbard’s false credentials claims.

Camacho's 2018 article may give the misleading impression that Hubbard abolished the Personal Efficiency course, but the opposite is true (Camacho 2018, 52; see Hubbard 1976a, 386). In Hubbard's 1978 compendium of information, *What is Scientology?*, the Personal Efficiency course appeared among the organization's "Beginning Services" (Hubbard [Based on the Works of] 1978, 9), and (even now), an Internet search on the phrase, "Scientology, Personal Efficiency course," reveals that dozens of Scientology organizations around the world still offer it. Consequently, during and after Hubbard's lifetime, the organization continued running the Personal Efficiency course, suggesting that an April 14, 1961 document about it (and which contained the statement about him being a civil engineer, a Ph.D., and a nuclear physicist) was legitimate and part of an existing Scientology program.

B. The Parenthetical Note on the "PE Handout"

Second, Camacho assigned importance to "the parenthetical note before Hubbard's name at the bottom" of the "PE Handout" publication, as it appeared in an *Organizational Executive Course* in 1970. (Oddly, in our copy of the publication, the note appears *after*, not *before* his name). Camacho's quotation of it omitted a couple of small details, so we provide the complete version:

(Please note: The article "What is Scientology?" has been entirely re-written by Ron, and this one should be used in preference to the original one which was written in Johannesburg and issued from there—HCO Sec WW [i.e.: Hubbard Communications Office Section World Wide]) (Hubbard 1961f, 199).

Camacho deduced from it that, "Hubbard could not have written or issued the *PE Handout* from Johannesburg [South Africa] as he was in England during this time" (Camacho 2018, 52 [italics in original]). Perhaps motivated reasoning led him to misread what the note actually said. It said that an earlier version of the "What is Scientology?" pamphlet had been written in Johannesburg (and note that the passive voice is unclear about who exactly wrote it), but the version in the "PE Handout" was one that Hubbard had rewritten. It did *not* say that Hubbard had written and issued the entire *Information Letter* from Johannesburg, just the "What is Scientology?" section. Hubbard had been in Johannesburg between mid-January to late February, and it is entirely possible that he wrote a "What is Scientology?" pamphlet during this time, which subsequently he revised.

This interpretation is speculation on my part, but some evidence supports it. The “What is Scientology?” eight-page photocopy that I have gave prices in American dollars and American addresses for ordering copies or receiving processing. I suspect, therefore, that Scientology organizations in various countries received the pages, then reproduced them after adjusting currency and location information to match local conditions. Indeed, the version of “What is Scientology?” appearing in the 1961 “PE Handout” *Information Letter* actually provided spaces for Scientologists to insert their local information. For example, one phrase said, “Scientology auditors are available to service in any Mental Health activity in (Country) on a paid or voluntary basis” (Hubbard 1961f, 197 [capitalization in original]); compare Hubbard 1961i, 3). Writing now from St. Hill in the United Kingdom, Hubbard also quoted costs in pounds and shillings rather than dollars (Hubbard 1961f, 197; compare Hubbard 1961i, 2). Small alterations (such as correcting the name, Sir James Jean to Sir James Jeans), and punctuation and spelling adjustments, appeared in the *Information Letter* version, and an entire section of books for purchase did not appear in the *Information Letter*. Hubbard wanted the corrected and adjusted version of “What is Scientology?” used as the template for its distribution worldwide, replacing the earlier one (including the American version that I have). The claim, therefore, that Hubbard had written the earlier version while in Johannesburg is unremarkable, but this parenthetical note *did not* claim that Hubbard wrote the entire *Information Letter* there. Camacho misread it.

C. The Initials at the Bottom of the Last Page of the “PE Handout”

Third, at the bottom left of the (last) page were the initials, “LRH:jl.rd” (Hubbard 1961f, 199). Camacho interpreted these initials as evidence that someone other than Hubbard wrote or at least altered the document: “this article attributed changes to Hubbard without indicating any initial assistant or compiler and instead only used typists’ initials ‘jl.rd’” (Camacho 2018, 51). I checked, however, with former Sea Organization Scientologists who had worked with Hubbard’s documents at the “Int [International] Base” in Riverside [county], California, and one of them explained that explanatory notes like this one simply were part of a detailed process of establishing a document’s provenance. They were to:

see how the submissions [i.e., the documents] were done.... The history has to be laid out in sequence and then summarized so as to prove that the final written issue being submitted and being proposed for printing is correct. The notes that ended up all through the *OEC* [*Organizational Executive Course*] green volume issues in the 1970s editions of the green volumes, are significant, and that is why they are left in (Chuck Beatty, e-mail message to author, May 16, 2019 [italics added]).

Moreover, another correspondent (who wishes to remain anonymous) helped clarify that “jl” referred to Jan Logan, who was “the original typist,” and then “rd” referred to Rosemary Delderfield, who was “the OEC project typist getting the issues ready for book book [sic] volume OEC publishing typing” (anonymous e-mail message to author, April 24, 2019). These initials, therefore, were additional indicators for Scientologists about how staff had handled the document in the typing and publication process. Taken together, the insert and the initials help establish Hubbard’s authorship, not diminish its likelihood.

These initials of the two Sea Organization members were commonplace in Scientology publications from the first early 1960s. If Camacho had checked Scientology’s *Technical Bulletins, 1960–1961* and the volume 0 of the *Organizational Executive Course*, he would have discovered thirteen *Hubbard Communication Office Bulletins*, eight *Hubbard Communication Office Policy Letters*, and one *Hubbard Communication Office Information Letter* with the “jl.rd” initials, plus another *Hubbard Communications Office Bulletin* with the initials, “LRH:jl.vmm.rd” (Hubbard, 1974, 47, 109; Hubbard 1976b, 194, 219, 223, 226, 253, 255, 257, 262, 272, 281, 320, 324, 330, 324, 330, 335, 367, 369, 371, 376, 384, 386, see 388). These initials in no way disqualified the documents from being authentic; rather, their widespread appearance in many Hubbard documents indicate that these documents were authentic and were being processed by Sea Organization staff.

D. The “Colour Flash/Not HCO Policy Letter” Issue on the “PE Handout”

Third, Camacho identified three short lines at the top right corner of the first page, which said “NOT HCO POLICY LETTER CORRECT COLOUR FLASH BLUE ON WHITE” (Hubbard 1961f, 196 [all in small capital letters in original]). He, however, only mentioned the first of the three lines (NOT HCO POLICY LETTER) but omitted mention of the crucial remaining two phrases

(CORRECT COLOUR FLASH BLUE ON WHITE). Seeing this note as additional proof that the Hubbard had not written the document, Camacho pronounced, “a ‘Not HCO Correct’ appeared as a small note at the top of this letter, which further indicated an incorrect, unofficial and misattributed status” (Camacho 2018, 52). One of my former Sea Organization contacts, however, who had been in the Sea Organization during the early 1960s clarified what these words meant:

The ‘Not HCO Policy Letter Correct colour flash blue on white’ was placed on the page by the OEC compilations project to let people know it was not an HCO PL [*Hubbard Communications Office Policy Letter*] but was originally issued by LRH in another such form as a *Directive* which are Printed Blue on White. But since the 1970 *OEC* vols were printed in green ink and the compilations project felt the issue was important enough to include in the *OEC* volumes it ended up being printed in green instead of changing ink color.

This is NOT a note by Hubbard (anonymous e-mail message to author, May 16, 2019 [italics added; capitalization in original]).

Another source pointed out that “Camacho doesn’t[,] in his article, list out the full note,” which—if he had done so—would have made clear that it had to do with the colour of the paper and ink (Chuck Beatty, e-mail message to author, May 16).

I do not know if Camacho’s failure to quote the entire note (omitting mention of the correct “blue [ink] on white [paper]”) statement was accidental or deliberate, but its omission allowed him to claim that the statement “further indicated an incorrect, unofficial and misattributed status” (Camacho 2018, 52). It did not. On February 4, 1961, which was ten days prior to the publication of the “PE Handout” *Information Letter*, Hubbard had established a procedure involving “several types and *appearances* of mimeos” in order to “facilitate the dissemination of Information” (Hubbard 1961b, 244 [italics and capitalization in original]). In it he required that,

HCO [Hubbard Communications Office] Policy Letters are now my administrative policy line. They are received done in green ink on white paper. They must be copied by local HCOs using that exact colour scheme.

An HCO Information Letter is now issued by me only and is blue ink on white paper (Hubbard 1961b, 244).

When, however, Scientology published the multi-volume *Organization Executive Course* in the 1970s, all of the pages were green ink on white paper, presumably because they were policies that Scientologists had to follow. Consequently, when the “PE Handout” appeared in the first volume of the *Organization Executive Course*, the compilers of its documents had to specify what the original colour scheme (blue ink on white paper) had been. This specification had nothing to do with indicating that it was “an incorrect, unofficial and misattributed status” (Camacho 2018, 52). Indeed, Hubbard directed that *HCO Information Letters* were “now to be issued by me only . . .” (Hubbard 1961b, 244). This top-of-the-page note, therefore, on the “PE Handout,” was additional proof that Hubbard had written it, since he held the sole power to issue *HCO Information Letters*. Indeed, years later (in 1969), Hubbard published another document in an *Organizational Executive Course* book—this time an *Executive Directive From L. Ron Hubbard*—that contained the same statement in the upper right hand corner of the first page: “NOT HCO POLICY LETTER CORRECT COLOUR FLASH BLUE ON WHITE” (Hubbard, 1969, 256 [all in small capital letters in original]). Nothing in this correction from a 1969 document indicted anything other than it was a Hubbard letter. The existence of an ink-and-paper-colour correction in the 1961 “PE Handout” document—a document in which Hubbard claimed to be a civil engineer, Ph.D., and physicist—helped authenticate, rather than invalidate, its authenticity.

E. The Civil Engineering Claim Continues Into the 1990s

One might be tempted to believe that the civil engineering claims, which appeared in both the “What Is Scientology?” pamphlet and the *Hubbard Information Letter* of April 14, 1961, were dropped in Hubbard biographies after April 4, 1977. On that day, a Sea Organization *Executive Directive* announced that it “cancels all earlier LRH Biographies . . . and is the ONLY authorized LRH Biography” (Gablehouse 1977, cover page [underlining and capitalization in original]). This biography of Hubbard did not mention anything about civil engineering or having taken a nuclear physics course, nor about having a degree (Gablehouse 1977, 2). The “L. Ron Hubbard, CE, Ph.D., a nuclear physicist” claim (Hubbard 1961f, 196), however, carried over from the “old” green, *Organization Executive Course* volume from 1974 into the “new,” ever-so-

slightly reworked and republished volume in 1991 (Hubbard 1961g, 293). We do not know why, for certain, these credentials claims reappeared in the 1991 reprint, other than the fact that these claims were in a publication that Hubbard had written, while the 1977 “LHR Biography” came out under the authorship of Liz Gablehouse, who was Director of LRH Personal Public Relations Office, but not signed off by Hubbard himself. Hubbard’s written works, of course, were Scientology scriptures, and (at least technically) were supposed to remain unaltered and definitive. We see this ideological position in an exchange between Scientology and the American Internal Revenue Service (IRS), in negotiations leading up to the agency’s granting charitable status to Scientology in late 1993.

During those negotiations, the IRS queried about what the organization believed to be its holy scriptures. In response, Scientology officials informed the IRS that everything Hubbard wrote or spoke on tape or film constituted Scientology’s reputedly sacred doctrines. In its “Application for Recognition of Exemption Under Section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code” (submitted August 18, 1993), the Church of Scientology International gave the following answer to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) in “Schedule A, Question 4 - Formal Code of Doctrine and Discipline,”

Scientology is a religion based upon the research, writings, and recorded lectures of its founder, L. Ron Hubbard, which collectively constitute the Scripture of the religion. The Scientology Scriptures are the sole source of all the doctrines, tenets, sacraments, rituals, and policies of the Scientology faith. They encompass more than 500,000 pages of writings, nearly 3,000 taped lectures and over 100 films (CSI Prod 11-4-93 1993, Bates No. 15006).

The Scientology website confirms that Hubbard’s writings constitute the scripture of Scientology:

Mr. Miscavige [i.e., Scientology’s current leader] first described the five-year, two-million-man-hour research project to ensure the purity of all Scientology Scripture, found in the writings and recorded lectures of L. Ron Hubbard....

In the ensuing years, every word and line in every L. Ron Hubbard book was researched, verified or corrected to ensure absolute purity. The standard set by Mr. Miscavige was *perfection*, the only standard suitable for the works of Mr. Hubbard.

Following that prodigious editorial undertaking, each book was meticulously designed, typeset, printed and bound to achieve the highest level of readability, comprehension, quality and durability—not to mention sheer aesthetic beauty. Thus came into existence

only the pure and perfect Scientology Scriptures as authored by Mr. Hubbard (Church of Scientology International 2014 [italics and capitalization in original]).

Consequently, aspects of Scientology’s self-identified scriptures include the courses, the doctrines, the terminology, and the organizational directives that came from Hubbard. Included among them was the “PE Handout” from 1961, in which Hubbard made his civil engineering claim. To Scientologists, that claim was scriptural, and overrode any biography written by someone else. To Scientologists, Hubbard’s authorship established the claim’s factual accuracy.

Civil Engineering Claims in Signed Hubbard Letters

In addition to Hubbard’s published books and documents, four known letters exist that contain typed or written signatures of L. Ron Hubbard along with mention that he had a Civil Engineering credential. Camacho knew about three of them and disputed the authenticity of each. The letter, however, that he was unaware of seemingly provided evidence of Hubbard’s falsely claiming to have a civil engineering degree in a context that is exceedingly difficult to refute. It also helps to contextualize the authenticity of one of the letters whose authorship Camacho disputed. I exam all of these letters, and address Camacho’s challenges about the authenticity of three of them.

The critical journalist, Tony Ortega, produced the first one (dated January 2, 1958) sent by Hubbard to prominent nuclear physicist and quantum mechanics pioneer, Dr. Edward U. Condon (1902–1974), of Washington University in St. Louis Missouri (see Ortega 2015). On “L. Ron Hubbard” letterhead and signed in Hubbard’s name, followed by “C.E., Ph.D.,” below it is the word and initials “/per md.” Camacho concluded that this word and initials “of course indicated that someone with the initials wrote it and signed Hubbard’s signature, as both appeared in the same handwriting style and did not match Hubbard’s” (Camacho 2018, 50–51). As Ortega suggested, however, “it wasn’t unusual for some of Hubbard’s employees to sign things for him” (Ortega 2019, 3). In this context, the “/per md” likely meant that a typist or secretary signed it according to (as per) Hubbard’s instructions, after typing from a handwritten version, dictation, or tape. Revealingly, however, in the text itself, Hubbard stated, “I am a member of the American Rocketry Society, The Explorers Club, was an engineering major at George Washington University in the 30’s [sic] who transferred to research in the

mind” (Hubbard 1958, 2). This self-interpretation—that he shifted his attention from engineering to psychology—was similar to what he had written to the War Department in 1939: “For the past five years I have been studying, to benefit my work, psychology and all human behavior . . .” (Hubbard 1939, 2). Also, worth noting was the vagueness about his engineering studies at GWU. He stated that he was an engineering major, and one might assume from this statement that he received a degree in that field. He did not, of course, but he avoided saying so directly. Consequently, the letter’s recipient likely assumed that he had an engineering degree when he saw “C.E.” (in capital letters) as a professional title beneath his name. In my opinion, this assumption was what Hubbard wanted. Consequently, a secretary or typist probably signed the letter, but the contents were in line with earlier Hubbard deceptions, including the combination of C.E. and Ph.D., which appeared in Scientology books throughout the 1950s.

The second letter (also on L. Ron Hubbard letterhead) was dated June 29, 1960 and appears to be from Hubbard to Inspector Bent at the Geelong Police Station in Victoria, Australia (Hubbard 1960a). In it, the writer (whom I believe to have been Hubbard), complained to the officer about the allegation that Scientology practiced healing, and blamed that (supposedly) false charge on likely “subversive infiltration” in the area. Hubbard claimed to be able to recognize such subversion, having once been trained to be the Provost Marshal of Korea (see Kay [ed.] 1971; 1974; Owen 2019). He gave his East Grinstead return address on the bottom left hand side of the page, identifying himself as “L. Ron Hubbard, C.E., PhD” (Hubbard 1960a). The letter only had Hubbard’s name typed as a signature, with (what appear to be) the initials “CW” beneath it, allowing Camacho to conclude “that someone else with those initials wrote the letter” (Camacho 2019, 143). He simply did not consider the likely explanation, which was that someone else typed it for Hubbard, who was not available to sign it. In addition, Camacho saw that the heading of the letter indicated that it had been mailed from the Melbourne Scientology office (with the receiving office of the Melbourne government’s Chief Secretary date stamp of June 30, 1960]), and Hubbard had given a lecture in London on June 30. Consequently, Camacho concluded that he could not possibly have written it. Camacho ruled out (albeit speculatively) that the letter “would not have been modified from a telex due to its length and format, nor was a telex used as it stated that it was mailed per the layout” (Camacho 2019, 143).

These rejections of the possibility that the letter was a re-typed telex are assertions not based upon hard evidence. In fact, suggestive evidence does exist that, around the time of the letter's date (June 30, 1960), Hubbard was using an overnight communication system between England to Australia. Dated 23 April 1961, Hubbard sent a telegram from East Grinstead to Peter Williams in Melbourne, at the bottom of which was the explanation, “[At the beginning of the above telegram, the letters ‘LT’ mean night letter, a form of cable, which travels overnight . . .]” (Hubbard 1961h). The more likely explanation, therefore, for the letter's mailing from Melbourne when Hubbard was in East Grinstead was that, indeed, an Australian typist had retyped and signed a letter that Hubbard had sent either by telegram or telex. It was not a forgery, just an office letter signed by a secretary and identified as such by the initials after Hubbard's signed name.

One more fact about the letter contributed to Camacho's conclusion that Hubbard had not written the letter to Bent: “the use of titles” in it (Camacho 2019, 143). Aside from the letter being addressed to “Inspector Bent,” the only titles in the letter are the “C.E., PhD” ones following Hubbard's name in his return address in East Grinstead. As another probable example of motivated reasoning, Camacho saw the titles attached to Hubbard's name as proof he had not written the correspondence, since (according to Camacho) Hubbard never made the fraudulent claim about having a civil engineering qualification or certification. Researchers now have, however, a third (in this case, signed) letter containing the claim that Hubbard had a Civil Engineering degree, dated only nineteen days later (July 18, 1960).

Journalist Tony Ortega published it after receiving a copy from researcher Lauren Wolf (Ortega 2019). While doing research for Lawrence Wright's Scientology study, *Going Clear* (Wright 2013, 372), she discovered the letter in the archives of the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia. The letter indicated that Hubbard had learned about a lecture that physicist W.F.G. Swann (1884–1962) had delivered, and Hubbard offered Swann the opportunity to publish some Dianetics/Scientology concepts and definitions that (he felt) related to Swann's presentation on a “fundamental life ‘entity’” (Hubbard 1960b, 1). Hubbard claimed that he first worked on this life entity “in 1930 while studying “‘atomic and nuclear phenomena’ as nuclear physics was then called, at George Washington University....” Hoping that Swann would publish some of his concepts, Hubbard made clear to the physicist that “you need take no

responsibility for them beyond saying that they were developed by L. Ron Hubbard, B.S. in C.E., Ph.D., and sent you [sic] for possible interest” (Hubbard 1960b, 2). Camacho had published a copy of Hubbard’s signature (Camacho 2018, 51), and (at least to my untrained eyes), the signature on the Swann letter looks very similar.

Camacho’s objections to the authenticity of other letters do not apply here. Hubbard’s letter to Swann contains a signature in what appears to be Hubbard’s handwriting, and no initials are around the signature to suggest that anyone other than Hubbard wrote or typed it. This evidence for its authenticity is very strong, and Camacho had not seen it before publishing his two articles on the civil engineering issue. As he had done before, Hubbard greatly inflated his academic studies at George Washington University, mentioning that he had studied “atomic and molecular phenomena” (more accurately, Modern Physical Phenomena; Molecular and Atomic Physics) but neglected to mention that he had failed the course. His assertions that he had a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering and a Ph.D. revealed his desire to have professional credentials, in this instance so that he could relate to legitimately credentialed people as their professional equals (and perhaps in other situations, as their professional superiors). The fact that he made this civil engineering claim gives weight that he also had done so in the letter to Inspector Bent less than three weeks earlier.

The fourth letter was from August 5, 1964, which Jon Atack had received from Australian writer Steve Cannane in relation to the Australian Inquiry about Scientology. Authorities had contacted Peter Williams, who was the Continental Director for Australia and New Zealand, asking him for clarification about his degrees: “What work did you do to obtain the C.E.—was it an Academic course, or work in the field as a civil engineer or what and any other relevant information?” (Williams to Hubbard 1964; reproduced in Camacho 2019, 154). Hubbard replied:

As you know, prior to the war, in addition to exploration and writing, I participated in several survey and engineering projects—civil engineering. C.E. of course stands for Civil Engineering.

I believe that the Board [of Inquiry] has been informed of my sojourn at the George Washington University—Engineering School—where I was one of the first students of nuclear physics in the United States (Hubbard 1964).

Again, Hubbard's vagueness deceived. The question about his (supposed) civil engineering degree was a query about whether it was from an academic course (presumably a degree) or fieldwork experience. Hubbard replied with information about (what he considered to have been appropriate) field experience, but then indicated that he had been in George Washington University's engineering school. He simply could have said, clearly, that he did not have an engineering degree (or even that he had taken only one course in the subject), so his Civil Engineering "degree" was self-appointed, based upon some fieldwork. He did not do so, however, leaving Williams with the misleading implication that he had *both* an academic degree and work experience, and which Williams then would forward on to the inquirers. As he had done with reporter Alan Trengrove, he prevaricated about his civil engineering credentials. He could have given a direct, honest answer, but he did not. He wanted to maintain the public status of having a civil engineering degree.

These four letters span a period of six years, and the fact that they all contain misrepresentations of Hubbard's civil engineering credentials gives credence to the conclusion that all of them were deliberate misrepresentations in attempts to impress prominent people—a police inspector, two physicists, and a Scientologist who was corresponding with members of a government enquiry. The need that Hubbard felt to impress also had shown up in his successful efforts to obtain an honorary degree from the unaccredited Sequoia University in 1953, believing that his attempts to spread Dianetics and Scientology in the United Kingdom were "utterly dependant [sic]" on it (Hubbard, quoted in Miller 1987, 212). After he received his honorary degree and solidified his association with the reputed university, he used that association to extend further his false civil engineering claim. A 1953 course outline advertisement for Sequoia University contained a brief biography of Hubbard, stating that "L. Ron Hubbard, CE, PhD, DScn, presented SCIENTOLOGY in its most basic form in May 1950" (Sequoia University of California 1953, 15). Presumably, belief that the person behind "university" courses had academic degrees might help convince potential enrollees to buy courses. Evidence is clear, therefore, that Hubbard felt status deprivation from his lack of credentials, so he simply embellished them (including ones about being a civil engineer and/or having a degree in it) when he felt it advantageous to do so.

Conclusion

Obviously, some researchers doubted that Hubbard lied about being a civil engineer, so an article presenting evidence about his alleged innocence was the proper academic approach. Unfortunately, then to think that one has written the final, definitive word on the issue—having now put it to rest once and for all—believes how scholarship works. Research findings lead to new research, and in the process, sometimes initial findings are overturned. Elevating one's research conclusions—or doing so regarding research conclusions with which one agrees—to a level of 'truth' is unwise and unsound, especially in disciplines outside of the natural sciences. Moreover, challenges to one's research findings are likely when one body of researchers assert that persons who had reached opposite conclusions had published "fake news," since those so accused surely will take up the challenge about truth claims.

Camacho did not make this "fake news" defense about those who have said that Hubbard had fraudulently misrepresented his civil engineering credentials, although his statements that they had been "dishonest" or "incompetent" in their criticisms of Hubbard (Camacho 2018, 29, 54) raise related sets of issues that are best answered simply by the results of additional published research (as I am doing here). The editor of the journal in which Camacho published, however, dismissed previous claimants about Hubbard's credentials-deception as "fake news," using as his springboard Donald Trump's repeated and pervasive claim that he was a victim of it (Introvigne 2018, 4). Use of Trump, however, as an analogous victim of "fake news" alongside Hubbard, was exceedingly odd, since, by August 2018 (when the journal issue appeared), "President Trump ha[d] made 4,229 false or misleading claims in 558 days"—the number of days in which he had been in office (Kessler, Rizzo, and Kelly 2018).

While no one ever has added up the number of false or misleading claims that Hubbard made, just on the civil engineering credential fraud alone I can offer a rough count. From the evidence in this article, I count two clear instances of Hubbard embellishing credentials about civil engineering (Hubbard 1939; 1944); at least seventeen examples of him making false credentials claims (Founding Church of Scientology 1963, 11, 13; Hubbard 1950 [1955]; Hubbard 1951, 1; Hubbard 1952c; Hubbard 1953a; Hubbard, 1953b; Hubbard 1956a; Hubbard 1956b, About the Author; Hubbard, 1956c;

Hubbard 1957a; Hubbard 1958; Hubbard 1959; Hubbard 1960a; Hubbard 1960b; Hubbard 1964; Hubbard 1968; Marquis—Who’s Who 1959; *Who’s Who Monthly Supplement*, 1943, 90); and at least thirteen instances of others (including Scientologists and non-Scientologists) claiming that he was a (civil) engineer (American Biographical Institute 1972, 145; Brennan 1981, 274; *Certainty* circa 1956, 3; Goldstein 1974, 2; Hemery 1959; Hubbard 1961f, 196; Hubbard 1961g, 293; Hubbard Communications Office 1959, 4; Founding Church of Scientology 1963, Addendum b; Ministry of Public Relations for the Church of Scientology in Canada n.d., 5 [see Appendix 4]; *PRO News* circa 1960; *PRO News* 1970; Winter 1951). Others will disagree about which of the three categories I placed some of the cited sources, but—even still—the sheer number of places (thirty-two by my count, spanning five decades [1939–1991]) in which Hubbard’s civil engineering claims appeared indicates that Hubbard initiated a false credentials claim that others both inside and outside of his organization(s) adopted and believed. Coupled with other accreditation claims (such as having a PhD and being a nuclear physicist), they elevated Hubbard’s Dianetics and Scientology’s status as creations by an accredited scientist, rather by the (science) fiction writer that he was who had an honorary PhD from an unaccredited organization.

My conclusion—that Hubbard committed credentials fraud about being a civil engineer—does not lead me to attribute either dishonesty or incompetence to Camacho as he did to me and others. These kind or advances in understanding happen routinely in both the sciences and the humanities. Because I expect such advances and anticipate that they may occur in relation to this article, I offer the advice that claims of truth actually may be nothing more than hints of hubris.

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