
Hollywood's Celebrity Lobbyists and the Clinton Administration's American Foreign Policy Toward German Scientology*

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Abstract: This article takes basic insights provided by resource mobilization theory in order to discuss how Scientology celebrities used their status to influence the international debate over Scientology between the United States and Germany. Their ability to have done so is another indicator of the access to American political elites that Hollywood cultural elites have gained in recent years, most especially during the administration of President Bill Clinton (1992-2000). The shortcomings, however, of some of the celebrities' efforts reveal the weaknesses that are associated with cultural elites entering political debates. As is common in other instances of celebrities' political involvement, Scientology's celebrities have contributed to the trivialization of serious issues that confront the international community.

[1] As international cultural elites,¹ Hollywood celebrities frequently are spokespeople for social and political causes (see Keller 1983, 5-7; George 2000). In addition to whatever genuine social concern they may feel, successful celebrities have opportunities provided them by the nature and rewards that are part and parcel of their occupations. Often, for example, actors have periods of discretionary time between work engagements (see McCarthy and Zald 1977, 1236). Moreover, they have access to globalized media and often possess extraordinary wealth - two charismatic qualities that elevate their own status (see Mills 1956, 71-72) at the same time that they bestow a "charisma through association" to persons (like politicians) with whom they have personal or professional contact (see Glassman 1984, 219; Keller 1983, 3-4; Mills 1956, 74). Consequently, just as celebrities sometimes need politicians in order to advance the political stature of their causes, politicians need celebrities to boost their campaign coffers and elevate their charismatic appearance in the media (see Mills 1956, 75). With increasing frequency, therefore, celebrities want access to the corridors of power, and many politicians are more than willing to let them in.

[2] Certainly since the period of the Vietnam War (and some would argue, well before), celebrities have attempted to transform their privileged social position into institutionally based social power (Brownstein 1990; Meyer and Gamson 1995, 184; see Sherman 1990). Celebrity public advocacy, congressional testimonies, and successful bids for public office by Hollywood personalities have become commonplace in American public life.² These activities have occurred in the current context of America's debate with European countries, especially Germany, over religious human rights issues.

[3] In contrast to the expected pattern, however, of celebrities avoiding marginal political issues involving a "stigmatized constituency," especially regarding international issues (Meyer and Gamson 1995, 189), Scientology celebrities during the Clinton administration (1992-2000) took their complaints of international religious persecution to politicians and the media in America and Europe. American politicians, in turn, paid tribute to these celebrities in levels that

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far exceeded the stars' contributions to public life and political discourse (see Keller 1986, 152). Of special note is that perhaps never before the Clinton administration in post-war American politics had celebrities been official, organizationally-sanctioned lobbyists for the 'religious' ideologies to which they adhere.

[4] This article takes basic insights provided by resource mobilization theory about the ability of an elite group to act as "issue entrepreneurs" who define, create, and manipulate grievances and discontent (McCarthy and Zald 1977, 1215).³ Making use of extensive media and Internet sources about Scientology and the American government along with many of the organization's own publications,⁴ the article argues that Scientology's Hollywood celebrities were sufficiently influential in their federal lobbying during the Clinton administration that they influenced the American position (although not always in the direction they desired) on the American-versus-German debate over Scientology that took place between the two countries. Their ability to do so is another indicator of the access to American political elites that Hollywood cultural elites gained in recent years, especially while Clinton was in office. The shortcomings, however, of some of the celebrities' efforts reveal the weaknesses that are associated with cultural elites entering political debates. As is common in other instances of celebrities' political involvement (see Keller 1986, 160, 162-163), Scientology's celebrities contributed to the trivialization of serious human rights issues that confront the international community.

Scientology and Celebrities

[5] Sociologically, a comprehensive perspective on Scientology is that it is a multifaceted trans-national in which (arguably) religious aspects interweave and often compete with material and activities related to business management, education, mental health, physical health, drug rehabilitation, social reform, entertainment, science fiction, and even intelligence-gathering (see Kent 1999a; 1999b; 2001c, 3). As a resource mobilization strategy, Scientology demands that most Western societies call it a religion at the same time that it downplays the secular nature of many of its activities (see Kent 1990, 397-403). Celebrities play an important in this strategy.

[6] With considerable insight, Scientology's founder, L. Ron Hubbard (1911-1986) developed organizational policies that attempted to recruit celebrities into his group (see, for example, Hubbard 1971; Sappell and Welkos 1990), and currently a number of high-profile stars follow Scientology's teachings (Hausherr 2002). Geographically, Scientology's Los Angeles headquarters is only minutes from Hollywood itself, and the organization runs an exclusive facility (the Celebrity Center) that caters to members and friends primarily in the entertainment industry. Realizing the stars' potential public relations and political value, Scientology leadership has developed specific assignments through which these celebrities can further the goals of the organization. From the standpoint of the Scientology organization, a primary responsibility for celebrities is for them to "use their power to speed the forward drive of creating a new civilization" (Lesevre 1988, 1) based upon Scientology principles, and their lobbying efforts are attempts to eliminate barriers to the dissemination of the group's ideology.

[7] In the language of resource mobilization theory, these celebrities are elites because they have access to sizable resource pools such as media and wealth [see McCarthy and Zald 1977, 1221]). Moreover, celebrities have high "status honor" because of the "style of life" that many of them lead, the cultural impact that they have, and the social "distance and exclusiveness" that they keep (see Weber 1946, 186-187, 191). Frequently because of these attributes, celebrities gain entry into political settings, as politicians defer to their status, enhance their own images by associating with cultural icons, and often benefit from their campaign-contribution generosity. Consequently, as the American political antagonism toward Scientology seemingly diminished during the Clinton years, the organization was quick to place some of its celebrity members on the political stage.

Scientology's Lobbying and Public Relations Campaign in America

[8] Several activities that Scientology undertook near the beginning of the 1990s had a significant impact later on upon a few American foreign relations issues. First, it set out to improve its image with politicians and the population at large by undertaking a major public relations effort in the nation's capitol. As part of this public relations effort, a Scientology affiliate in Los Angeles was paying "almost \$725,000 to a Washington-based firm [Federal Legislative Associates] to lobby Congress in 1997 and 1996" (Dahl 1998a, 14A). These lobbying efforts (many performed by the firm's managing partner, David H. Miller) eventually bore fruit during the battle between Scientology and Germany.

[9] Second, Scientology greatly expanded its access to resources by entering into an agreement (in October 1993) with the Internal Revenue Service (the IRS) that granted the American organization and its affiliates tax exemption. Receipt of the much-coveted exemption from tax on charitable grounds gave Scientology a degree of legitimacy in the United States that it had not had for decades, despite the fact that the organization received this exemption under most unusual circumstances.⁵ Regardless of the conditions under which Scientology and the IRS reached their agreement, the charitable status was a greatly-prized resource (see Kent 1990, 398) that opened up important possibilities to gain even more resources and support. Most significantly, after the IRS/Scientology agreement, the United States Department of State now considered Scientology to be a tax-exempt religion, so it began criticizing Germany's actions against the organization and its members. Indeed, by the time that the IRS issued its agreement in late 1993, the battle between Germany and Scientology was growing in intensity.

The German Debate Over Scientology

[10] In a phrase, many Germans (including regional and federal government officials) see Scientology as a totalitarian, business-driven organization that is guilty of significant human rights abuses (see Enquete Commission 1998, 189-192, 230). Prominent German officials such as Ursula Caberta y Diaz of Hamburg's Scientology Task Force, Member of Parliament Renate Rennebach [SPD], and Bavarian Interior Minister Dr. Günter Beckstein-examined a wide array of primary and secondary sources, legal documents, and former member testimonies before concluding that the organization was antithetical to a democratic state. This conclusion is similar to the position reached by the German Parliament's Enquete Commission that studied new religious and psychological groups in the country. After scrutinizing numerous groups and scrutinizing Scientology's doctrines and corporate behavior, the Enquete Commission singled out Scientology as requiring monitoring by the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (Equete Commission 1998, 170-173, 291).⁶ The German government's position, however, that Scientology was both non-religious (see Enquete Commission 1998, 268) and a potential threat to democracy brought it into direct conflict with its American counterpart.

[11] Although Scientology first appeared in Germany during the early 1970s, the issues leading to the contemporary human rights allegations of abuse trace back to the late 1980s and early 1990s. Germans became alarmed when it appeared that Scientologists were operating in the volatile rental and condominium market, and politicians around the country began receiving complaints about allegedly unscrupulous behaviour by parties associated with the Scientology organization (Baker 1997, 116; MieterEcho 1997; Walsh 1997, A10; see Hausherr 1997, #12). In addition to Scientologists' involvement in the building trades, by late 1992 prominent German Scientology businesspeople were under financial pressure to make profits in order to undertake major investments on behalf of Scientology in the former Communist country of Albania (American Family Foundation 1994; Haag 1992).⁷

[12] Probably because so much Scientology business activity took place in Hamburg around the turn of the 1990s, the city established a working group "to combat the Scientology movement" (Whitney 1994). The key person in this group was Ursula Caberta, and certainly by 1995

(and probably well before) she and other Germans learned about Scientology's forced labor and re-indoctrination programs in which the organization places its upper level members whose job performance declines or who show signs of 'deviance' toward it or its leaders. Operating in several American locations,⁸ these programs (called the Rehabilitation Project Force or simply, the RPF) involve classic brainwashing techniques. These techniques include (often forcible) confinement and physical coercion in the context of an intensive re-education program involving social and psychological degradations, forced confessions, and hard physical labor (Kent 2000; 2001a; 2001b; R. Young 1995, 107). Partly because of Germany's experience with forced labor camps during the Second World War, German officials were particularly concerned to learn about Scientology's operation of its own version of such camps in Europe and America. (Indeed, forced labor is specifically banned in post-war Germany by Article 12 of its constitution.) Moreover, parliamentary officials remained puzzled at the fact that American government officials were completely unaware of them, especially since the RPF has attracted so much American press (AFP 1998; Behar 1986, 318; Koff 1989; Shelor 1984; Welkos and Sappell 1990).

[13] In 1997, a German state official raised the issue of the RPF programs on American soil in response to a harsh "open" letter to Chancellor Helmut Kohl that equated the German government's handling of Scientology with Nazis' persecution of Jews prior to World War II. Published as a full page ad in the *International Herald Tribune*, thirty-four Hollywood personalities signed it, including actors Dustin Hoffman, Goldie Hawn, director Oliver Stone, writer Mario Puzo, and CNN talk show host Larry King (Boyes 1997). (Afterwards, the film director Constantin Costa-Gavras expressed regret at having given the letter his signature [Reuters 1997]). It turned out that many of the signatories had close ties to prominent Scientology actors Tom Cruise and John Travolta (Whittell 1997). The analogy between the current plight of Scientology in Germany and the fate of Jews during the early days of Hitler proved so offensive that the U.S. State Department immediately denounced it, saying "This is an outrageous charge against the German government by an American group. It bears no resemblance to the facts of what is going on [t]here" (quoted in Boyes 1997). Likewise, German-Jewish leader, Ignatz Bubis, dismissed the accusations as "insulting to the memory of the [holocaust] victims" (quoted in John 1997).

[14] As a resource mobilization strategy, therefore, the celebrities' letter was a failure and almost certainly hurt the Scientology cause. Their use of an early Nazi image to convey their message fragmented rather than galvanized both public and American governmental support for their criticisms of the German government, and the incident reveals some of the pitfalls involved with entertainment elites trying to gain entry into an important public debate. They had enough money to purchase exposure in the media, but they did not have sufficient grasp of the issues nor the political wisdom to select appropriate symbols that might have won them support. Indeed, the ill-chosen symbol of Naziism angered German officials (including Kohl himself), and it provided an opening for another German official to respond with a press release that advised, "Instead of sending 'open letters' to Germany, Hollywood VIPS should express their outrage at Scientology's punitive camps." The Bavarian State Minister of the Interior, Dr. Günther Beckstein, went on to refer to the RPF facilities as "penal colonies" that subjected their inmates to "extreme processes of brainwashing and punishment." Using information that came directly out of an American affidavit by former Scientologist, Andre Tabayoyon, Beckstein mentioned one of the harsh physical punishments that a female inmate supposedly suffered, and described the security system around one California facility that involved a "fence, barriers, floodlights, electronic monitors, hidden microphones, ground sensors, and electronic eyes..." He also mentioned information about "semi-automatic rifles and unregistered weapons" in the Southern California RPF facility. Mockingly, Beckstein mused, "Wouldn't it be great if Mario Puzo wrote a script to a film directed by Oliver Stone, in which Dustin Hoffman and Goldie Hawn starred as two inmates in a Scientology penal colony attempting [t]o escape from their heavily-armed

keepers?" (Beckstein 1997; see Tabayoyon 1994). Even though Beckstein gave explicit directions about the location of an RPF facility only about 100 kilometers from Hollywood itself, no indication exists that any American officials took his remarks seriously. Nevertheless, the incident reveals the dangers of cultural elites wading into complicated, international political battles.

[15] In summary, as American government officials seemed to side with Scientology, German officials became convinced that their counterparts in the United States simply did not understand the nature of the organization that they were supporting. Most German officials viewed the organization as either a psychological group or a business being run under a totalitarian ideology whose alleged human rights violations were inimical to the operations of German democracy (see *Enquete Commission* 1998, 347; *St. Paul Pioneer Press* 1995). Along these lines, the Americans did not seem to appreciate the requirements placed upon German politicians by their country's constitution and law, which requires a "militant" protection of "the free democratic basic order" (Kommers 1997, 217, see 510; also see Articles 18 and 20 of Germany's Basic Law). In essence, as one government (the United States) was providing Scientology with important opportunities to expand its resource base, another one (Germany) was severely curtailing the organization's resource acquisition abilities in ways that might have significant implications for the organization's European activities. Germany's curtailment of Scientology became the subject of hearings before the American congressional committee, the Organization [formerly Conference] on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE, also called the Helsinki Commission), and in these hearings Scientology celebrities played prominent roles.

Scientologists Present Before the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE)

[16] Probably through its lobbying efforts, Scientology had three of its prominent celebrities—musician Chick Corea, musician and actor Isaac Hayes, and actor John Travolta—appear before the CSCE on September 18 1997.⁹ Chairman of the CSCE, Senator Alfonse D'Amato (R.-N.Y.) who spent much of the day "showing Travolta around the Senate," quipped, "My staff, for the first time, was in early this morning.... They all had cameras. I never saw so many cameras." *The New York Post* printed a picture of D'Amato and Travolta facing each other with D'Amato's right hand clenching Travolta's left bicep, and Travolta's left hand under D'Amato's right arm. Travolta had a noble look on his face, and the photo caption read, "Sen[ator] Al D'Amato yesterday embraces John Travolta, who testified about persecution of Scientologists" (*New York Post* 1997). Clearly Travolta's celebrity status carried weight, and it served the intended point of getting Scientology's charges against Germany into the American media. That status suggests that even some politicians (not to mention their staff) feel the effects of a "charisma through association." Likewise, it demonstrates that political committees can attract media attention to their work by bringing in celebrities into their public hearings.

[17] Taken together, the statements that Travolta, Hayes, and Corea offered to the Helsinki Commission provide a comprehensive summary of Scientology's objections to the treatment of its organization and members in Germany (see Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe 1997). Never did they question Scientology's status as a religion (as did German officials), but instead they presented a list of religiously based, alleged human rights complaints. As Travolta summarized in his written statement, "federal and state government officials have urged the public to blacklist and boycott Scientologists from every aspect of German life" (Written Statement of John Travolta in Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe 1997).

[18] Travolta, Hayes, and Corea provided additional complaints to the CSCE about (what they considered to be) discrimination in business affairs. These complaints were against the requirement that individuals and companies sign documents (called 'sect filters') stating that none of the parties involved followed Scientology practices. Additional complaints were against government-sanctioned "Scientology" labels placed on businesses owned or operated by Scien-

tologists; loss of employment and employment opportunities; denial of business licences to Scientologists; prohibitions against Scientologists obtaining bank loans; cancellation of Scientology-related bank accounts; movie boycotts (specifically against Tom Cruise's *Mission Impossible* and Travolta's *Phenomenon*); and boycotts against patronizing businesses that employ Scientologists. Indeed, the celebrities even asserted that sometimes these boycotts took place against wrongly identified people.

[19] In the area of education, the testifying celebrities highlighted discrimination claims that included the charge that biased information against Scientology created an oppressive climate in schools for Scientology children in a manner that violated their educational rights as well as the rights of parents to provide the religious training of their choice to their kids. In schools and in German society at large, the three witnesses claimed, Scientologists were harassed, threatened, and even assaulted. Scientology children, they asserted, were expelled from clubs and even schools. Ordinary citizens viewed their good-will projects (like drug rehabilitation) as recruitment schemes, and even a foreign soccer team had to pay a fine for displaying a Scientology ad in view of the playing field (Testimonies and Written Statements by John Travolta, Isaac Hayes, and Chick Corea in Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe 1997).

[20] Contrasting these extensive allegations of human rights violations was the German Ambassador's succinct letter to the CSCE, which outlined his government's position toward Scientology and its members and helped to explain Germany's reaction to it:

After having conducted thorough studies on the Scientology organization, the Federal Government has come to the conclusion that the organization's pseudo-scientific courses can seriously jeopardize individuals' mental and physical health and that it exploits its members. Expert testimony and credible reports have confirmed that membership can lead to psychological and physical dependency, to financial ruin, and even to suicide. In addition, there are indications that Scientology poses a threat to Germany's basic political principles.

Later he added, "[u]p until now, no court has found that the basic and human rights of Scientology members have been violated." As was usually the case, the German Ambassador continued by citing two court cases from the United States that reinforced his concerns, along with legal decisions from Lyon, France, Italy, Greece, and Germany (German Ambassador Jürgen Chrobog, in Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe 1997; see Enquete Commission 1998, 227-232). American congressional leaders had not mentioned any of the court cases during the hearing, so one is left wondering whether they even knew about them.

[21] Neither Travolta, nor Corea, nor Hayes mentioned (probably because they did not yet know) that earlier (on February 28, 1997) a German Scientologist had "been granted asylum in the United States after telling a judge she would be subjected to religious persecution if she went back home" (*The Washington Post* 1997). Nearly three years later, however (on June 14, 2000), another actress and Scientologist, Catherine Bell, did bring up the asylum issue before the House Committee on International Relations. Pointing out the former German resident in the hearing room, Bell told that committee that she was "Ms. Antje Victore, who in 1997 became the first German Scientologist to be granted asylum by a U.S. immigration court on the grounds that she faced ruinous persecution if she had to return to Germany" (Bell, 2000, [3-4]). Bell could not have realized that the circumstances under which Victore sought asylum were fraudulent, having been contrived by the Scientology organization itself ostensibly to embarrass the Germans. German media exposed the fraud just two weeks after Bell's introduction of her to the American congressional members (Kruttschnitt, Nuebel, and Schweitzer 2000; see Billerbeck 2000; Kent 2001c, 3).

John Travolta and President Clinton

[22] Evidence of Scientology's high level State Department contacts came to light in a widely-discussed article about Travolta in *George* magazine. Travolta attended an April 1997 summit on volunteerism in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in order "to present educational materials created by Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard." The next day, Travolta met President Clinton who told him, "Your program sounds great.... More than that..., I'd really love to help you with your issue over in Germany with Scientology" (Travolta quoting Clinton in J. Young 1998, 106). Clinton informed Travolta that "he had a roommate years ago who was a Scientologist and had really liked him, and respected his views on it. He said he felt we were given an unfair hand in [Germany] and that he wanted to fix it" (Ressner 1997). Clinton followed up on this conversation by going "to the extraordinary length of assigning his national security advisor, Sandy Berger, to be the administration's Scientology point person" (J. Young 1998, 138). In September 1997, when Travolta and Chick Corea were in Washington (presumably for their testimony before the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe), Clinton "had White House political affairs director, Craig Smith, arrange a meeting between Berger, Travolta, and jazzman Chick Corea, also an avid Scientologist. According to a senior administration official, the straight-shooting Berger briefed Travolta on the administration's efforts in the same manner he would a senior senator. 'Sandy was just great to us,' Travolta notes" (J. Young 1998, 138).

[23] The State Department received some criticism for this high-level meeting, in no small part because people wondered whether Clinton was doing a favour for Travolta in return for the actor providing a favorable interpretation of the presidential character (based upon Clinton) in his current movie, *Primary Colors*. Senator Lauch Faircloth (R.-N.C.), for example, wanted "'to haul John Travolta before Congress' to find out whether the actor toned down his portrayal of a philandering, Clintonlike presidential candidate . . . in exchange for Mr. Clinton's promise to help the Church of Scientology fight with the German government" (Pierce [comp.] 1998). Apparently this effort went nowhere, but the possibility that Clinton was adjusting foreign policy for his movie image came up in both The White House Press Briefing on February 12, 1998, and on the NBC news interview program, *Meet The Press*, on which Berger was the guest. The White House Press Secretary, Mike McCurry, tried to minimize the discussion that Clinton and Travolta had in Philadelphia, and suggested that Berger only explained to Travolta (and presumably, Corea) "what we had been doing to raise our concerns pursuant to work that we had already done diplomatically" (The White House 1998, 6). When an interviewer on *Meet The Press* asked Berger whether he or the President were trying to influence Travolta's portrayal in *Primary Colors*, he replied that the only ulterior motive he had for the meeting was "to get an autograph" for one of his kids (excerpt from *Meet The Press* in O'Connor 1998; *The Washington Post* 1998).

[24] An op-ed piece in *The New York Times*, written by Frank Rich, reproduced Berger's claim that his reason for holding the briefing was to get an autograph. As an explanation, however, for "why he had wasted his time and taxpayers' money to brief a movie star's delegation," columnist Rich judged it to be "as revealing as it is pitiful" (Rich 1998). Europeans, however, likely saw the Clinton-arranged meeting in the context of other actions the American president had taken on behalf of Scientology. For example, the section of the State Department's 1996 human rights report that was harshly critical of Germany's actions towards Scientology "was written by the White House...." Its condemnation was so strong that Secretary of State Madeleine Albright apologized to the German government because of it (*American Spectator* 1997). French and German authorities also were aware that the December 1996 issue of Scientology's French language publication, *Éthique & Liberté*, published what it called an "Interview exclusive" against drug-use, written by Clinton himself (Clinton 1996). They also took note when Clinton sent Scientology congratulatory greetings on its 50th anniversary (on December 28, 1999), in which he "thanked the church for its work to promote religious tolerance and to 'build just communi-

ties” (Gerstein 2000). In short, it appears to the Europeans that Clinton was working actively on behalf of the Scientology organization, and that his assistance to the Hollywood Scientology lobbyists was indicative of his general support for the group.

Lobbying in the House of Representatives for a Bill Condemning Germany

[25] While in Washington meeting with Berger and presenting before the CSCE, Travolta also spent time lobbying on behalf of a House of Representatives motion that (had it passed) would have put on record its “concern that performers, entertainers, and other artists from the United States who are members of minority religious groups such as Scientology continue to experience discrimination by the German Government” (House of Representatives 1997). Almost certainly introduced after lobbying efforts by Scientology’s paid lobbyist, David H. Miller, the resolution gained “support from leaders of House caucuses who advocate on behalf of arts, Hispanics[,] and African Americans” (Dahl 1998a, 14A). Although the resolution cleared the House International Relations Committee, it failed to pass the full House when it went to vote in November. One Representative (Doug Bereuter, R-Neb.) complained, “I think it is important we not have Tom Cruise or John Travolta setting foreign policy in this country and [I] think that is a driving factor behind this legislation” (Dahl 1998a, 14A). The bill suffered defeat at 101 in favor and 318 against (Anonymous 1997), with Amo Houghtin (R-N.Y.) apparently expressing the majority’s opinion by concluding, “the issue was ‘whether we do not look just a bit pompous sitting back here with all our many moral problems in this country, to pass judgment on a nation, our friend, which is wrestling with something which we ourselves and other nations are wrestling with’” (quoted in *The Virginian-Pilot* 1997).

[26] Travolta and lobbyist Miller saw “a victory in the defeat. Miller claimed, “The important thing was to make a point here” (quoted in Dahl 1998a, 14A), while Travolta proclaimed, “there were at least 300 people in the House and the Senate who agreed with our plight and, at minimum, 100 who went 100 percent to bat for it.” He added, “I think a lot of it had to do with Clinton backing it up because it was for all minority religions, not just ours, which I liked” (quoted in J. Young 1998, 138). Moreover, Miller saw the failed resolution as only a first attempt. He revealed that he was “in regular contact with the National Security Council and the State Department and is counting heads on Capitol Hill to see if his group could persuade the Scientology-sponsored resolution. ‘We’re going to come back at it again. Let me tell you, it’s well in the works, he said’” (quoted in Dahl 1998a, 14A).

[27] As promised, Representative Matt Salmon (R-Ariz.), whose Mormon faith a Scientology publication thought was significant (Church of Scientology International 1998, 24), introduced another resolution that called on the President “to assert the concern of the United States about religious discrimination in Germany” (quoted in Dahl 1998b). In late June 1998, Travolta was back on Capitol Hill, lobbying for Salmon’s bill. Again he attracted a flurry of attention, but not just from the media. *The Washington Post* carried a small article with a picture of Travolta, stating:

In case you needed reminding that congressmen are shameless groupies, consider the small mob of House members that formed around John Travolta yesterday in the Rayburn Room of the Capitol, just off the House floor. There was jostling. There was staring. There was lining up for photos with the movie star who was on the Hill to meet with lawmakers, including House Speaker Newt Gingrich, on behalf of the Church of Scientology, of which he is a member (Gerhart and Groer 1998, B3).

Perhaps the blurring boundary in Washington between politics and entertainment helps to explain why Gingrich, who at the time was the most powerful figure in Congress, met with him (see Marshall, 1997, 204-205; Seib 1999). The bill apparently died in committee.

[28] The following year, 1999, Scientology continued its lobbying efforts. When Salmon, along with Representatives Benjamin A. Gilman (R-NY), Mark Foley (R-FL), and Senator Mike Enzi (R-WY), (and others) introduced House and Senate bills calling for the German government "to enter into constructive dialogue with minority groups subject to government discrimination based upon religion or belief," Scientologist Anne Archer was at the press conference (News From the House International Relations Committee 1999, 2). In 2000, Salmon, Gilman, and Donald Payne (D.-N.J.) introduced another bill that identified Austria, Belgium, France, and Germany as countries where religious intolerance persists (House of Representatives 2000). Although none of these bills have passed, they revealed differences in understanding that persisted between members of the American and German governments on the sensitive issues of religious freedom, transnational conglomerates, and the protection of democracy within autonomous states (see Kent 2001c).

Conclusion

[29] While reflecting on the relationship between celebrities and politics, sociologists David S. Meyer and Joshua Gamson concluded, "[t]he resources that celebrities bring to bear in social movement struggles do not generally include citizen education or detailed political analysis" (Meyer and Gamson 1995, 202). In essence, few celebrities have the educational and political skills that would allow them to do sustained, in-depth and nuanced presentations. Certainly this conclusion gains support from reading a CSCE transcript in which the Scientology celebrities floundered for answers to members of Congress about why Germany appeared to be so hostile to that particular group (Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe 1997, 16-17).¹⁰

[30] If we can overlook these floundering responses, and if we put aside the unsuccessful campaign that attempted to link the condition of contemporary German Scientologists with pre-war German Jews, then observers of Washington politics must give credit to the partial effectiveness of Scientology's negotiation and celebrity lobbying efforts. Its negotiation of an IRS settlement has proven enormously valuable to the organization's image, and it is doubtful that Scientology's stars would have gained access to governmental elites without it. With that charitable status in place, Scientology and its celebrities apparently applied pressure on the Department of State, gained access to key State Department officials, motivated the U.S. Trade Representative (with Sonny Bono's assistance) to undertake a key copyright issue with Sweden (Bardach 1999, 91; Heintz 1997), won key congressional members to its causes, and even gained entry into the Clinton White House. Taken together, these achievements bespeak an organization that had learned how to make Washington listen.

[31] While some Hollywood celebrities gain political access through their financial contributions, only a few prominent Scientologists show up on politicians' lists as major contributors. For example, Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman—perhaps Hollywood's highest-profile Scientology couple until their recent divorce proceedings cast her commitment in doubt—contributed \$58,000 to various Democratic causes, including \$14,000 to Hilary Clinton's successful Senatorial campaign (von Rimscha 2000). Scientologist Mimi Rogers attended a \$5,000-a-person dinner/fund-raiser for Clinton in September 1998 (Weinraub 1998), and Travolta introduced President Clinton at a \$25,000-a-plate fundraiser in August 2000 (Kennedy 2000:2). An inside-the-beltway Washington lawyer and Scientologist, John Coale, donated at least \$30,000 to various Democratic causes, "including the Democratic National Committee and Vice President Al Gore's political action committee" (Jacoby 1998:5; Hess 1999, 74). He and his wife (CNN legal commentator, lawyer, and Scientologist Greta Van Susteren) attended a state dinner for the Italian Prime Minister, and Van Susteren sat next to First Lady Hilary Clinton (Jacoby 1998, 5). No evidence, exists, however, that Cruise, Rogers, Coale, or Van Susteren have tried to transform their financial clout and contacts into Scientology lobbying opportunities. More interesting is that fact that, all on the same day (July 2, 1998), ten prominent Scientologists donated a total of

\$7,400 to Congressman Benjamin A. Gilman's coffer-three months before he signed on as a co-sponsor to Matt Salmon's House of Representatives bill that was critical of Germany's protection of religious freedom (see The Center for Responsive Politics 1999). Financial interests, however, may be a factor that helps to explain the Scientology celebrities' access.

[32] Not only does the Department of State have a mandate to monitor human rights (including religious human rights) issues in countries around the world, it also seeks to protect American financial interests abroad. Seen in this context, Germany's firm stand against Scientology combined religious human rights concerns with financial protection of America's major export-entertainment. Corea caught the ear of politicians and State Department officials with his claims of financial loss due to the cancellation of German shows, and Travolta (along with fellow Scientologist Cruise) had been the subject of a movie boycott. Hayes had not 'suffered' at the hands of German officials, but perhaps Scientology officials thought that his status as a visible minority (an African-American) gave him a platform to discuss alleged discrimination. In any case, the withdrawal of state funding for Corea and the (albeit failed) boycott of a Travolta movie gave the stars issues in which they could "legitimately claim standing or stake" (Meyer and Gamson 1995, 201).

[33] Finally, worth remembering is that members of Congress and the State Department grew up with these Hollywood personalities. Travolta has been a presence in the American pop culture scene since the 1970s, starring in numerous television and movie roles with a rejuvenated career in the 1990s. Hayes's major musical hit, "Shaft," is instantly recognizable and still receives occasional radio airtime, and Corea has been making music for decades. For a generation of Americans who have grown up with television and radio, these three celebrities are familiar figures who, in various ways, have been in people's lives for a long time. Indeed, some baby-boomers associate them with crucial moments in their own young adult lives. Because of this pop-culture, media-generated notoriety, it is not surprising that Americans-specifically American politicians and government officials-would give them special access. Indeed, Scientology officials count on them doing so, and thus far the actions of D.C. decision-makers have proven them right.

[34] On a practical level, perhaps the most significant question that this article generates is whether the influence of Scientology's celebrities was indeed part of a larger pattern of accessibility that Hollywood experienced because of systemic predilections involving media, money, and political power in the American political system, or instead was a temporary window of opportunity fostered by the social climate of the Clinton administration. Cultural studies theorists who view celebrities and politicians as constructing "public subjectivities to house the popular will" (Marshall 1997, 204) undoubtedly see the infusion of celebrities into politics as a reality of post-modern life. In, however, the post-9/11 realities of a nervous America led by George W. Bush, one cultural commentator reflects, "[t]he whole fusion thing [between Hollywood and Washington] seems dated suddenly... [W]hat the public wants now are supercompetent technocrats with no discernible private lives who sublimate their libidos by plotting strategy instead of parading them on cable [television]" (Kirn 2002, 12)). For many people, world events may have become more gripping than entertainment, so celebrities may find fewer politicians and smaller audiences for their opinions on pressing issues of the day.

Notes

- 1 By "cultural elites" I mean people whose relationships to various media give them significant impact upon societies and/or cultures, especially in areas involving styles, tastes, and entertainment.
- 2 The best known celebrity among American federal politicians was Ronald Reagan, and a celebrity-turned-politician who had taken Scientology courses and remained a supporter of some of its causes was the late Congressman Sonny Bono (Bardach 1999, 90-92)

- 3 Resource mobilization theory identifies the ways in which organizations acquire and utilize a wide variety of assets (such as time, wealth, talent, labour etc.) in efforts to reach their goals while depriving their opponents of them. By the late 1970s it has usurped relative deprivation as the dominant paradigm for interpreting social movements. In recent years, new social movement theory has been among its most vocal challengers, yet some researchers have moved resource mobilization theory into areas such as Internet battles (Peckham 1998) and globalization (Kent 1999a; 2001c).
- 4 Most of this material is housed in a research collection that I oversee, although a great deal of it is available on the Internet.
- 5 In secret committee negotiations that transpired over two years and that operated "outside of normal agency procedures," Scientologists and IRS officials reached an agreement that granted the organization tax-exempt status after the organization agreed to pay \$12.5 million for unspecified reasons to the federal government, and Scientology agreed to drop 2300 lawsuits that its members had launched against the revenue department (International Association of Scientologists, [1994?]). These and other aspects of the agreement, which undermined a string of court decisions against Scientology's tax exemption efforts, remained confidential until *The Wall Street Journal* posted a leaked version of the document on the Internet (Franz 1997; MacDonald 1997).
- 6 Some North American scholars see Germany's position differently. Two Canadian authors explain German hostility toward Scientology as the result of a "lack of empirical research coupled with hasty theological judgements based on limited texts" interpreted by church-affiliated anti-cultists who often enjoy special relationships with the state (Hexham and Poewe, 1999, 210, 222). Taking a different approach, an American law student argued, "the majority of Germans perceive Scientology as not fitting traditional religious norms and as perhaps unworthy of protection" (Moseley 1997, 1169).
- 7 It is difficult to obtain information about the results of Scientology's Albanian efforts, although one source indicates that Albania banned Scientology "in the wake of a corruption scandal" (Morvant 1996).
- 8 RPFs operate in and on Scientology property in at least three California locations, plus at locations in Clearwater (Florida), Copenhagen, East Grinstead (West Sussex, England), and Australia.
- 9 Important to note is that, within Scientology, all three entertainers are "Honorary LRH [L. Ron Hubbard] Public Relations Officers" whose goals involve the propagation of Scientology information and image (See the list attached to Anderson 1980, 1, 3; Church of Scientology International 1994).
- 10 When, for example, Corea responded to a question about apparent German hostility to Scientology, his interpretation of its cause was, "We're dealing with incredible, weird, wild emotions" (Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe 1997, 17).

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