

Bitcoin creator
unmasked again ?



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A month after a firestorm erupted over Newsweek's claim that it "unmasked" the creator of Bitcoin, a U. K. university has released a new study that points to a different candidate.

The study by students and researchers at Aston University in Birmingham claims a linguistics analysis of the writings by people most often listed as bitcoin's potential creator leads them to believe that Nick Szabo, a well known name in cryptography circles, is the mysterious father of the digital currency.

A group of 40 students and researchers at the university studied the writing of 11 candidates, concluding that Mr. Szabo's writings have "uncanny" similarities to the writing found in the initial October 2008 white paper on bitcoin.

It's important to stress that the team isn't saying its study points conclusively to Mr. Szabo, only that of the people it studied, he appears - on the basis of his writing - to be the most likely candidate. That is a far cry from a smoking gun. It's just another clue.

"Our study adds to the weight of evidence pointing towards Nick Szabo," said Dr. Jack Grieve, a lecturer in forensic linguistics at the university and the study's leader, in a statement. "The case looks pretty clear-cut. Szabo is an expert in law, finance, cryptography and computer science...Did Nick Szabo create Bitcoin? We're not sure, but we think he probably wrote the paper so it's certainly worth a closer look."

Mr. Szabo is known for his work in digital contracts and currency. He developed a precursor to bitcoin called bit gold, and has written in depth about a fairly wide array of topics including the security of online commerce. An earlier, anonymously published textual analysis also claimed that Mr. Szabo's writings pointed to him as the likely creator of the currency.

Mr. Szabo's was unavailable for comment. Furthermore, George Washington University says that despite widespread reports that Mr. Szabo worked as a law professor at the school, it has no records of his ever working there in that capacity. The university did confirm, though, that he received a law degree from the school in 2006.

The Aston University team looked at the writing of 11 men, all of whom at one time or another have been rumored to be " Satoshi Nakamoto," the author of the 2008 white paper. In addition to Mr. Szabo, they were Dorian S. Nakamoto, the man named by Newsweek in March; Hal Finney, the first person to work with the pseudonymous Nakamoto on bitcoin; Jed McCaleb, the founder of Mt. Gox; Dustin Trammell; Gavin Andresen, currently the chief scientist at the Bitcoin Foundation; Vili Lehdonvirta; Michael Clear; Shinichi Mochizuki; Wei Dai; and the team of Neal King, Vladimir Oksman, and Charles Bry, whose names appear on patents in August 2008 for systems that look similar to bitcoin.

In a press release, the school writes:

The results showed that of the eleven Szabo is by far the closest match, with a large number of distinctive linguistic traits appearing in both the Bitcoin paper and Szabo's blogs and other writings. This includes the use of: the <https://assignbuster.com/bitcoin-creator-unmasked-again/>

phrases “ chain of...”, “ trusted third parties”, “ for our purposes”, “ need for...”, “ still”, “ of course”, “ as long as”, “ such as” and “ only” numerous times, contractions, commas before ‘ and’ and ‘ but’, hyphenation, ‘-ly’ adverbs, the pronouns ‘ we’ and ‘ our’ in papers by a single author; fragmented sentences following colons and reflexive (-self) pronouns. In total hundreds of documents written by the eleven possible authors were considered, including over 40 academic papers written by Szabo which are available on his personal website.

Again, how many other people in the world could have those same quirks? Quite possibly many. But it’s fun to speculate.

UPDATE: According to George Washington University, it has no record of Mr. Szabo ever working at the school as a law professor. An earlier version of this post stated that Mr. Szabo was a former George Washington University law professor.