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# Project MKULTRA and the Search for Mind Control: Clandestine Use of LSD Within the CIA

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**Project MKULTRA and the Search for Mind Control:  
Clandestine Use of LSD within the CIA**

Tani Linville

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In the months following the Watergate scandal and the resignation of Richard Nixon from the presidency, the newly appointed Vice President Gerald Ford, became President of the United States. With rumors circulating that the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) had involvement in the Democratic National Committee break – in and cover up, the Rockefeller Commission was created to investigate the CIA and potential negligence. To lead their own investigation of the Agency, the United States Senate, in January of 1975, formed the Select Committee to Study Government Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, also known as the Church Committee. In February, the Nedzi Committee, later renamed the Pike Committee, was created in the House. Senator Frank Church and Representative Otis Pike led the committees in investigations of the CIA as well as the Intelligence Community (IC).<sup>1</sup> The committees found more than they bargained for when they uncovered a covert operation within the CIA which tested various drugs on witting and unwitting U.S. civilians in an attempt to discover a wide range of spy tactics. This Cold War driven plot elicited the help of psychologists, physicians, college professors, and Intelligence agents alike to experiment new procedures in the field of behavioral modification.

From 1953 to 1964 the CIA engaged in various clandestine operations to manipulate the human mind. With the relatively new discovery of LSD, scientists around the world became interested in its ability to be used for both defensive and offensive measures in the interest of national security. Minimal documentation was kept on the extent of the research conducted on the manipulation of the human mind. In the years following the termination of the program documentation of MKULTRA was destroyed. An analysis of historical evidence has proven

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<sup>1</sup> Gerald Haines, "The Pike Committee Investigations and the CIA," Central Intelligence Library, last modified June 27, 2008, accessed January 20, 2016, [https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/csi-studies/studies/winter98\\_99/art07.html/](https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/csi-studies/studies/winter98_99/art07.html/).

difficult to pin point an exact reason for this action. Those involved claimed the decision was made in an attempt to prevent misunderstanding; however, the secrecy that has followed suggests otherwise. While the MKULTRA program ran for a relatively short amount of time, the CIA and other government agencies were researching behavioral modification during the years following World War II. The Intelligence agents, physicians, researchers, and other involved in the MKULTRA experiments were in direct violation of ethical codes previously set in place prior to the program, including the Hippocratic Oath, U.S. Constitution, Nuremberg Code, and the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights.

Due to the Committee Reports and the details of the death of one particular MKULTRA victim being released to the public one individual in particular took discovering the truth of MKULTRA upon himself. It could be said that if it was not for the work of John Marks and his book *The Search for the Manchurian Candidate: The Secret History of the Behavioral Sciences*, the horrors of MKULTRA may have been buried when Richard Helms, director of the CIA, ordered the destruction of controversial documents in 1973. Through the Freedom of Information Act and with the help of a few lawyers, thousands of documents were released to Marks outlining the financial history of the CIA's search for mind control. These documents had been filed with other financial documents keeping them safe from the hand of Helms. Once Marks and a team of researchers sifted through boxes of still censored documents piecing together names of individuals and institutions involved, the most comprehensive picture of Project MKULTRA developed. Apart from a few scholarly articles, all of which cite Marks to some extent, MKULTRA could have been lost to the realm of conspiracy theorists. The 1977 Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, which sought to further investigate MKULTRA, commends him for accomplishing more on his own than the government committees that investigated before him.

The surviving documents in accordance with hearings conducted by the federal government present the story of the clandestine experiments of behavioral modification and the use of mind-altering drugs by the CIA during the Cold War.

The road to MKULTRA, and the violation of ethical standards previously set in place was paved by the perceived potential threat of other nations during the Cold War. In 1949 the Hungarian government held a show trial for Cardinal Josef Mindszenty in which he confessed to crimes he apparently did not commit. The CIA claimed Mindszenty appeared drunk or as if he had been taken over by an outside force. In order to protect United States national security, the first Director of Central Intelligence (DCI), Roscoe Hillenkoetter, authorized unvouchered funds to be put to use in this area. On April 20, 1950 Project BLUEBIRD was created. Sparking what would become various unethical research experiments conducted in the name of national security.<sup>2</sup> BLUEBIRD's primary objectives were, "discovering means of conditioning personnel to prevent unauthorized extraction of information from them...; investigating the possibility of control of an individual by application of special interrogation techniques; memory enhancement, and establishing defensive means for preventing hostile control of Agency personnel."<sup>3</sup> These objectives would continue throughout the MKULTRA program.

Some documents of this MKULTRA precursor explain the desire to create Manchurian Candidates, which are individuals that could be used to act in a certain way against their will, for CIA use. This could be done in a variety of ways; however, hypnosis was the most enticing. The Agency also sought ways in which spies could be detected, have their memories erased and replaced with false memories. Psychologist, G. H. Estabrooks of Colgate College in New York

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<sup>2</sup> John Marks, *The Search for the Manchurian Candidate* (New York: Random House Publishing Group, 1989), 23-24.

<sup>3</sup> United States Select Committee on Intelligence, "Project MKULTRA, the CIA's Program of Research in Behavioral Modification" (Ninety-fifth Congress, first session, August 3, 1977) 67.

published works and spoke of ways in which hypnosis could create Manchurian Candidates, by the means of creating an artificial and reversible multiple personality disorder. While the U.S. desired to create these types of agents there was also a push to develop ways in which undercover agents from enemy territory could be discovered.<sup>4</sup>

The first studies conducted focused on the defensive uses of behavioral modification to protect Americans from potential threats from Communist countries. At the closing of World War II, the United States had seen firsthand what humanity was capable of, particularly the mark Nazi leaders and scientists left when the horrors of concentration camps came into the public sphere. Some of the first offensive experiments happened in Japan during the Korean War, where under the cover of conducting polygraph work, agents tested a potential truth serum of the depressant sodium amytal with the stimulant benzedrine. The initial tests were considered a success and the CIA kept limited documentation, a trend that would continue well into the 1960's. In 1950, the former State Department member, Morse Allen, became the head of Project BLUEBIRD which was renamed Project ARTICHOKE on August 20, 1951, shifting experimental responsibility from the CIA's Office of Scientific Intelligence (OSI) to the Inspection and Security Office (ISO). This change symbolizes a shift from tactics used primarily for defensive means to the search for more offensive measures.<sup>5</sup>

The ARTICHOKE report which still remains censored, asked the question, "Can an individual of \*\*\*\*\* descent be made to perform an act of attempted assassination involuntarily under the influence of ARTICHOKE?"<sup>6</sup> The conclusions of the document claimed that drugging

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<sup>4</sup> Colin Ross, "Ethics of CIA and Military Contracting by Psychiatrists and Psychologists," *Ethical Human Psychology & Psychiatry* 9 (Spring 2007): 28.

<sup>5</sup> "Project Artichoke," Operation Gladio, last modified November 20, 2014, accessed March 21, 2016, [http://operation-gladio.net/project-artichoke#footnote7\\_ykgrws1/](http://operation-gladio.net/project-artichoke#footnote7_ykgrws1/).

<sup>6</sup> CIA, ARTICHOKE Report, January 22, 1954, 2, accessed March 21, 2016. [http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document\\_conversions/89801/DOC\\_0000140399.pdf/](http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/89801/DOC_0000140399.pdf/)

an individual, through the drinking of a spiked alcoholic cocktail, would be incredibly difficult if not impossible. The use of an unwitting subject in which there was limited control in diverse social situations proved to be a major limitation.<sup>7</sup> Not only was dosing the suspected spy's drink with chemical agents difficult, predicting and understanding how their individual bodies would respond to the drugs was incredibly difficult. It is evident early on that the potential uses of this type of interrogation method was risky and impractical. The Korean War and anticommunist rhetoric circulating through American life helped set a mood of fear and paranoia in the United States. It could be said that the CIA was simply following in the footsteps of the common thought of the day which encouraged new and unique ways to improve national security. Rumors that the Soviet Union had begun to create their own behavioral modification programs involving the use of drugs on captured servicemen pushed the CIA and other military branches to pursue psychological manipulation further.

The CIA in cooperation with the Army, Navy, and Air Force, worked to find a truth drug as well as interrogation techniques to protect captured servicemen. The discovery of a "truth serum" would allow for the complete truth to be told when the drug was administered. The benefits from technology of this caliber could have directly influenced spying and military tactics of the future. In response, testing in the field of behavioral modification began. While the parameters of Project ARTICHOKE forbade terminal experiments, the original charter allowed for them to be conducted in secret internationally if researchers so desired.<sup>8</sup> Documentation on whether or not this was ever accomplished is limited and censored. The U. S. Navy gave \$300,000 to Professor Richard Wendt, the chairman of the Psychology Department at the University of Rochester, to study a variety of drugs on student volunteers in an attempt to

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>8</sup> Marks, 32 – 35.

produce amnesia. The project fell under the ARTICHOKE umbrella and was codenamed CHATTER. With the help of Dr. Samuel Thompson, psychiatrist, physiologist, pharmacologist, and Navy Commander, the men studied ways in which to produce amnesia in subjects. Dr. Thompson was a medical professional and during his time in the CHATTER operation questioned Professor Wendt on the appropriateness of his experiments since he had no professional background in psychiatry or pharmacology and was only a professor.<sup>9</sup> Prior to MKULTRA, legal and ethical standards were bypassed to expand knowledge in the field of behavioral modification. The discovery of new and unique drugs fueled this fire.

The MKULTRA program would not have come into existence if it was not for one peculiar discovery. In 1934, Swiss chemist Albert Hofmann synthesized and ingested lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) for the first time while working with plant fungi. Hofmann did not know what he had created until 1943, when he suddenly felt dizzy after working with the chemicals in his lab. He bicycled home and experienced the first acid trip complete with vivid hallucinations.<sup>10</sup> The CIA's intelligence driven project to covertly use LSD on witting and unwitting U.S. civilians was not chartered until 1953, ten years later. Unwitting civilians were thought to produce the most accurate results. Since they, like those in the field, would have no prior knowledge of behavioral modification experiments by the CIA. On April 13, DCI Allen Dulles made official the proposal, using the ideas of Richard Helms, to create Project MKULTRA. With an initial budget of \$300,000, the program was created to be exempt from normal financial controls and allowed for research projects to be conducted without written

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 38 – 49.

<sup>10</sup> Mark Wheelis, "The Use and Misuse of LSD by the U.S. Army and the CIA" In *Innovation Dual Use, and Security: Managing the Risks of Emerging Biological and Chemical Technologies*, edited by Jonathan B. Tucker (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2012), 290.



contracts.<sup>11</sup> MKULTRA sought behavioral modification through the use of mind-altering drugs as well as other psychological tactics and would bypass ethical standards previously set in place by the Hippocratic Oath, U.S. Constitution, Nuremberg Code, and the UN Declaration of Human Rights. The Technical Services Division (TSD), responsible for most of MKULTRA experiments, maintained limited documentation and kept individual knowledge to a minimum. CIA chemist Sidney Gottlieb was placed in command of a bulk of the MKULTRA subprojects and is recognized as the mastermind behind the behavioral modification projects.

In 1963, the CIA Inspector General published a report on MKULTRA. Although not released to the public until later, the document outlines the basics of the program but did contain some censored sections. Written in the original charter, MKULTRA sought the, “research and development of chemical, biological, and radiological materials capable of employment in clandestine operations to control human behavior.”<sup>12</sup> The documentation of research was kept to a minimum and knowledge of the project was incredibly limited. Testing on unwitting civilians began in 1955, while universities, hospitals, state and federal institutions, and other research organizations began conducting research of their own. In order to fund research in a manner that was secret the CIA created the Society for the Investigation of Human Ecology, also known as the Human Ecology fund, which served as a front organization to disguise CIA funds. Secrecy allowed for more academic freedom and connections to more professors, psychologists, and scientists without top secret security clearance.<sup>13</sup> This allowed for research to be conducted without individuals or their respected institutions to be directly linked to the CIA. In some cases they were completely unaware their work was being used in an attempt to enhance national

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<sup>11</sup> Marks, 57 – 61.

<sup>12</sup> Memorandum for the Director of Central Intelligence, “CIA Inspector General Report on Inspection of MKULTRA,” Washington D.C., July 26, 1963, 1.

<sup>13</sup> Marks, 159 – 172.

security. Grants and other funds were given to individuals and institutions through what seemed to be a neutral party. Physicians, pharmacologists, psychologists, and psychiatrists alike believed their research was being used to further the knowledge within the field of psychology. However, their results were used to further CIA investigation into behavioral modification and mind control.

This funding allowed for research to be conducted and published in a manner that was acceptable to the particular institution without having to be directly linked to the CIA and without leaking potentially new national security advances. The charter of MKULTRA thought the “sensitive nature” and risk of the experiments being conducted would be enough to validate knowledge and understanding being kept to a minimum and within the ring of a few particular individuals. The lack of records made secrecy easier. The Inspector General Report mentioned the files appearing to be incomplete and unorganized, presenting a lack of management and oversight. At its inception the program consisted of 144 subprojects all of which related to the control of human behavior and the mind.<sup>14</sup>

Richard Helms, who could rightly be called the creator of MKULTRA, served as Deputy Director of Plans in 1953 and wrote a memorandum for the DCI mentioning more details of the project. Helms wanted to keep the identity of the CIA and the U.S. Government secret, claiming the subprojects were highly “sensitive”. He mentioned his desire to develop, “chemical material which causes a reversible non-toxic aberrant mental state... This material could potentially aid in discrediting individuals, eliciting information, implanting suggestion and other forms of mental control.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Inspector General Report, 7 – 23.

<sup>15</sup> Memorandum for the Director of Central Intelligence, “Two Extremely Sensitive Research Programs,” Washington D.C., April 3, 1953, 1 – 2.

The Select Committee on Intelligence which investigated MKULTRA in 1977 uncovered some valuable documents and information relating to MKULTRA. A variety of the written proposals have survived with objectives of some of the experiments being defined as follows:

- to study the possible synergistic action of drugs which may be appropriate for use in abolishing consciousness.<sup>16</sup>
- to study methods for the administration of drugs without the knowledge of the patient.<sup>17</sup>
- the discovery of the following materials and methods: which will promote illogical thinking and impulsiveness to the point where the recipient would be discredited in public, increase the efficiency of mentation and perception, prevent or counteract the intoxicating effects of alcohol, promote signs and symptoms of recognized diseases in a reversible way so that they may be used for malingering, and produce physical disablement such as paralysis.<sup>18</sup>

These statements only outline a few of the CIA's potential objectives. The 1977 Senate hearings uncovered 149 MKULTRA subprojects, many of which dealt with behavioral modification, mind control, or the administration of drugs. Experiments dealing with behavioral modification through the administration of drugs and/or alcohol in volunteer subjects consisted of 14 subprojects, where six clearly outlined the use of unwitting test subjects. Hypnosis was incorporated into at least eight subprojects. Four subprojects were dedicated to the use of magicians and magic. Sleep research, behavioral modification and psychotherapy made up nine subprojects. The attainment of drugs and other chemicals was listed in seven subprojects. Six subprojects enlisted the help of individuals to research and attend seminars dealing with behavioral modification. The CIA assigned the study of human motivation to a total of 23 subprojects. Polygraph research was the primary focus of three subprojects while another three projects were dedicated to the funding of MKULTRA. Six subprojects were devoted to the

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<sup>16</sup> U.S. Select Committee, MKULTRA, 111.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 112.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 123 – 124.

research of drugs and other biological materials to be used in humans. This condensed list only outlines a small portion of the MKULTRA programs.<sup>19</sup>

The same Senate hearing found from the surviving documents a list of 44 colleges and universities, 15 research organizations and pharmaceutical companies, 12 hospitals, as well as three penal institutions which conducted research for MKULTRA. This committee also discovered 185 individual researchers who had willingly or unknowingly been involved to some capacity in the 149 subprojects making up MKUTLRA.<sup>20</sup> The Intelligence agents, physicians, researchers, and other involved in the MKULTRA experiments were in direct violation of ethical codes previously set in place prior to the program, including the Hippocratic Oath, U.S. Constitution, Nuremberg Code, and the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights.

Medical ethics date back to the fifth century BCE with the work of the Greek Physician, Hippocrates.<sup>21</sup> The code of ethics entitled the Hippocratic Oath lays out the relationship between the physician and his teacher, their gods, and their patients. The relationship of physician and student as outlined in the Oath takes on a relationship similar to family. It is stated that the physician should only pass on information to students who have also taken the Oath and committed themselves to similar values.<sup>22</sup> While there is a critical necessity for the physician to be held accountable to their students, they are also to be held accountable to their gods. The universality of the Oath can be seen even within the context of pagan Greece. Those who adhere to the Judeo-Christian worldview have applied the Oath to include the god of their monotheistic

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>21</sup> Byron D. Cannon, "Hippocratic oath," *Magill's Medical Guide (Online Edition)* (January 2015): accessed March 23, 2016, *Research Starters*, EBSCOhost.

<sup>22</sup> Nigel Cameron, *The New Medicine: Life and Death After Hippocrates* (Chicago and London: The Bioethics Press, 2001), 26.

religious beliefs.<sup>23</sup> Nigel Cameron in his book *The New Medicine: Life and Death After Hippocrates* states in reference to the Oath's call to responsibility and accountability to a higher power states that the Oath, "...reaches beyond the doctor-patient relationship to the relationship of both doctor and patient with the gods in whom they believe and who will hold them to account."<sup>24</sup> It has become the foundation for most oaths and values within the field of medicine. While it is ancient in nature it still carries significant weight, specifically in the explanation of the relationship between doctor and patient.

The relationship between physician and patient is critical; an entire section of the Oath is dedicated to it, placing significance in the desire to never cause harm. The *Duties to Patients* section of the Oath reads as follows:

I will use treatment to help the sick according to my ability and judgment, but I will never use it to injure or wrong them. I will not give poison to anyone though asked to do so, nor will I suggest such a plan...But in purity and in holiness I will guard my life and my art...Into whatsoever house I enter, I will do so to help the sick, keeping myself free from all intentional wrong-doing and harm, especially from fornication with woman or man, bond or free. Whatsoever in the course of practice I see or hear (or even outside my practice in social intercourse) that ought never to be published abroad, I will not divulge, but consider such things to be holy secrets.<sup>25</sup>

The Oath has had significant influence on the ethical codes that have followed it. Within the field of medicine there has been a focus on doing good and not causing harm. Hippocrates, writing from ancient Greece understood the need to avoid poison. It could be argued that the Hippocratic Oath did not apply to the agents working within the CIA since they were not physicians or medical professionals; however, those who were conducting the experiments in medical facilities would have been under the Oath. While some medical professionals did decline to participate

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 34.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 25.

due to ethical or moral opposition, others did not, continuing unethical research backed by the intelligence community. Others continued unethical experimentation without knowledge of U.S. government sponsorship and the potential for national security interests.

The work of Dr. Harris Isbell at the Addiction Research Center in Lexington, Kentucky depicts the work of a physician violating the Hippocratic Oath in an attempt to understand ways in which the human mind could be manipulated for national security. Isbell, who had access to drug addicted prisoners, sought volunteers who would test a variety of unknown substances. Volunteers were never told which drugs they were testing nor were they advised on potential side effects. After prisoners had tested the drugs of Isbell's choosing, the volunteers were paid in the drug of their choice.<sup>26</sup> Using drugs and medications in experimentation, without the desire to do good or promote the health and well-being of the patient, could be classified as administering poison, which the Oath prohibits under any circumstances. The relationship between doctor and patient was violated in the lack of information and communication between the two parties. Isbell was neither helping the sick nor was he using his profession to do good and not cause harm, the overarching principle in the Oath.

In one particular incident Dr. Harris Isbell tested 800 psychoactive chemicals, including LSD, on seven prisoners of African American decent. These men were kept on a variety of medications for 77 consecutive days. Not only would these drugs wreak havoc on the human body but Isbell made matters worse by keeping the men awake. Electroshock was used to wake them whenever they fell asleep.<sup>27</sup> Dr. Isbell produced little to no valuable information from the experimentation. Patient well-being and health was an afterthought, if even a consideration at all.

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<sup>26</sup> Marks, 66 – 69.

<sup>27</sup> "Dr. Harris Isbell's experiments," Alliance for Human Research Protection, accessed April 25, 2016, <http://ahrp.org/dr-harris-isbells-experiments/>.

The Hippocratic Oath was violated by the work of Dr. Harris Isbell as well as other physicians and psychologists.

Colin Ross is the founder and president of the Colin A. Ross Institute for Psychological Trauma and has researched and written on the ethical violations of physicians in MKULTRA and other similar programs.<sup>28</sup> In his article *Ethics of CIA and Military Contracting by Psychiatrists and Psychologist* he makes a very interesting claim about the lack of credibility multiple personality disorder receives in the field of psychology. Members of the False Memory Association, specifically two individuals who serve on the Advisory Board, were MKULTRA contractors who worked directly with subprojects dealing with the creation of reversible and artificial multiple personality disorder. These men have worked hard to infiltrate the field of psychology with claims that this mental disorder is completely fraudulent. While there is debate within the field of psychology as to whether or not this claim is accurate, Ross states the dramatic effort that these men have made to deny multiple personality disorder is an attempt to cover CIA research conducted under their leadership. He also argues that the MKULTRA experiments were a violation of the Hippocratic Oath due to the lack of informed consent and the lack of attention to patient care and well-being.<sup>29</sup>

Wrye Sententia is the co-founder of the Center for Cognitive Liberty and Ethics and takes pride in the protection of civil rights and ethics in neuroscience.<sup>30</sup> In her article *Your Mind is a Target: Weaponizing Psychoactive Drugs*, she claimed, “The right of a person to liberty, autonomy, and privacy over his or her own mind is at the core of what it means to be a free

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<sup>28</sup> “About Dr. Colin Ross,” The Colin A. Ross Institute for Psychological Trauma, last modified 2007, accessed April 27, 2016, [http://www.rossinst.com/about\\_dr\\_colin\\_ross.html/](http://www.rossinst.com/about_dr_colin_ross.html/).

<sup>29</sup> Colin Ross, “Ethics of CIA and Military Contracting by Psychiatrists and Psychologists,” *Ethical Human Psychology & Psychiatry* 9 (Spring 2007): 29-30.

<sup>30</sup> “Wrye Sententia,” University Writing Program, last modified 2016, accessed April 25, 2016, <http://writing.ucdavis.edu/people/sotoole/>.

individual. The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, as well as the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, protects cognitive liberty and freedom of thought.”<sup>31</sup> Her article mentions that most Americans do not object to the government working with biological and chemical materials that present health benefits, like substances such as fluoride being added to state water systems to enhance teeth. Without careful watch it would be just as easy for substances that could potentially be harmful to be added as well; possibly including those that are mind altering. The United States prides itself on freedom, and as mentioned and advocated for by Sententia, including freedom from technologies that directly interfere with brain function and protection from these tactics being used on civilians against their will.<sup>32</sup>

A case could be made against the experiments of MKULTRA as a violation of the due process clause of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment’s to the U.S. Constitution. These amendments both state that no one should be deprived of, “life, liberty, or property without due process of law”.<sup>33</sup> These amendments to the Constitution call for the equal protection of all peoples and their rights to be protected. The men of MKULTRA violated the rights and protections granted to citizens by the Bill of Rights. Some may claim that experiments conducted by the CIA were prudent and acceptable for the time period; however, it is clear that the MKULTRA scheme bypassed ethical standards such as the Hippocratic Oath, U.S. Constitution, and the Nuremberg Code.

In 1945, at the closing of World War II the Allied powers held the International Military Tribunal which served to conduct trials against war criminals and Nazi leaders. One particular hearing tried twenty-three Nazi physicians for their crimes against prisoners in Nazi concentration camps, earning it the unofficial title of the “Doctors’ Trial”. Only seven of the

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<sup>31</sup> Wrye Sententia, “Your Mind is a Target: Weaponizing Psychoactive Drugs,” *Humanist* 63, (January/February 2003): 43.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, 44.

<sup>33</sup> US Constitution, amend. 5.



defendants were acquitted while seven were sentenced to death and nine received various prison sentences. The Doctors' Trial created what is known as the Nuremberg Code, named for the location of the trial in Nuremberg, Germany. The Code set in place ten ethical standards for future research and experimentation involving human subjects, all by 1945, well before MKULTRA or precursor projects started. The Nuremberg Code reads as follows:<sup>34</sup>

1. The voluntary consent of the human subject is absolutely essential...
2. The experiment should be such as to yield fruitful results for the good of society, unprocurable by other methods or means of study, and not random and unnecessary in nature.
3. The experiment should be so designed and based on the results of animal experimentation and a knowledge of the natural history of the disease or other problem under study, that the anticipated results will justify the performance of the experiment.
4. The experiment should be so conducted as to avoid all unnecessary physical and mental suffering and injury.
5. No experiment should be conducted, where there is an *apriori* reason to believe that death or disabling injury will occur; except, perhaps, in those experiments where the experimental physicians also serve as subjects.
6. The degree of risk to be taken should never exceed that determined by the humanitarian importance of the problem to be solved by the experiment.
7. Proper preparations should be made and adequate facilities provided to protect the experimental subject against even remote possibilities of injury, disability, or death.
8. The experiment should be conducted only by scientifically qualified persons. The highest degree of skill and care should be required through all stages of the experiment of those who conduct or engage in the experiment.
9. During the course of the experiment, the human subject should be at liberty to bring the experiment to an end, if he has reached the physical or mental state, where continuation of the experiment seemed to him to be impossible.
10. During the course of the experiment, the scientist in charge must be prepared to terminate the experiment at any stage, if he has probable cause to believe, in the exercise of the good faith, superior skill and careful judgement required of him, that a continuation of the experiment is likely to result in injury, disability, or death to the experimental subject.<sup>35</sup>

Those involved in the MKULTRA program deliberately acted against the Nuremberg Code. First and foremost, voluntary consent was at times violated. Two particular MKULTRA

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<sup>34</sup> "Nuremberg Code," imarc, last modified December 19, 2014, accessed March 21, 2016, <http://www.imarcresearch.com/blog/bid/359393/Nuremberg-Code-1947/>.

<sup>35</sup> Trials of War Criminals before the Nuremberg Military Tribunals under Control Council Law No. 10, Vol II, October 1946 – April 1949, 181-182.

events that depict this violation of informed, voluntary consent includes the New York and San Francisco safehouses, which came to be known as Subproject 3 or Operation Midnight Climax, and the suspicious death of Dr. Frank Olson, who fell from a New York City hotel after being dosed with LSD. Both of these MKULTRA tragedies violated numerous statements of the Nuremberg Code.

Richard Helms proposed that in order to conduct experiments that would transfer into the field, unwitting subjects would be essential. Researchers' curiosity and the possibility that LSD could become an effective weapon made the bypassing of ethical standards seem like the proper choice in the U.S. culture plagued with fear. Subproject 3 became the ideal way to test LSD on unwitting civilians. The CIA enlisted the help of George White, an employee of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics who was willing to use his power and authority without any moral or ethical dilemma. Apartments in San Francisco, and later New York, were furnished, complete with two-way mirrors and equipment to record the events that followed. White soon began testing LSD, marijuana, and other drugs on unwitting civilians. The most important factor for Agency officials was finding subjects who could not be easily linked back to the CIA experiments. Prostitutes, drug addicts, and other criminals were ideal subjects due to their reputations and lack of credibility if they decided to go to the authorities for help. Prostitutes quickly became the focus of the San Francisco safehouse due to the desire of the CIA to understand how sex could apply to spying. The men involved in the safehouse schemes sought to find a way women could be used to lure information out of men during or after sex. This idea was thought to have potential due to the intimate nature of sexual relationships. In typical MKULTRA fashion little to none of the records of these experiments were kept, as ordered by Sid Gottlieb. Doctors were rarely present, leaving CIA agents with little to no scientific or medical background in charge of the safety and

health of other human beings. The potential national security advances caused for ethical and moral issues to be overlooked and blatantly surpassed. The San Francisco safehouse operated until 1965 while the New York location remained open until 1966.<sup>36</sup>

In a letter from Sidney Gottlieb to George White, as found in the work of John Marks, Gottlieb, in reference to Subproject 3, said, “I was very much a missionary, actually a heretic, but I toiled whole heartedly in the vineyards because it was fun, fun, fun. Where else could a redblooded American boy lie, kill, cheat, steal, rape, and pillage...?”<sup>37</sup> The 10 years spent in the safehouses scored no major information that was of use outside of the experimental stages. Despite the lack of results, LSD was still being used in other MKULTRA programs. It was around this time that the Medical Office of the CIA claimed LSD posed a danger to unwitting subjects; however, Gottlieb argued otherwise and sought to keep doctors and other medical professionals away from his experiments out of fear they would discontinue their research.<sup>38</sup>

According to the Nuremberg Code, voluntary consent was essential, but the men of MKULTRA clearly did not hold the same standard of ethics. The story of Dr. Frank Olson is another example of the extreme measures taken in the experiments of MKULTRA. Dr. Gottlieb, in November 1953, decided to take a group of scientists from the Army Chemical Corps Special Operations Division (SOD) to Fort Detrick in Frederick, Maryland in an effort to gain better understanding of the effects of LSD on those who were not taking the drug willingly. The men of the SOD were heading to an annual retreat for the planning of spy tactics; however, they were unaware that they would become the victims of behavioral modification research. On November 19, Dr. Frank Olson shared a drink with all but two people present on the trip. The men of the SOD had been given liquor tainted with LSD; violating the first statement on voluntary consent

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<sup>36</sup> Marks, 94 – 109.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 109.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 110 – 112.

in the Nuremberg Code. Soon Olson became quite anxious but chose to keep his paranoia secret. Later experiencing depression and feelings of incredibly low self-worth, Olson spoke up about his feelings and was taken to Dr. Harold Abramson in New York. Abramson was chosen because he had CIA security clearance and was also conducting research on LSD. He eventually recommended that Olson be hospitalized. The CIA had cleared psychiatrists and staff at the Chestnut Lodge in Rockville, Maryland and planned to send Olson there next. With the flight leaving the next day, Olson and a CIA official Richard Lashbrook spent another night at the Statler Hotel in New York City. Early the next morning Lashbrooke awoke to find Frank Olson jumping out of the window of their 10<sup>th</sup> floor hotel room.<sup>39</sup> The CIA officially claimed Dr. Olson's death a suicide due to the state of his mental health as observed by Dr. Abramson. There is some question to the legitimacy of the claim and official statement from the CIA that the incident was entirely the action of Frank Olson. While there is no incriminating evidence, some wonder if the incident was murder in an attempt to cover up the unethical distribution of LSD by a CIA official. Sidney Gottlieb received no more than a reprimand and continued to test LSD and other drugs throughout his CIA career.<sup>40</sup>

MKULTRA conducted experiments on humans that violated many statutes of the Nuremberg Code. The first statement of voluntary consent was violated in both the case of George White's safehouses in San Francisco and New York, as well as the drugging of Dr. Frank Olson which resulted in his death. Nuremberg set a standard the required experiments to be conducted in a necessary manner, not conducted at random, and produce results that would benefit society. The CIA learned from MKULTRA precursor, BLUEBIRD, that attempts to administer drugs to people unwittingly was difficult and produced unfavorable results. From the

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<sup>39</sup> Marks, 79 – 88.

<sup>40</sup> Edward Lach, "Sidney Gottlieb," *American National Biography*, (2010), accessed January 20, 2016, EBSCOhost.

onset it was obvious that experiments of this nature had no benefit to society. The third standard as set in place by the Doctor's Trial at Nuremberg is the need for animal trials to be conducted prior to experimentation being conducted on humans. While there are a few cases of doctors conducting psychological experiments on animals, most of the MKULTRA objects focused first on the human subject. The events preceding the death of Dr. Frank Olson violated the clause that experiments should avoid physical and mental suffering to subjects. Dr. Olson experienced both. The fifth statement of the Nuremberg Code mentions that experimental physicians could conduct experiments in which they also served as subjects. This could be a standard in which MKULTRA did not violate. With the culture of drug use on the rise, the men of MKULTRA tested drugs, LSD in particular, on themselves and their colleagues. Whether this was for scientific benefit or personal pleasure is unknown.

The Nuremberg Code continues with a statement about the humanitarian importance of the problem in which to be solved by the outcome of experimentation. National security is not an issue to be taken lightly and is one in which many Americans during the Cold War were concerned. If MKULTRA produced realistic and valid results that could have been used to protect the life of American citizens, MKULTRA would not have violated this statute. However, when it became clear that the results of behavioral modification experiments were not producing the type of results the CIA had hoped for, experimentation should have been stopped. Experiments at times were conducted in adequate facilities but not always. George White conducted experiments in furnished apartments that were not capable of handling a medical emergency if one were to arise. In violation of the eighth standard, scientifically qualified individuals were not always present. George White was a Federal Bureau of Narcotics agent and Sid Gottlieb was only a chemist. White, while having the experience and qualifications to

interact with criminals, did not have the authority to administer drugs to unknowledgeable citizens who placed their rights and liberties within the reach of the government. Neither White nor Gottlieb had the psychology background needed for the analysis of human behavior. The last two statements of the Nuremberg Code mention the necessity of an experiment to be stopped if the subject becomes uncomfortable or the scientists believes the experiment has become dangerous. MKULTRA experiments involving the administration of drugs could not be stopped immediately due to the effects of drugs on the human body. The Nuremberg Code set in place ethical standards for experimentation dealing with human subjects. The CIA chose to ignore these standards as well as others during the time frame of MKULTRA.

Prior to the closing of the behavioral modification chapter of the CIA's history, Richard Helms, Director of Central Intelligence, tried to hold on to his original idea of human experimentation and proposed a new charter in June of 1964 in which MKULTRA became MKSEARCH. Instead of leaving behavioral modification experimentation in the past, the CIA continued to bypass ethical standards for the advancement of national security. Sidney Gottlieb chose to continue seven MKULTRA projects that he deemed to be most important. 1) The safehouse program in New York continued until 1966. 2) Gottlieb continued to use the Baltimore biological laboratory in order to continue the production of biological weapons out of sight from other U.S. military organizations. Minimal documentation was kept on this project. 3) A group of companies, one of which custom made rare chemicals for the use of pharmaceuticals would still perform jobs affiliated with the CIA without the knowledge of the board of directors. 4) What is known as MKSEARCH subproject 3 gave Dr. James Hamilton access to prisoners at the California Medical Facility at Vacaville. Within a six month time span he is said to have experimented on anywhere from 400 to 1,000 inmates. 5) Having sat on the Food and Drug

Administration committee that eventually allowed for LSD to be used for scientific research, Dr. Carl Pfeiffer conducted experiments focusing on the preparation, use, and effect of drugs. He tested a variety of drugs, including LSD, on inmates in a federal penitentiary in Atlanta. 6) While other experiments were being conducted on humans, Dr. Maitland Baldwin conducted lobotomies on apes and then sent the subjects into sensory deprivation. There has been no information found as to whether or not Baldwin conducted similar experiments on humans. 7) Lastly, Dr. Charles Geschickter used terminal cancer patients to test chemical substances on human subjects.<sup>41</sup> These experiments continued to break the ethical standards previously set in place by the Hippocratic Oath, U.S. Constitution, Nuremberg Code, and the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights.

At the closing of World War II, in 1945, the United States and other nations created the United Nations in an attempt to create a more universal governing body. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, created on December 10, 1948, outlined the basis of human rights for people around the world. While it was not legally binding, it set a standard for the international community and has become customary in some countries.<sup>42</sup> The United States played a significant role in the drafting and ratification of the document. The articles themselves speak of brotherhood, freedom from cruel or inhumane treatment, the right to effective remedy if rights are violated, and freedom of thought and conscious.<sup>43</sup> During the 1950s the United States took a step away from the international regulations and ethical standards that were set in place by the global community. The conflicting ideologies of the Cold War made a single ethical standard

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<sup>41</sup> Marks, 211 – 218.

<sup>42</sup> Australian Human Rights Commission, “What is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights?” last modified 2016, accessed March 28, 2016, <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/publications/what-universal-declaration-human-rights/>.

<sup>43</sup> United Nations, “The Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” Paris, December 10, 1948, <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/index.html/>.

difficult, according to U.S. leaders within the Intelligence community. This shift is made clear in the experiments of MKULTRA which violated these simple declarations of human rights.<sup>44</sup> Article 8 of the Declaration of Human Rights states, “Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law.”<sup>45</sup>

The subprojects of MKSEARCH continued under the guidance of Sidney Gottlieb until June 1972. In his statement concerning the end of the program he claimed, “it has become increasingly obvious over the last several years that this general area had less and less relevance to current clandestine operations...In addition to moral and ethical considerations, the extreme sensitivity and security constraints of such operations effectively rule them out.”<sup>46</sup> Following the decision to end behavioral modification experiments under the MKSEARCH pseudonym, DCI Richard Helms headed the destruction of materials that could later incriminate him and others involved in conducting the research. Retiring alongside Gottlieb, the two hoped to have protected future generations from any sort of misunderstanding or even an understanding by citizens of what their government is capable of.<sup>47</sup>

In an attempt to piece together the puzzle of MKULTRA, John Marks sought to interview many of the people directly related to the mind control experiments. In an attempt to interview Gratian H. Yasetevitch in 1978 about his involvement in covert CIA action, Yasetevitch responded with, “I’m a professional and I just don’t talk about these things. Lots of things are not fit for the public. This has nothing to do with democracy. It has to do with common sense”.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> “Human Rights & The U.S.,” The Advocates for Human Rights, accessed April 25, 2016, [http://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/human\\_rights\\_and\\_the\\_united\\_states/](http://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/human_rights_and_the_united_states/).

<sup>45</sup> United Nations, Declaration.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 219.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Marks, 193.



Yasetevitch presents the common mindset of previous CIA agents. The majority of those involved in MKULTRA who were contacted to help expand the field of behavioral modification on behalf of the CIA refused to partake in interviews. The destruction of documents as ordered by Richard Helms displays a similar mindset. In 1975 he claimed he and Sidney Gottlieb had the idea to destroy the documents since,

...there had been relationships with outsiders in government agencies and other organizations and that these would be sensitive in this kind of thing but that since the program was over and finished and done with, we thought we would just get rid of the files as well, so that anybody who assisted us in the past would not be subject to follow-up questions, embarrassment, if you will.<sup>49</sup>

The necessity to redeem past actions as declared in the UN Declaration of Human Rights is difficult due to the secrecy that surrounded the MKULTRA experiments as well as the destruction of documents by the order of Richard Helms in 1972. The committee of the 1977 Senate hearing found documents pertaining to MKULTRA which outlined the proposals of 149 subprojects that sought to better understand behavioral modification, drug acquisition and the covert administration of drugs.<sup>50</sup>

In 1977 the new DCI, Admiral Stansfield Turner, when asked if experimentation similar to that of MKULTRA continued after the closing of the project stated, "I think it would be very, very unlikely, first, because we are all much more conscious of these issues than we were back in the fifties, second, because we have such thorough oversight procedures. I cannot imagine this kind of activity could take place today...."<sup>51</sup> Admiral Turner, like the rest of the Intelligence community, seemed to have forgotten the ethical standards that were set in place prior to MKULTRA experimentation, such as, the Hippocratic Oath, U.S. Constitution, Nuremberg

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<sup>49</sup> Select Committee to Study Government Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, Foreign and Military Intelligence Book I, 94<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2d sess., April 26 1976, 403-04.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 5 – 8.

<sup>51</sup> U.S. Select Committee, MKULTRA, 35.

Code, and UN Declaration of Human Rights. The United States and the global community were conscious of ethical issues during the Cold War. However, ethical standards were ignored due to the desire to protect the nation. The CIA did have “oversight procedures” set in place at the time of MKULTRA. The Intelligence community decided to bypass this obstacle by creating the Human Ecology Fund which channeled money to research institutions of the public and private sector. This front organization made the transferring of funds more discrete, keeping the transfer of funds relatively secret from those within the CIA ranks. When Admiral Turner became the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency he took responsibility for past actions. When questioned by the Select Committee in 1977, he, like the rest of the Intelligence community, chose to keep sweeping the horrors of MKULTRA and behavioral modification research under the rug.

Senator Edward Kennedy in his statement to the Select Committee on Intelligence states that responsibility falls on the intelligence community to find those who were unknowingly involved. He claimed that,

The Intelligence community of this Nation, which requires a shroud of secrecy in order to operate, has a very sacred trust from the American people. The CIA’s program of human experimentation of the fifties and sixties violated that trust. It was violated again on the day the bulk of the agency’s records were destroyed in 1973. It is violated each time a responsible official refuses to recollect the details of the program.<sup>52</sup>

The U.S. Constitution protects individuals from abuses and injury. In return, citizens, at times of war or crisis, forfeit some of their protect liberties for the sake of national security. However, when individual rights and liberties are treated as if they do not exist and the government decides to ignore previously set in place standards of ethics, human rights and individual liberties are

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 3.

violated. Wrye Sententia in her article *Your Mind is a Target* expresses that the human mind is at the center of what it means to be a free and autonomous human being.<sup>53</sup>

Since the ethical standards previously set in place did not stop the U.S. Intelligence community from acting in ways which violated the Hippocratic Oath, U.S. Constitution, Nuremberg Code, and UN Declaration of Human Rights, the responsibility to hold the government accountable cannot always fall on ethical standards, since they are not always legally binding. In order for human rights and individual liberty to be protected, U.S. citizens are responsible for educating themselves on new and upcoming technology as well as governmental action at home and abroad. As the United States continues to pride itself on the rights of the individual, individuals must take action to hold the government accountable and vote for individuals who believe in the protection of human rights and liberties.

While it is not possible for every national security issue to be made public, MKULTRA was a direct violation of basic human rights and ethical standards. The true victims of MKULTRA are not those who experimented with LSD research, or those who volunteered willingly. It is those who were used and taken advantage of. *The Washington Post* in 1985 called for accountability and efforts to be taken to compensate victims for their losses. About 80 institutions along with 185 other private researchers and facilities had some sort of connection to the MKULTRA program. The only way in which victims could be notified of their unwitting involvement would be if the CIA sifted through the remaining documents in order to find the institutions and facilities who had a relationship with the CIA or the Human Ecology Fund and from there moved to finding individuals through whatever records the institution had kept.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Sententia, 43.

<sup>54</sup> David Orlikow, "The Victims of MKULTRA," *The Washington Post*, April 18, 1985, accessed January 19, 2016, LexisNexis Academic.

Determining if an individual suffered sufficient injury would be the major difficulty in reimbursement as well as the fact that many victims have since passed away.

A news article in response to the death of Sidney Gottlieb in 1999 mentioned that Gottlieb defended the CIA programs arguing, “aggressive use of drugs in intelligence operations by other countries in the early years of the Cold War called for an appropriate response by the United States.”<sup>55</sup> One of the most fascinating quotes from the beginning of the MKULTRA scheme comes from the Head of OSS Research and Development Stanley Lovell. He was credited with saying, “Throw all your normal law-abiding concepts out the window. Here’s a chance to raise merry hell”.<sup>56</sup> Other members of the CIA directly involved in MKULTRA projects expressed their lack of concern for ethics. After the Rockefeller Commission had finalized its report, changes were made to the function of the CIA. An executive order was signed by President Ford requiring all covert operations to have a signed presidential statement finding that it would be of “national security interest”.<sup>57</sup>

Senator Kennedy in an opening statement to the Select Committee on Intelligence in the 1977 hearing on MKULTRA claimed, “The best safeguard against the abuses in the future is a complete public accounting of abuses of the past.”<sup>58</sup> Project MKULTRA was a direct violation of basic human rights and ethical standards set in place by the Hippocratic Oath, U.S. Constitution, Nuremberg Code, and the UN Declaration of Human Rights. While this incident was in the past, general public knowledge can be an asset that promotes integrity within the government. The destruction of documents under the discretion of Richard Helms and Sidney

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<sup>55</sup> Bart Barnes, “CIA official Sidney Gottlieb, 80, dies; directed tests with LSD in ‘50s, ‘60s” *The Washington Post*, March 11, 1999, accessed March 28, 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/1999/03/11/cia-official-sidney-gottlieb-80-dies/4f667e7a-58cc-4abf-b1de-14db608dc850/>.

<sup>56</sup> Dominic Streatfeild, *Brainwash: The Secret History of Mind Control* (New York City, NY: St. Martin’s Press, 2007), 41.

<sup>57</sup> Arthur Herman, “The 35-Year War on the CIA,” *Commentary* 128, no. 5 (December 2009): 15.

<sup>58</sup> U.S. Select Committee, MKULTRA, 3.

Gottlieb was not in the best interest of the nation. Instead of erasing MKULTRA from history, their decision has caused more questions to be raised. Their choice to avoid confrontation on the issue does not show professionalism, but rather a lack of integrity in their continued secrecy. If these horrific acts of injustice had stopped, like many government officials claim, it would make sense that these men would have expressed remorse or even explained themselves before their deaths in order to provide closure and security for those either directly or indirectly involved in the covert program MKULTRA.

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