



# THE BLACK VAULT

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MEMORANDUM TO : Dr. [redacted] 27 May 1955  
Chief, [redacted] Chemical Division

FROM : Dr. [redacted]  
Chief, Medicine Division/CSI

SUBJECT :

1. In an experiment on influencing conversational continuation, twenty four subjects, divided into four groups, carried on conversations with seventeen experimenters. This reduced the situation, already numerically small in a statistical sense, to an almost person to person relationship. The extensive amount of individual interpretation possible in such a situation reduces the scientific aspect to almost zero.

2. As indicated in transmittal memo from author, an implication for "brainwashing" might be found in such an experiment as this. In its present form this report of experiment offers little to either "brainwashing" or interrogation techniques. This lack is best manifested by the author's recognition that the relationship effect between the experimenter (interrogator) and subject (interrogee) was not measured. The author himself poses our question as to whether or not verbal behavior would or could be reinforced by agreement in a situation wherein the subject (interrogee-prisoner) disliked the experimenter (interrogator - captor).

3. Despite the individualistic assessment afforded by seventeen experimenters interviewing twenty four subjects, the results obtained are practically universally constant, and are as would normally be expected, viz:

- a) the rate of opinions expressed showed no significant changes as a function of reinforcement during the operant (initial control) period;
- b) Each of the subjects showed an increased frequency of opinions expressed during the agreement period;
- c) Twenty one of twenty four of the subjects showed a decreased frequency of opinions expressed during the extinction (disagreement) period.

*Revised 12*

4. These results would seem then to offer little prospect for their utilization by a Communist "experimenter" to achieve any degree of success in a "brainwashing" or "brainchanging" attempt except in the very immediate initial stage.

5. The application in this initial stage would be the situation wherein the subject (prisoner) is encouraged by the experimenter (captor) to express his opinions as to 'what the war is about'; 'why the prisoner joined the military service'; etc. By the experimenter's encouragement through agreement, the subject may go on and on in his opinion expression. Thus the subject might afford the experimenter a psychological profile of himself, and thus might expose a psychological point of vulnerability which could be used as a departure point or entry wedge in the depersonalization of "brainwashing".

6. Even this initial application to "brainwashing" cannot be deduced from this report of experiment, however, because the effect of a situation of antagonism between experimenter and subject (see paragraph 2) has not been measured.