

A/B, III, 6, 19

28 February 1956

MEMORANDUM FOR: [REDACTED]

SUBJECT: Hypnosis and Covert Operations (Interim Report)

SUMMARY:

1. Use of the polygraph as an attention diverter facilitating application of hypnosis to covert operations has enabled us to identify:
 - a. A disguised pretest for hypnotic susceptibility,
 - b. A definite instrument index of onset and termination of hypnosis - the breathing pattern,
 - c. An inconstant instrument index of onset of hypnosis - the electrodermal change.

2. A light stage of hypnosis has been achieved without the subject's awareness while using this polygraph "cover" in at least one instance.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

3. a. The use of the polygraph as a disguised method of hypnotic induction should be attempted in a field situation using subjects of a fairly sophisticated type in non-optimum age and sex groups.
 - b. The use of medical instruments as a disguised induction method should be investigated.
 - c. Particulars of these recommendations and one significant caution are included in Part I. Details of experiments dealing with unwitting subjects are included in Part II; considerations of use of hypnosis with witting subjects, in Part III.

PART I.

1. We have used the polygraph with some success in two major applications of hypnosis to covert operations. A disguised pretest of susceptibility appears possible in routine use of this machine (to screen individuals who are good hypnotic subjects). Induction of a light stage of hypnosis without the subject's awareness has been accomplished in at least one instance. These results have been achieved with subjects in the most favorable age and sex groups. Results with more sophisticated age groups and with agent types remain to be determined. Members of the Security Office are actively investigating further refinements of polygraph-disguised induction.

2. The polygraph provides two indices of hypnosis.

a. The breathing pattern changes markedly within five seconds both on induction and on termination of hypnosis and demonstrates a slow, rhythmical, symmetrical curve while the subject is under hypnosis.

b. The electrodermal potential is less constant but has shown a marked change (upwards) within five seconds of induction in some subjects. Electrodermal potential changes on termination of hypnosis are equivocal.

3. We have not had the facilities to go beyond the polygraph to experiments with drug-assisted induction or disguised induction utilizing medical apparatus.

4. The Security Office is at the planning stage with regard to using the polygraph as a test of disguised induction in the field. Mass testing of about one hundred persons needs doing. No effort to select any given age or sex groups should be made; nor should the subjects be confined only to low-level agent types. Appropriate challenges, including post hypnotic suggestions, and checks on the amnesia obtained need to be devised.

5. All test results will require further refinements before use on agents. But it is only with successful application against agents that the program can be said to be successful from a [REDACTED] standpoint, though members of the Security Office believe that they may already have an aid in their own work at this time.

6. A caution must be raised against an apparent shortcut to success in this aim. Much has been written about "instantaneous hypnosis" achieved through carotid artery pressure. (The right and left carotid arteries are the major blood supply to the brain.) This technique involves serious medical danger, including that of death. It has been used primarily by stage operators and normally results only in stupefaction, not hypnosis. It is possible to combine a stern injunction of "sleep!" with carotid pressure to obtain hypnosis, but this is medically dangerous; requires excessive practice and split-second timing; and is far from disguised since it involves firm pressure (choking) on both sides of the neck where the carotid arteries lie.

7. Experimentally utilizing medical apparatus offer as yet unexplored possibilities of achieving disguised hypnotic induction. These require ordinary, but considerable, medical apparatus and a controlled environment where the experiments can be conducted. The electroencephalographic (brain wave), electrocardiographic (heart wave), opthalmoscopic (eye exam), and audiometric (hearing exam) instruments all offer situations wherein, as with the polygraph, attention is diverted to the machine. The basal metabolic rate determination (BMR - breathing test) machine appears to offer the best medical counterpart to the usual hypnotic situation where attention is diverted and relaxation is a prime requisite. The BMR has the added advantage of control of inspired air. Breathed through a mask (which is the measuring device), the amount of oxygen and carbon dioxide inhaled can be controlled. With the oxygen decreased, the subject is rendered more susceptible to hypnosis. This can be coupled with injunctions to "relax", "go to sleep if you like", "sleep" so that induction might be accomplished. A post hypnotic suggestion that "you will only remember having fallen asleep and sleeping through the test" could result in amnesia. This will have to be investigated, however, in a proper environmental setting and with various age and sex groups.

8. It would also be possible in these situations to set up a routine approach whereby subjects could be tested for susceptibility to hypnosis on the polygraph without their knowledge, and then susceptibles hypnotized using the BMR (for example) as a disguised approach.

C. T. II - Unwitting Subjects

1. Disguised pretenses of hypnotic susceptibility and disguised induction of hypnosis were the immediate aims of experimentation using the polygraph as the attention diverter. Eight females, ages 17 - 20, and one male, age 25, have been the subjects. There appears to be in the most favorable age and sex groups for obtaining good hypnotic subjects.

2. Six of these nine subjects have been definitely affected by this procedure. Three, including the male, entered a stage of profound relaxation. Two, indicated by this approach as good hypnotic subjects, have subsequently proved to be so. One other went directly into a light stage of hypnosis, at least.

3. All of these people have been observed by six Agency personnel, with varying degrees of experience in hypnosis, using a two-way mirror and audio surveillance, and their conclusions are in agreement. Two newly-trained Agency hypnotists, experienced polygraph operators, have utilized this or a closely allied technique solely for purposes of relaxing agitated polygraph examinees, with apparently successful results. (No attempt at anything beyond relaxation was attempted with these examinees.)

4. As a result of experience with unwitting subjects, we believe that the polygraph can be used as a screening device to determine likely hypnotic subjects. This can be done without exposing the purpose or otherwise compromising the situation so long as the examinee is not

quite familiar with hypnotic techniques. On encountering a knowledgeable examinee, a simple agreement that the techniques of hypnosis and this technique of relaxation may be similar and a denial that hypnosis is intended must be voiced. A test of any apparent obviousness of this similarity is inherent in the recommended trial using large numbers of more sophisticated individuals.

5. Our success in obtaining profound relaxation in six of these nine subjects and in introducing one of the nine into a light stage of hypnosis further indicates that the polygraph approach may be sufficient in itself to achieve direct hypnotic control of highly susceptible subjects. Completely satisfactory challenges and checks on achievement of amnesia in such a situation are as yet undeveloped.

PART III - Witting Subjects

1. In contrast to the difficulties of dealing with unwitting subjects, the advantages obtainable in dealing with witting subjects offer extensive unused applications to covert operations.

2. With witting subjects, it is possible to hypnotize an individual and have him carry out all business and social amenities in a normal manner without an unknowing person perceiving that he is under hypnosis.

3. Hypnotic induction can be accomplished over the telephone, orally, by written word or with seemingly innocent gestures. Each of these (including oral) can be accomplished in the presence of a third party who is unknowing and will remain ignorant of the fact that the subject has been placed in hypnosis. A previously arranged key word or key gesture is utilized to induce hypnosis.

4. Any emotion or attitude can be brought into play; the senses can be modified into acute awareness or oblivion as desired, and body positions and functions can be controlled.

5. These factors allow the instillation of an attitude of calm when all normal reaction would be intense fear or panic. An existing individual can be made invisible to a hypnotic subject's observation; a non-existent individual can be made observable and describable by a subject, or the subject can be made to describe an observed, existent individual in a completely erroneous fashion.

6. Practically any given situation can be manipulated according to the operator's desires. Each and every case requires individual attention and meticulous direction as to what the subject will or won't feel, see and do. It becomes a simple problem of suggesting what you wish the Subject to experience.

7. These varying capabilities in manipulating willing hypnotic subjects become meaningful in terms of covert operations when applied to operational situations.

8. Deep instillation of real or false identities and cover stories; unwitting message transmittal; unwitting instruction; improved observation by age regression; and multitudinous applications of post hypnotic suggestion are all possible.

a. Real identity and cover story details can be minutely instilled under hypnosis with the reinforcement that any interrogation will result in blank thoughts for any factor not covered. This must obviously be very carefully done.

b. False identity and an appropriate cover story can be similarly instilled and the subject will hold to it with no deviation, even rationalizing apparent or obvious discrepancies or falsehoods in terms of the false identity. This could best be used in giving an agent a false cover for a given period of his life.

c. Unwitting message transmittal can be achieved whereby

the subject will verbalize a message to an individual expressing the key. The subject will not realize he possesses such a message and can be made unknowing of it even after delivery.

d. Unwitting instruction can be similarly utilized. The subject instructed under hypnosis and otherwise instructed while not under hypnosis will carry out both instructions. The subject can be kept in ignorance of the fact he was carrying out any instructions other than those he received in the non-hypnotized state.

e. Improved observation is one of the best uses of hypnosis. With age regression, an individual can be returned in time to the point at which an item was observed, a conversation held, a paper read or written and be caused to repeat in detail what actually transpired at that time as the subject experienced it then rather than as it is remembered in the waking state. This offers opportunities of completeness and exactness that are not ordinarily available, and is obviously valuable in checking veracity.

f. Post hypnotic suggestion is a technique rather than an end in itself. It is, for instance, the basis of unwitting message transmission and can be used in unwitting instruction. It can be applied to almost any situation where an action by the subject at some future time or under some future circumstance is

desired. Apart from offensive operational uses it might be noted that, appropriately instructed, a subject will go deeply asleep when queried on a security matter. The posthypnotic suggestion might play a role with border personnel who might be exposed to hostile interrogation as a reinforcement of their morale and will to resist.

9. It must be recognized that variables will be encountered between subjects and at different times in the same hypnotic subjects. Applications of hypnosis with willing subjects must be interpreted accordingly.

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