

BOOK REVIEW:
PSYCHIATRY AND
THE CIA: VICTIMS OF
MIND CONTROL
By Harvey Weinstein

Richard L. Jacobs, Psy.D.

Richard L. Jacobs, Psy.D., is a psychologist in Brookline, Massachusetts.

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With the increase in client allegations of satanic cult abuse and the like, we as therapists like Freud, are challenged as to what to believe (Ganaway, 1989; Young, Sachs, Braun, & Watkins, 1991). Here is a story to believe. In 1956, the Chinese Communists were implementing massive mind control projects to reform their society. Also beginning in 1956, Dr. Harvey Weinstein and his family began a journey on one of the most harrowing tales of the dark side of Western psychiatry. In that year, when Dr. Weinstein was a young adolescent, his father showed symptoms of what we would now diagnose as panic disorder. Weinstein, Sr. was admitted to a prestigious Montreal psychiatric hospital and treated over the next several years by Ewen Cameron, M.D. Cameron was a psychiatrist of prominence and power, whose career included the presidency of the American Psychiatric Association.

The treatment Weinstein, Sr. underwent broke him, and broke his family. It was a brutal form of brainwashing that combined the use of high dosages of potent psychotropic drugs and copious ECT. It included long periods of isolation, sensory deprivation, and unconscionable abuse of power in the doctor/patient relationship.

For those readers who were fortunate to attend attorney Alan Schefflin's invited address at the 8th International Conference on Multiple Personality/Dissociative States this past November (Schefflin, 1991), perhaps this story will not come as such a shock. Schefflin shared the fruits of his arduous research into the CIA's MKULTRA (probably "Mind Control, Ultra") Project. Project MKULTRA operated for twenty years and funded covert scientific research on mind control techniques and brainwashing with human subjects. Schefflin said that MKULTRA, which flourished during the Cold War, ran 149 sub-projects, some of which explored the possibility of creating a "Manchurian candidate" (Marks, 1979). Some of these covert projects experimented with techniques of hypnosis to create alter personalities which would be inaccessible under interrogation. Other subprojects used hallucinogenic drugs and other forms of brainwashing that copied Soviet and Chinese methods. Weinstein documents that Cameron used similar methods on his father by reviewing medical records and researching well over one hundred of Cameron's published papers. The author, also reviewed declassi-

fied CIA files. After many hours of searching, Weinstein found that his father's psychiatrist was one of many scientists receiving support and funding from CIA monies laundered through a foundation at Cornell University (Marks, 1979).

It is still not known how many people were victimized by these many projects. Weinstein, Jr. depicts the tribulations of a lawsuit brought by nine of Cameron's patients against the CIA. But in Cameron's tenure at the Allen Hospital it is likely that many more were treated by his method called "psychic driving." It is frightening to wonder about the others who were subjected involuntarily to harmful treatments such as these.

This book is important on many levels. Although not a scientific work on dissociation, it is a book mainly about trauma told from the inside out. Dr. Weinstein, now a psychiatrist himself, was a victim of Cameron's treachery as much as his father was. Not only did a son lose a father in a completely unnatural way, but he also witnessed the overwhelmingly sadistic destruction of a human mind paradoxically performed in the name of medicine. It is a case of double trauma, i.e., witnessing the loss of a loved one (Putnam, 1989) and of traumatic contagion (Terr, 1990). This produced in both father and son the symptoms of traumatic stress; shattering of basic assumptions of trust and safety in the world, shame, guilt, avoidance of intimacy, and low self-esteem (Curtois, 1988; Shengold, 1989; Ulman, 1988). The father sank into despair and futurelessness and became barely functional; the son suffered from developmental delays, identity confusion, and a constricted emotional life.

Weinstein's father never really fully recovered from the several years of "therapy" with Dr. Cameron. He resisted disclosing, acknowledging, and integrating the experience, and was never able to regain or reestablish a sense of meaning. Indeed, he had to be pressured repeatedly by his son to pursue the lawsuit, and one wonders if it was more the son's need for redress that motivated the litigation. It was easy for me as a reader, however, to identify with the outrage the son felt about his father's psychiatric care. Quite clearly, it was mind control masquerading as therapy. In fact, Weinstein Jr. draws insightful parallels between Cameron's methods and the definitions of mind control written about by Robert Jay Lifton (Lifton, 1963). Lifton wrote a compelling introduction to this book.

Interestingly, the author includes what may be the chief etiological factor in his father's presenting panic disorder which led to the hospitalization. The disorder manifested

with breathing problems, fears of suffocation, and anxiety attacks. Although he does not explicitly identify the connection. Weinstein Jr. writes about his father's childhood history. When his father was an infant in Rumania, the family was fleeing from the pogroms. One night, the screaming infant threatened the entire family's safety, and to silence the child, his mother stuffed a scarf in his mouth. It seems quite likely that the father's symptoms may have been somatic recall (Putnam, 1989; Ross, 1989) of this original trauma.

Thus, the story here may also illustrate the theme of early trauma predisposing individuals to later victimization, one familiar in the treatment of trauma survivors (Terr, 1983). Although trauma survivors have many strengths, they are among the most psychologically vulnerable of all clinical populations to abuses in treatment (Kluft, 1990). Because of their often impaired reality testing (i.e., lack of trust in their own perceptions of what is good and bad) (Courtois, 1988), and because of a tendency to anesthetize themselves with self-hypnosis (Speigel, 1988), they often find themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time. Cameron, a man of charisma, authority and power, was in an "ideal" position to carry out what he called scientific investigations on his patients. This misuse of a position of power is common to many perpetrators of child sexual abuse. Cameron gave no consideration of informed consent for highly aversive treatments. And Cameron's students and colleagues asked no questions. Yet, Cameron published prolifically, never fully disclosing the extent of his treatments, never using scientific method, never documenting his failures. It is no wonder, then to read about Weinstein Jr.'s anger at the professional community that supported Cameron.

The case against the CIA was only recently settled after nine years, in the plaintiffs' favor. The plaintiffs received rather modest cash settlements. The outcome was tantamount to a silent admission of culpability. But no claims of responsibility were made by either the United States or Canadian governments. The author asserts his own disappointment with the outcome, wishing along with most trauma survivors, that someone would take responsibility. The CIA has created a new position for an individual to monitor and check any such future activities, though.

For all who read this book, basic assumptions will be shaken anew. The book calls into question faith in the medical establishment, the government's ability to protect basic human rights, and the strength of the human mind. For therapists, other issues will be raised as well, especially as pertains to the treatment of trauma. The book implores us, as does Lifton in the introduction, to consider the risks of "expertism," and the danger of neglecting the wisdom that our clients are our best teachers. It highlights the hazards of "scientism" (Lifton, 1963)—that scientific relative truth becomes accepted as absolute truth. And sadly, it reminds us that it is not all that difficult to break a human mind.

A final note of acknowledgment should go to the American Psychiatric Press for its courage in publishing this book, and the like to Harvey Weinstein for having lived it and written about it. Clearly, the writing was a step in his own healing. ■

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