

# TV: An 11:30 P.M. Look At Mind-Control Studies

By JOHN J. O'CONNOR

**A**BC NEWS documentaries these days are exhibiting pronounced schizoid symptoms. Those tackling sensitive issues from fresh angles, both technical and interpretive, have been encouraging. Two outstanding examples were "Youth Terror" and a portrait of the Palestinians. But those dabbling in inherently sensational subjects, such as the occult, have generated understandable nervousness.

Tonight's example, "Mission: Mind Control," falls somewhere in the uneasy middle. Scheduled outside prime time, the 90-minute documentary begins at 11:30 P.M.

The producer and writer is Paul Altmeier, whose television record is certainly solid, particularly in the area of investigative reporting. And the stated purpose of the program is certainly legitimate: to pull together the bits and pieces of stories involving the United States Government in the last 30 years in various experiments aimed at perfecting mind control.

For the most part, the experiments involve drugs, most of them, such as LSD, hallucinogenic. Much of the story has already been covered in the general press. There are the distressing tales of unwitting guinea pigs. There are the cases of covered-up suicides, most notably those of Frank Olson and Harold Blauer. Extensive experiments were conducted on relatively powerless types — prostitutes,

drug addicts — living on the fringes of society.

This ABC-TV compilation touches on all these aspects and more, getting exclusive interviews with former officials and consultants to the Central Intelligence Agency and other agencies. At the same time, however, the program's methods provide both too much and too little in the way of substantial content.

While much of the material would seem to suggest a staggering ineptness in American efforts in these areas, the documentary insists on emphasizing the more outrageous statements of some obvious oddballs. Much is made, for instance, of George White, a bizarre consultant to the C.I.A. who once wrote, "It was fun, fun, fun . . . where else could a red-blooded American lie, kill, cheat and rape with the sanction of the all-highest?" Well, yes, but the truly dangerous villains of this scenario were considerably more proper in tone and behavior.

Two devices are especially irritating. Clips from the film "The Manchurian Candidate" are shamefully overused. A scene in which a brainwashed Laurence Harvey, under orders from the enemy, shoots his Army buddy in the face is shown not once but twice. One explanation may be that the documentary owes an obvious debt to consultant John Marks, whose new book will be entitled "The Search for the Manchurian Candidate: The C.I.A. and Mind-Control."

In addition to this, evidently in an effort to get away from "talking heads," the proceedings are regularly inter-



John Gittenger, retired chief psychologist for the C.I.A.

rupted to show an experimental film's conception of an LSD "trip." Now, of course, there is no such thing as a single trip. Different people react differently to hallucinogenic drugs. Some trips are pleasant, others terrifying. But nevertheless, "Mind Control" insists on wasting considerable time on these tedious versions of a "simulated LSD experience."

In the end, piled atop a mound of intriguing material and ominous declarations, an expert is brought on to conclude that as far as the average human mind is concerned, "predictable, absolute control is not possible." The point is made clearly, but one can't help wondering what viewers will remember longer: the unsensational expert or those scenes of Laurence Harvey blowing off his friend's head.