

### Structural Functionalism

**Core Idea:** Society is a system of inter-related parts that work together to maintain stability; deviance can serve functions.

**Key Figure:** Talcott Parsons

**MKULTRA Relevance:** The CIA's role in national security was seen as functional in Cold War society — even when activities violated norms.

MKULTRA was framed as a way to protect social order from perceived Soviet destabilisation.

Deviance here was functional for elite power structures, reinforcing U.S. dominance.

**Analytical Point:** Highlights how deviance may be tolerated or institutionalised if it is perceived as contributing to societal stability.

### Conflict Theory

**Core Idea:** Society is in constant conflict between groups competing for resources and power; law serves the powerful.

**Key Figures:** Karl Marx, C. Wright Mills

**MKULTRA Relevance:** U.S. state power was leveraged to control knowledge and technology, preventing the public from accessing truth.

The Cold War arms race extended to the "mind control race," with science weaponised for geopolitical dominance.

### Conflict Theory (cont)

Victims were drawn from marginalised groups — illustrating how power shapes whose rights can be violated.

**Analytical Point:** Shows MKULTRA as part of elite control, where law enforcement and scientific institutions served ruling-class interests.

### Symbolic Interactionism

**Core Idea:** Society is constructed through social interactions and shared meanings; deviance is defined through labeling

**Key Figure:** Herbert Blumer

**MKULTRA Relevance:** "Mind control" was not just a technical goal, but a cultural concept — infused with Cold War fears, spy narratives, and media depictions.

Internally, scientists and agents redefined illegal acts as "research" or "operations," changing the moral meaning of their actions.

The label "national security" altered public perception when elements of MKULTRA surfaced.

**Analytical Point:** Language and framing shaped how participants and the public understood the program.

### Power/Knowledge (Foucauldian Analysis)

**Core Idea:** Knowledge and power are intertwined; control of knowledge produces control over populations.

**Key Figure:** Michel Foucault

**MKULTRA Relevance:** CIA controlled both the production of knowledge (research) and its secrecy, dictating what could be known about human psychology.

The human body and mind became sites of discipline through chemical, sensory, and psychological control.

Surveillance of subjects paralleled Foucauldian "panopticism" — subjects altered behaviour under observation.

**Analytical Point:** MKULTRA represents biopower in action, where the state governs bodies and minds directly.

### Social Construction of Science

**Core Idea:** Scientific facts are socially produced through negotiations, politics, and cultural context.

**Key Figures:** Bruno Latour, Karin Knorr-Cetina

**MKULTRA Relevance:** Research results were shaped by CIA goals — "truth" was filtered through operational usefulness.

Funding decisions prioritised experiments with intelligence applications, not peer-reviewed merit.



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### Social Construction of Science (cont)

The boundary between legitimate science and pseudo-science blurred under secrecy.

**Analytical Point:** Demonstrates how institutional power determines what counts as valid knowledge

### Deviance and Social Control

**Core Idea:** Societies maintain order by defining and regulating deviance through norms, sanctions, and control mechanisms.

**Key Figures:** Howard Becker (Labeling Theory)

Émile Durkheim

**MKULTRA Relevance:** The CIA engaged in norm violations (e.g., unethical experimentation), yet avoided sanctions through secrecy.

The state itself became an agent of deviance, redefining "legal" in ways that benefited operations.

Whistleblowers and journalists who exposed MKULTRA were sometimes labeled as unpatriotic or conspiratorial.

**Analytical Point:** Shows how deviance is relative to power — the same acts by ordinary people would be criminalised.

### Structural Violence

**Core Idea:** Social structures can harm individuals by preventing them from meeting basic needs.

**Key Figure:** Johan Galtung

### Structural Violence (cont)

**MKULTRA Relevance:** Victims suffered long-term psychological and physical harm due to experiments.

Targeting psychiatric patients, prisoners, and the homeless exploited pre-existing social inequalities.

Harm was invisible to the broader public for decades — a hallmark of structural violence.

**Analytical Point:** MKULTRA perpetuated harm through institutional design, not individual malice alone.

### Secrecy and Social Organisation

**Core Idea:** Organisations can embed secrecy into their structure, shaping internal culture and external perception.

**Key Figures:** Georg Simmel

Gary Marx (on secrecy in social control)

**MKULTRA Relevance:** Use of front organisations, code names, and compartmentalisation created a "need-to-know" hierarchy.

Information silos prevented internal dissent.

Public accountability was structurally impossible by design.

**Analytical Point:** Secrecy wasn't an accident — it was an organising principle of MKULTRA.



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