

One ethical issue in *Oppenheimer* is the responsibility of scientists in developing weapons for use in battle. To begin the discussion, it must be noted that the scientists at Los Alamos knew they were working on a weapon of mass destruction (WMD). As the scientist then, it is very clear that the research they complete will be used to harm multiple other people, possibly both civilians and armed forces. The ethics of war behavior has been studied extensively and countless words have been published as such; a result of discussion on war and ethics is that the killing of civilians, intentional or not, is generally frowned upon. The nation's armed forces are trained for combat and killing, but most scientists do not have the same training. So then, one can argue that a scientist has no right to develop a WMD, nor do they have a right to contest military officials in the decision to use the atomic bomb against enemies. In one scene of the movie, we see Oppenheimer visiting president Truman to discuss the new hydrogen bomb program; Oppenheimer shares remorse, saying that he feels that he has blood on his hands from the bomb, to which Truman gets upset, saying that not everything is about Oppenheimer since Truman was the one that gave the order to drop the bombs, likely causing internal turmoil in the decision himself. However, despite arguments that the scientist cannot be an arbiter of weapons use, the idea of a conscientious objector presents the idea of an informed citizen that disagrees with a military appointment for moral or religious reasons. So then, many can argue that the scientist indeed has every right to reject the building of an atomic bomb. However, the scientist is never required to build the bomb – there is no conscription for the development of a WMD, yet Oppenheimer feels regret for his actions and role in developing the atomic bomb, perhaps feeling that his hand was forced, or that his actions have unintentionally started an arms race that will end in the total destruction of the planet. How true is it that the scientists at Los Alamos had every chance to quit development for the atomic bomb? In the movie, there were meetings of the scientists at Los Alamos to discuss whether it was right for the atomic bomb to be used in the war, yet these scientists were never shown to leave the project.

Another ethical issue present in *Oppenheimer* is the role of politics in science. When he was a younger professor, he was reprimanded by other professors for organizing political club meetings in the classroom, and Oppenheimer's association with communism is a consistent source of controversy. Many will tout the idea that science is apolitical, or at least should be. This position can be confusing to those familiar with politics, however, since there seems to be policy for everything, from sexuality to groceries to books. The truth is, when science is done by people, politics are at play since people are subject to policy. In fact, for a long period of time, women were barred from doing science, despite having that same aptitude for science as others. So then, in a world where being a person was political, it is inevitable that politics are in science; however, with consideration for the historical circumstances, the situation is more complex. In the case of Oppenheimer, "being political" meant being communist, which was very contentious at the time – with McCarthyism, being accused of communism was treason. In the latter portion of the movie, the country was in an arms race against the USSR, and communism was considered sympathy for the enemy. This ethical issue can be extended to the discrimination of different ideologies and the tolerance of bigotry, which is beyond the scope of this paper.