

**Plenary Session: An Anthropologist's Application of Systems Theory to
Development of the Casebook —
Roberta Culbertson**

Participants: Jean Maria Arrigo, Ray Bennett, Colleen Cordes, Roberta Culbertson,
David DeBatto, George Hunsinger, Ray McGovern, Sam Provance, Don Soeken, Stephen
Soldz, Cheryl Welsh
Date: June 30, 2008
Transcribed by: Teresa Bergen

Note: The following discussion led by anthropologist Roberta Culbertson, PhD, refers to three military advisors from the previous day who wished to remain anonymous: Mr. A, Ms. B, and Ms. C. Here are summaries of their positions prior to the transcript of the discussion:

Mr. A, a retired senior military intelligence officer with primarily tactical experience, believes that the military was not prepared doctrinally for processing un-uniformed personnel captured in a combat or occupying environment. He discussed an approach where a psychologist could serve the role of observer, ensuring both that detainees were not abused, and the mental health of interrogators was monitored. Another, possibly separate approach, would be to install a separate reporting chain, apart from normal military hierarchical channels, akin to the Inspectors General model, to report abuses and concerns, even having psychologists as a part of the Inspector General's scope of authority and organization. Mr. A is concerned about the dependence on contractors and the concurrent ill-defined chain of command and responsibility. Mr. A believes that in the first Gulf war, the U.S. treated and processed captured personnel doctrinally, and surmises that the abuses in the current Global War on Terrorism are a result of a lack of doctrine.

Ms. B, a former military intelligence officer, did not agree entirely that the Army had doctrinal problems, but points to a failure of leadership, resulting to a lack of discipline within the force. For the purpose of monitoring interrogations and ensuring compliance with established norms, she suggests the military chaplaincy could play a role.

Ms. D is a psychiatrist with extensive knowledge of military healthcare, particularly psychology and psychiatry. She discusses the extreme pressures that the institutional systems are under, mostly driven by funding issues, but also a dysfunctional system in that the system's participants are not acting in the way they were trained. Ms. D also expresses concern of how the use of contractors is contributing to this dysfunction.

[Begin Transcript]

**An Anthropologist's Application of Systems Theory to Development of the
Casebook —**

Roberta Culbertson: –survivors of situations of torture, the dirty war in Argentina, Cambodian genocide was my particular specialty. I know that in some depth. Also people who study the Holocaust and survivors of the Holocaust. And in all these cases, I become very familiar with torture and the nature of torture. And the qualities of torture and its effects on the torturer as well as on the tortured. So the way in which I've understood this stuff is not so much academic as the experiences of people with whom I've worked. And when I say worked, I don't mean work in a sense of the psychological counselor, because I'm not. But in working with folks to try to understand what the internal experience of violence, and torture is, of course, one of the more extreme forms of violence. The internal experience. How it actually feels, and then how long it lasts. And the various ways in which it plays out over the course of a person's life.

So that's sort of the mind set that I'm bringing to this. And in my opinion, violence is something like the weather. It has its own power, it has its own shape, it is an emerging complex system. And once it begins, it propagates itself. And it used people to mine material from everything around it just sort of gets sucked into it like a tornado. And they'll maintain that, the violent system will be maintained until all resources are exhausted.

Jean Maria Arrigo: Wow.

Culbertson: So this is sort of where I'm going with my work.

Arrigo: Could you stop on that and say a little bit more about until all resources are exhausted?

Culbertson: Well, basically what I'm trying to do is apply a very interesting, relatively new field. Everybody, if you say "systems theory," everybody goes oh, yeah, right, I know what that is, especially if I work in an organization. But there's such a thing as complex systems theory emergent, which talks about emergent systems, in which systems are actually much larger than their component parts, which are also systems. So of course the body's different from your stomach. And there are actually now mathematical computations and understanding of how systems emerge. And that's the kind of material that I'm beginning to apply to this.

If you want to know more about it, you can go to the Santa Fe Institute. And there are also some wonderful books on it. There's a book called *Complexity* by one of the main guys at Santa Fe Institute. And as is often the case in science, these are sort of renegade folks because they're saying that it really doesn't matter what phenomenon you take, these same principles will apply. So I decided to try to apply it to violence. And that's sort of cutting edge of what I'm trying to do. And I'm trying to do it because I think it also gives people something to work with in terms of, do I really want to engage even the first step in this thing, because I will soon lose control over what will happen. So those are some of the things that are behind me.

And my thinking as I am talking to you here about this, I'm an anthropologist, but I'm kind of a renegade anthropologist. I don't really do the cultural, I do cultural work, of course, I understand the power of culture. But I don't go along with the whole notion that everything's cultural. I believe there are basic human experiences that cross cultural lines.

Interpretive cultural.

So I'm going to have to sort of read a little bit because I want to go fast. And I want to make sure you got it. I mean, make sure that I say what I think I need to say. So I'll try not to read a lot. I hate people who read, I'm just going to hand it to you and you can read over a glass of wine. (?)

So there are two things that I want to try to do here as I'm talking. One is first of all, we need to think about the context or the cultural matrix in which psychologists are involved or not involved or perhaps involved in wartime interrogations are working. And we want to take into account the very real limits to our, here at the table, even being able to conceive of the problem, because we're embedded in that cultural makeup ourselves.

So part of what we've been struggling with this weekend, I think, is how to move beyond some standard ways of talking about things to really get to the picture itself. I think one way to do that is to go as concrete as we can. So we have to understand at a deep level what we're asking people to do when they interrogate. When they seek to extract information from people who don't want to give it. And we also maybe want to look at how many individuals might want to negotiate what's fundamentally at the trail on both sides. It's at the trail of my weakness because I don't know. I don't know what you know. I need to know it. So in a way, there's something here I need from you. And on the other side, as soon as I tell you, I will have betrayed myself and my people and my leaders.

So each of these is a really personal matter, and a personal issue, that's being carried out in a matrix of limits that are pushed, held or managed by people in real time. I think that's particularly true when you're talking about a circumstance like Abu Ghraib where you're holding people whose only designation is "detainee," which only means that they've been detained. It tells you nothing else about whether they're guilty, whether they know anything, whether they're a combatant or not. So at that point, you really are dealing with a circumstance in which there's really not a lot that's already clarified for you. And I think we need to recognize that in that circumstance, the interrogator may feel as powerless as the interrogated, or at least have some level of that. That's one thing to think about, just throw it at you.

So I think if we're going to talk about ethical behavior in interrogations, we have to talk about the individual's decisions, and also the cultural options that are available to that interrogator. What's going to be considered right or wrong. This weekend we spent most of our time on the first. How do you make decisions, and we talked a little bit less about the cultural matrix in which people are embedded. So what I want to do first of all is describe what it seems to me, the questions we asked. And then I'll talk about the answers we came up with. So this is the real cut and dried part. I'll get into the other in a little bit. I've seen a piece here that I wish I had said later instead of now, so I'm going to try to remember to come back to it.

In the past two days, we've heard many excellent analyses of what the role of psychologists should be, and we've got some sense of what it is. And a lot of that, though, however, has been really by indirect rather than direct reports. We haven't really talked to psychologists here. We've talked to people who say, "Well, they should do this," or "they did that." But it's all sort of been, as we knew it would be, (?) direction. And we've also been talking about the interrogation ethics in the Iraq war in particular, and the ways in which excesses changes in war strategies, differences in the enemy and

other developments, affected what could be done and what were considered ethical behaviors. So I think we have to remember that what we're talking about is this particular circumstance as well as maybe broader issues. But there's a lot of talk about how we're facing a different world now and the rules are different.

Male: Where have I heard that before?

Culbertson: Not from me.

Male: No.

Culbertson: Okay.

Male: But the general statement over the last lifetime or two.

Culbertson: Yes. Right. Exactly. It's always a different world, right? In which maybe it is, maybe it isn't. But anyway, that's one of those, there's one of those places, I think, that we fall into a trap of thinking oh, we understand because we're now in a different world. Oh, the enemy has changed. Well, we'll get to that. So that's coming a little bit later. We'll talk about those more general issues. But at this point, what I heard overall in terms of the concrete things, and of course I think that Jean Maria and others will be able to do this in much more detail. What I heard was these several questions. When is psychological knowledge relevant to interrogation? When and how should it be delivered? Do psychologists have a role in interrogations themselves, or are they more effective as trainers and consultants to train interrogators? What sorts of controls, supervisions, rules, doctrines and chains of command should be in place to ensure that psychologists do not overstep the boundaries between assistance to interrogators and perhaps even humane treatment of the detainee and abuse?

So it seemed like those were two roles that were suggested for psychologists. Humane treatment of detainees, and also as interrogators. But where does the line come in then, when assistance become abuse?

And then, should psychologists develop a specialty or concentration in this field, so as to ensure that those who engage in this activity are both trained and held to ethical standards in keeping with the role of psychologists as healers and helpers.

So we were looking at should there be a concentration in this field and what might it look like, if you remember that the role of a psychologist is fundamentally to heal and to help.

And then I think it's the last question, yeah, what abuses have occurred and why, and what safeguards would ensure that they stop? That's what I heard as the questions that we really kept bandying about, at least at the functional level.

And if I were to summarize quickly what I think the answers were that we came up with, I would say this: Psychological knowledge is relevant to interrogation when it advances the mission in a way that is both efficient and humane; when it promotes the least intrusive means of eliciting information; and when it helps the interrogator to remove his or her own biases or (?) from the process of interrogation. That allows him or her to get the most reliable information, and to do so in a way that dehumanizes neither

the interrogator nor the interrogated.

Okay, so that's the first, the first thing, is that there are certain ways in which psychological knowledge evolved. Overall, it seems that psychological knowledge can most often be delivered in the training of interrogators.

Arrigo: Roberta, could we pause there (with that?) relevance? Early on, early, at the beginning, you talked about the two betrayals that the person, that the interrogatee is betraying his country or whatever, and that the interrogator, what was that betrayal? He's betraying the relationship—

Culbertson: He's betraying his weakness. Because he doesn't know.

Male: But she's using "betray" in two different senses.

Arrigo: Okay. Okay. Or exposing his (?)

Culbertson: Yes, he's exposing himself.

Male: Just by the fact that he's asking a question, the mere fact that he's asking a question betrays that he doesn't know.

Arrigo: Okay. So—

Male: "Betrayal" is a heavy word. I thought (?)

Culbertson: Yeah. Yeah. Well, you know, also there's so many different lines, though, especially if you're not trained sufficiently in doing it, you will easily cross about, do you go beyond what you think as a human being you should do, just because you want to (?)

Arrigo: But I also thought it could be a betrayal in that relationship, if you actually get an intimate relationship with a person in— anyway, so I was wondering whether the psychologist was also, when you were talking about the utility of the psychologist, whether the psychologist's expertise had anything to do with these betrayals and revelations there, too.

Culbertson: Yeah, I would say they would be embedded in what knowledge is relevant to interrogation. People just, perhaps understand what's going on in the interrogation using psychological principles. For example, this is another, an aside, but something I thought about a lot. We talked about rapport-based interrogation. And of course, rapport-based interrogation isn't really, you're still lying to the person.

Arrigo: It's more like seduction.

Culbertson: It's a seduction, right. And you're not really going to go off and be that person's friend, even though that's how you're acting. It's a means of getting information. Which I hope a psychologist doesn't always do when they're actually using

rapport-based information in a counseling session.

Arrigo: Well, there's a paid relationship. It's not going to continue without that.

Culbertson: Yeah. But there's a way in which they're not going to take what you say and then use it against or use it for nefarious purposes that you would not agree with.

Arrigo: Thanks.

Culbertson: So that's another angle. Overall, it seems that psychological knowledge should be most often delivered in a training of interrogators. And then less often, or with greater supervision and support, in the case of individual interrogations. But it shouldn't, it seems what we've been saying here, it should not be delivered in the interrogation room itself, and nor should psychologists themselves engage in interrogations. This is sort of the overall sense that I (was?) here. And I think that the materials that we have give reason for all of that.

And I think, the next one I heard, was nor should the psychologist forget his or her obligation to treat both parties, the interrogated and the interrogator, humanely. And to be aware of conventions, like the Geneva Conventions, ethical rules and so on that limit extreme measures that amount to torture in the extraction of information. And advise us as to how to do it effectively. The psychologist, as a member of a healing profession, is called to a high standard of performance that requires as a first principle that he or she commit no acts that cause harm, and report such acts to authorities.

This is particularly relevant to me, and I think a good way to find out how people have, other psychologists in other countries have worked with this problem. We've even looked at the material from Argentina. Because Argentina was what they called, the Argentineans, I know, were called a psychologically-minded society. At the time of the dirty war, many people in the middle class were very much aware of psychoanalysis. There were lots of counselors. They had major training programs in psychology at their universities. And what developed there was what is sometimes called the (counter?) therapy of the state. And what it was was using psychological principles in reverse to cause disorientation and disruption of not only individuals, but of the entire culture. And it worked very well. And at the same time, the psychologists who survived, and very few did, ended up working with survivors of, people who came out of the so-called concentration camps. That's what they called them when they put them together in little torture chambers for long periods of time.

Psychologists worked with those folks. Many of those folks also were declared dead at some point, and then they would reemerge. So then they would live their lives as dead people. So there's a whole psychological literature on how that was all done, the effects of torture on the torturers, the effects of torture on the tortured, and the effects of torture on the psychologists who ended up dealing with these people.

And also, the psychologists were the ones who were working with the government, generally under the pain of, the dangers of noncompliance, to say how to make it work. Doctors, too. We were talking yesterday about doctors being in the room when torture was going on. They were there so the person wouldn't die. Not because you didn't want to kill the person, but because you didn't want the person to die. Because that wouldn't

be any good. He wouldn't be an asset anymore. You wouldn't be able to torture him next week.

Male: Can you get us some literature on that? I know a part of a picture, but you obviously know a lot more.

Culbertson: Yeah. Yeah. Well, yeah. I can (get?) some stuff.

Male: One book that's, I'm blanking on the author, The Real Terror Network, do you remember that?

Culbertson: That one I don't know.

Male: Edward (Herman?)

Male: That's explicitly just psychologists, sort of psychological side. I know (?) dirty war, etcetera. But that, the angle that you're putting is new to me.

Culbertson: There are some articles by people working in the field, mostly Argentinean. Also Chilean and Uruguayan was basically (?)

Male: When you say very few of the psychologists survived, do you mean they were killed by the government?

Culbertson: Yeah.

Male: And why was that?

Culbertson: Because if they weren't going to comply, the whole story of Argentina is just fascinating. But if they seemed, there was a strong, there was perceived to be a strong resistance (?) to the repressions of the generals. And the generals decided, as has become quite common, that the easiest way to deal with repression is to kill the people who are, I mean, the easiest way to deal with rebellion is just to kill the people who are rebelling. But they decided that would really be just too close to genocide. So instead, what they did was disappear people from throughout the population. And they disappeared them, they would just take them, and I know people who were taken, and they would either put them in concentration camps and torture them and then put them back out on the street so that they could demoralize the population by their disorientation. Or they would take them in planes, fly them out across the water, and drop them into the ocean.

Male: The psychologists tended to be aligned with the left.

Culbertson: Yes.

Male: That's part of the reason why they were singled out.

Culbertson: Right. They were aligned with the left, and they knew what was going on. Because they knew what was being done. They knew how counter-therapy of the state was working. So they were killed. So one of my good friends, there were only two people who survived from this entire class of the University of (Buenos Aires?) So, that's why.

So, not to get off on Buenos Aires and all that, but, okay. So, let's see, where was I? So what we talk about then, what I was talking about there as a psychologist, as a member of a healing profession, perhaps, really, can emphasize that piece of it that he or she has committed already to cause, to commit no acts that cause harm and to report such acts to the authorities. And it was also discussed that oversight is critical, and that psychologists should never be outside chains of command, or left to operate outside doctrinal principles of the military, and the basic ethical principles of their own disciplines. It was discussed that psychologists in the field should be subject to the chain of command, and also to independent reviews by the mechanisms of the inspectors general.

And finally was suggested that because the issues of interrogation are so complex, and shade over so quickly into the realm of torture, or can, if they aren't carefully delineated, this should perhaps become an area of specialization in competency in psychology. That would limit the practice to those trained to do it, and aware of international treaties and conventions, aware of ethical issues, and of their own limitations as objective observers and trainers in situations that are exceedingly fraught.

Okay. Those are what I saw as the basic questions and the basic answers. What do you all think? Does that sound fairly summarizing?

Arrigo: I think that the issue of having somebody with this competency as a specialization, which I'm imagining outside, not a clinical person, okay, I think that was only discussed in my group. But you were there, and I don't think we actually have any opinions from other people on that matter. That's something we need to take up.

Culbertson: Yeah, I agree. I think it's an interesting framing mechanism for some of the questions that you have.

Arrigo: Yeah. Putting real accountability someplace, but danger.

Female: I also think something you had said earlier about psychologists being involved as consultants for individual interrogations was something that we have not actually discussed as a group. We haven't aired it all. And the only times I remember having conversation are with Steven Behnke. And he was representing APA's position. And they have had that position, but we didn't really get into sort of a full discussion of why or why not. I think we were working with that, but there's so much else to deal with.

And then yesterday with Mr. A and Ms. B. And Ms. B was not very, we were interviewing them, we weren't really having, I did not feel like we were trying to come to a group agreement. We were interviewing them and Mr. A made it pretty clear that he did not really know much about psychologists. He had not worked with psychologists in his own interrogations, but he was imagining things psychologists could do. So I don't feel that that was like we as a group actually aired all the reasons for and against it. There was actually no psychologist in the room. So I would see that as a major question that we

have not yet really aired. We have not gone through all the sort of pros and cons of that.

Male: This is a different consideration. Can I just respond to that for one question? I wasn't in the small group with the colonels yesterday. But if I understood what Mr. A. was saying, he was sort of taking the military position that if psychologists are useful to the mission, I'd like to have them there. I'd like to, I felt, I didn't feel that he was really in a position or necessarily saying that they were useful to the mission, though it sort of sounded like that. There's sort of two questions. Are they useful? And then he's saying, if they are, I want them there. And then, of course, there's a third question, which is do psychologists want to be there, which is what a separate, for various ethical, whatever, reasons, just saying that these are just (state?) questions.

Culbertson: I think what I was suggesting here is that, I was floating around all the different groups and then (?) sort of pull it all together. And I think that is an issue that's come up as a possible answer. And so I'm not saying these are like should, should, should, that these are the areas in which we're answering our questions.

Male: And it relates to an issue that we have not touched upon very much (?) which is the APA, APA has made an argument, Behnke has made this at various points, that some psychologists are health providers and that those consulting in interrogations are not health providers but behavioral scientists, whatever in the world that means.

Arrigo: The problem is that they have clinical licenses, okay?

Culbertson: Right.

Arrigo: So our specialty would be something else.

Male: Well, they're also subject to the same ethics code, which has certain- (?) but that's an issue, I just was aware at the end of yesterday that that's an issue that we haven't really (?) This may not be the group. It may be we need a group of psychologists in some sense to discuss some of those issues around-

Culbertson: And here's where I plead my own ignorance, because you know, anthropology, we have different kinds of disciplines and so on, but we don't really have, I don't think, a sense, we recognize, this is the revolution that Laura was talking about. We recognize that we do have no place as a value-free observer. There's no such thing. And so we're always not scientists. As well as being scientists, as well as trying to be as reasoned and rational as we can, we have to recognize that we are always inserting ourselves into the situation. And we also don't try to make (?) better. You know, we're not a helping profession. So these are issues that to me, I'm not quite sure how psychology divides that all up as a behavioral science. Well, yes, but there's still rules about what you can do to people in your studies of behavioral science. So it's an interesting issue.

Male: I think it's important to keep a distinction straight between ethical considerations,

and I don't know quite how to put it, competency of considerations. I mean, there are some roles, it seems to me, that psychologists should not be expected to play. Not necessarily because it's an ethical matter, but because they're actually not qualified to play them. And the one I think of in particular is this whole business of monitoring. To my mind, in an interrogation situation, the monitor should be someone with a legal background. And not someone with a, certainly not a chaplain, and not a psychologist. This is about we're trying to make it humane. See, that sort of spills over, it creeps over into okay, we'll monitor the situation to keep it humane. The guidelines are primarily legal, I think, that we want to see be respected there.

Male: Eventually they are.

Male: The role that a psychologist might play in trying to make sure that the interrogation is not conducted inhumanely seems to be rather separate from the technical monitor role that would be (?)

Male: Jordan, I think there was some confusion on that point in our discussion last night. I think the point that I was trying to express and we were finding some agreement with the Mr. A and Ms. B is that the psychologist has a role to play in the training of the interrogator. That was all agreed upon, correct? The monitoring of interrogation was simply to be able to comment, was simply a part of the training. It was looking to see if the interrogator was following the guidelines laid down in the training. He is not attempting to judge the humanity or anything else in interrogating, attempt to judge the performance of the interrogator, who is, in the very nature of training, always in a state of training. You recycle back for more training. But that's the point. It wasn't for the interrogator to assume a role more proper, as I think you indicate for the legal specialist, to see if the legal line is (?). He's saying, is the interrogator using the techniques that he's been taught properly. (Fair enough?)

Culbertson: I could also, we didn't get into a whole group again, sort of airing that all out. I guess what I would have said, if we were trying to come to a group decision on that, a group recommendation, is that it's hard to believe that a psychologist would be allowed to limit themselves to that role, if they're right there in the heat of a real interrogation versus interrogators going back for continuing education totally outside of the real interrogation and maybe doing some simulated interrogations and having a psychologist see whether they're, you know—

Male: The way you could do that, which would (?) another part, is if the only role is sort of a training one, then videotape so that trainers can examine videotapes. Then you're clearly removed from the interrogation setting.

Culbertson: But again, you run into would a psychologist be allowed to only comment on it as a training thing, if it's a real interrogation. Where real information the government wants and needs.

Male: The reason I'm saying videotape is there's a time lag as well.

Arrigo: Let's sort out the details later, and let Roberta– [several talking]

Male: Well, we were talking about different countries. Since I've not been an expert on torture, I've generalized from what I've seen on television. And then there's levels. There's first level of torture, (?) and so people generalize. And if you look at it from a public, the public gives the psychologist the right to be helpers in the community. It comes from the public. If the public decided to outlaw them for some reason, one would be that they're working on, they're doing torture. Or they're working with people who are doing torture. So I think that generalizing as far, if the specific thing that is what we're talking about is hard to nail down. Because if I were to see myself, I think the reason, I don't have the problem, I will never be involved with it, okay? I would be, if you use the legal model, which I don't (?) believe in, I would be the expert witness for the person who's being tortured. That would be the expert witness for the person who, like you (Sam?). But the other side, is it only because I don't have the opportunity that I'm not on the other side? I mean, psychologists have the opportunity to be what we're talking about. Why is, is it more than just money? Because I've tried to fight this battle within the social work community, and it's like you don't get anywhere. Because everybody says well, (we don't?) do that. Why is it that psychologists–

Male: Want to be in this role?

Male: Yeah. Why would they want to be in that role? Because if you look at Mr. A's point of view, I've got him here, and whatever I can get out of a new guy as fast as possible, and what some psychologist can help me find, and I guess that's what we're talking about is what are the limits of how fast you can go and what methods can you use. But why, there's another thing there. And that is, if you do it, and the public generalizes and thinks well, that's what they're doing. They're participating in torture.

Arrigo: Don, there have been huge career opportunities have opened up. I don't think you need anything more than that. If you look through the APA, this is the massive funding arrangements we were talking about before.

Male: But is that, okay, money is always the hook you're on.

Arrigo: Well, it's not just money, okay?

Male: It's career.

Arrigo: Career opportunities. You don't need that many psychologists to do it.

Male: There's only–

Culbertson: And also, if you're a military psychologist, you are concerned about the nation's security. And you might feel that this is a real, you want to be right as close as possible to protect national security.

Arrigo: No, they're not thinking that.

Culbertson: Well, I don't think we could rule that out.

Arrigo: Okay. I was with those people, and that's not how they're thinking.

Male: So why are they, do we know why they're there?

Male: This is my job. That's what—

Male: Well, I think they're also there—

Male: The Germans said, "I was ordered." Okay? So if the psychologists are ordered to do something, do they just do it?

Male: Psychology is, in the military, this sort of operational psychology is in a battle to show its value. And this was an opportunity. We're talking about a very small number of people. It could be as few as twenty people that this huge battle has been about. We don't know. But it's about, by doing this, I think psychology has shown its loyalty to the military leadership and is saying we're the profession you should turn to for things. And also, not those psychiatrists, is also part of this.

Arrigo: We'll give you prescription rights, we'll fund your child welfare programs, you know, do all this other stuff. And this is where the APA leadership works into it, okay?

Male: We'll give you research, we like you guys. You guys have shown that you're loyal, you'll do what we want. (?) hundreds of millions of dollars.

Arrigo: This is the character versus situation issue here.

Culbertson: And the thing is also that character is extremely malleable. And that we've been here today for, we've been here in this room for a couple of days. And we have more of a feeling about belonging to one other than we had when we first walked in. And nothing was done to make that happen. It just does happen. And having worked in criminal justice and mental health both, I know that after all I got used to the idea of bus therapy. You know what bus therapy is, some of you do, if you're therapists. Bus therapy is when the person that you just can't deal with anymore, who drives you crazy, you give them a bus ticket. [laughter] And we would talk about, this is probably really not what we should be doing with this guy but, you know. So these things happen. It's acculturation. Because our group sticks together. We've got to get this guy out of here. We can't do anything else with him. And by the way, the guys like bus therapy. They want to get out of there, too, because we weren't doing a very good job.

So I would like to just go on a little bit. Because I think some of these issues you're raising, particularly about a situation, I would like to take up, basically sort of take up one level more. Because I think that while we often think that we should work at the level of

systems and sort of immediate situations, all of those are actually driven by beliefs and world views. And beliefs and world views are malleable and not. They're also often very contradictory. And they're also not very examined, because they're the bedrock on which everything else is examined. So a system can't observe itself, as they sometimes say. And if the system of your thoughts is the system that's taking in all new information, it's going to keep structuring things in the way that your mind has already said. So I think it's really important to look at, if we look at these overall questions and answers, and we might be able to think of, hang on, I'm not even sure here what I'm doing here. Oh, yeah. Okay. That's summary kind of thing, I'm not sure I need to say that now.

But I think we want to look at some of the bedrock values and beliefs and so on that may be going on here, and change some of those as we move into globalization.

First of all, I'd just like to point out that in my opinion, interrogations are what you might call "edge experiences." They're extreme, they're intense, they bring together two people in a kind of mind combat. They have extremely high stakes for those that do them. And interrogations must not be confused with other forms of psychological work. The effects of interrogation can be devastating to both or all parties if the interrogation is not done properly. Which means without surrendering to baser drives that hurt those, to hurt those who are weaker than oneself.

Torture as a kind of endgame interrogation dehumanizes the interrogator as well as the interrogated. And after one has crossed that line, there's no going back without acknowledging that one has done things of which he or she's not proud. Changes in the mind on both side are permanent. And they include numbing, splitting, and so on. The stories of what happened in that room, if they get out, will make others wonder if the person is a monster of some kind. And the person himself will wonder.

Male: Which person? The interrogator or the interrogated?

Culbertson: Both. The differences between the two, if it reaches that point where there's really no, where they're working on fairly base levels, there's little difference in the effect. If this is the case, then the psychologist has a role as researcher and teacher here that can bring to interrogators the likely effects on themselves of what they are doing, and the likely effects on those they may be asked to harm. This goes beyond pointing out that torture is not necessary for the extraction of information, but also relates what torture will do to both parties.

In other words, the psychologists' ethical standards for their own behavior and circumstances in interrogation can be derived from what is necessary to save both parties from dehumanization. But the consequences are failing to do so.

In other words, we're dealing here with a slippery slope. And perhaps it's wise to say that the reason psychologists should not engage in interrogations is not only that they don't know how to work in a field in which they weren't trained, and probably couldn't be trained in, but that doing this work is actually turning their teachings and their ethics on their heads. And the power of the interrogation room will likely draw them towards their own process of dehumanization. Especially without specific training, as you've said so many times, that keeps things within very strict limits.

Psychologists, you don't need to invent the research on the dehumanizing effects of torture on everyone, that's really available from the Latin American psychologists. In

general, I think, psychologists could take on the role of educators about the nature of violent circumstances and their effects on reasoning, means of remaining human, and so on.

I'll just make a simple analogy here, which is sort of interesting. I talked a lot about violence, the effects of violence, the way violence affects the mind, and reasoning. And I was always coming up with people who'd say, "You mean like spanking? I spank my kids. How could I not spank my kids? I spank my kids, and I turned out fine.

I say, "You turned out fine, except that you spanked your kids."

But also, they said, "But how can you do it if you don't inflict physical punishment?"

And I said, "Well, you wouldn't put a hot iron on your kid as a way to inflict physical punishment. You just wouldn't do that. So why do you have to hit them? Because here's the effect of hitting them on the way their mind works, and on the neurological pathways that go from experience to thought."

So I think that if you can make these kinds of, this is where psychologists can really be helpful so the people understand that what's going to happen to them in the interrogation room, especially when it's not structured and when the goals are not clear, is going to take them down a path from which they won't return.

So, just to go on here, I said I was going to be talking a little bit about the cultural issues and I do want to get to that. But I just had to say that about the interrogation room itself. So, the matter of psychological ethics in torture, and of course, it's not really in torture. Part of what I want to talk about is we've really got to get our terms clear here, in what we're doing. But in interrogation, it's not happening in a vacuum. Nor is it happening in a context anything like the context of previous wars in many ways. We like to say this. We like to say that this war is different or the enemy is different. But it's also that we're different.

To understand the real ethical challenges of this time, and this specific situation of military interrogation in the combat theater, we have to look beyond matters of power and politics and we need to understand the entire discussion is taking place in a changed world. It's not a world so much in which combat or the enemy have changed. A fundamental change has taken place in the model of human relationships that prevails. This is a model characteristic of the experience of violence, which means it's very simple. It's permeated all institutions now, and all social interactions, so it's hardly seen. That's the treatment of people.

And here, this is me going off on my tangents, okay, but I hope it might be useful. This is the treatment of people as means rather than ends. And the overall commitment in a global world to the three lowest common denominators of human interaction, or to the common lowest common denominator, and that's the exchange of goods and services. Basic things humans have to do with one another are exchange goods and services.

Arrigo: I think that's a very awkward point to raise in this situation because the soldiers are treated as means rather than ends. I mean, everybody in the whole system.

Culbertson: Yeah. Well, we're not making distinctions.

Arrigo: Right. Is expendable, as it were.

Culbertson: Right. So that's the point. That's the point.

Arrigo: Yes, but it's almost saying that if we decided we couldn't interrogate for this reason, that we couldn't do abusive interrogation for this reason, we'd also decide that we can't send the platoon out.

Culbertson: Yeah. (?) Well, just let me keep going.

Arrigo: Okay.

Culbertson: Because I'm not trying to make direct connections yet. I'm just trying to set up a situation in which I think you could, you might be able to say. And again, the way I tend to think is I tend to think, how can you think about something? So let's have some possibilities. One possibility that seems to me, then, is when you have a global society in which people are mixing from all different parts of the world. They don't speak the same language. They're essentially brought together by the need for exchange of goods and services. The language that they speak becomes the language of cash. You know, this is what you do. You exchange for a consideration. The consideration is money. It's not relationship. It's not health. You know, that's why you pay a psychologist, so you won't have any kind of obligation to that person, nor they to you.

At the same time, the handmaiden of a very simple form of communication called money, is the (?) form of communication called violence. Violence is basically a simple form of communication that has its own syntax, which is very, very simple. Once it's spoken, other languages are not spoken. I like this, somebody had that quotation, "You can get a long way with a smile—" it was Al Capone – "You can get a long way with a smile, you can get farther with a gun and a smile."

When I'm doing my trainings, I like to say to people, "What's the easiest way for me to get you to do something?"

And they, you know, "Money." (?)

"Yeah, what's even easier than that?"

They say, "Pleading. Begging."

I say, "No. What do you think is the easiest?" I say, "Put a gun to your head. That will probably make you do it. Quickly." And if you don't believe that, you can ask what police tell rape victims to do. Which is to submit when a gun is put to your head, because there's not much room for manipulation or moving in that situation.

So if we think that into this world that's shaky in terms of its fundamental principles and its acceptance of human beings as somewhat more than productive machines or consumers, there comes a handmaiden of pragmatism, and that's violence. So violence, what does it communicate as a language? It communicates power. And once it's in play, people have to learn to speak it or they will have nothing that they can say. What its effect, this is an overall dumbing down of human discourse. Because there's really not much you can say with violence. You can't say "I love you" with violence. People try to do that by spanking their kids. But that's not the message that gets across.

I love, one of you mentioned, somebody told me once, she was really upset with her husband because he smacked, the kid had smacked his sister, so the father smacks the kid and says, "Don't hit your sister."

So in other words, if you're big, you can hit them. But if you're small, you can't.

Male: That's another way of saying what goes around, comes around.

Culbertson: Exactly. Yeah. Same thing.

Male: Might makes right.

Culbertson: So—

?: (?) maybe the kid will be big enough and his dad will be—

Culbertson: So I think that if we also added another level onto this, we can talk about what the article that you gave us, Australian anthropologists was talking about. War has a whole lot of different qualities now, especially asymmetrical war is fought basically on image. It's fought on what people see. And the most convincing images are usually images of violence. So what this then means is that there's a kind of general desensitization and I've seen that in every culture I've worked with, the increasing numbers of violence. When violence continues, it increases in number. And the thought patterns become basically about black and white, good and bad, with us or against us.

So if you think about that as being an overall trend – I'm not saying that there aren't other trends, and that there aren't resistances to those trends, because there certainly are. But that's an overall trend in our thought. And I think if you start looking, you'll pick it up in yourself.

Then it raises the question why should we care whether people are hurt or not. Why should we care whether people who may well be our enemies are treated as anything else than enemies. And as possible killers of ourselves.

When I worked in mental health, the reason for taking care of people who are mentally ill was not that it's a good thing to do as a social obligation to care for the weak, it was because it's too expensive to leave them on the street or it's too expensive to let them become murderers. And the whole negotiation— [cell phone] That's a nice tune. The whole negotiation would have to be around the pragmatic issue of what's the cheapest, how can we make these people productive members of society, or how can we take care of them most cheaply. And then the question is well, why care about them at all, and so they ended up, many of them, on the street.

So that being sort of an aside, but just another example. I think we can also look at the fact that we have to look at this experience in the context – I'm only going to go on for about ten more minutes.

Male: May I (?) the initial part of your presentation, the summation of what you had heard. Are you now giving us your view—

Culbertson: I'm saying how do you put this into context?

Male: Yeah, yeah. Okay. But the point is, this is not what you (?) from the—

Culbertson: No, no.

Male: This is from your lifetime of study and experience.

Male: This is the anthropologist.

Culbertson: This is the anthropologist side. So what I'm doing, I'm saying if you're going to do these things, you have to recognize the context of what you're doing. And you have to recognize that you're doing them in a context in which there's, especially once violence begins, in these situations we're talking about violence has begun, there's a very strong process of dehumanization, I guess you could say, which actually means deconceptualization. Thought becomes very simple.

So that means, that as thought becomes very simple, your ethical questions become fewer, or they go into the background. Or, if you're going to try to keep them in the foreground, you have to make your demands for ethical behavior very simple.

We're also entering a period, as you know, of global scarcity. And we're witnessing the rise of new powers, and the decline of ourselves, and new population configurations. What people don't understand, for example, is this state is not what it was ten years ago. It's full of all kinds of different, if you walk around out here, how many people do you see who are native born Americans? Not very many.

Male: We had to go through that wedding party last night.

Culbertson: Yes. So we have to understand that. Because what that means is that cultural differences are not only going to be on the side of the person who's being interrogated, but on the side of the interrogator as well. So you have to take into account that there are going to be lots of different perspectives coming in to any process that you're talking about.

Let's see. What else do I want to say here? Okay. So if we're going to talk about, I could go on about this complex environment, but I think (?) direction I'm going in it. So just let me just go back to say if you're going to talk about ethics in the context in which you have a kind of instrumental view of human beings, you have limited linguistic competencies and you have cultural differences, you have sort of a basic human response to threat that's playing itself out in the interrogation room and all around, what do you do in terms of your ethical considerations? How do you begin to look at it?

Well first, I think, that if you're going to talk about supporting the humane treatment of all people, you have to explain why that's worth doing. And one reason it's worth doing is because you yourself become dehumanized as soon as you adopt these means. And if you, I would think that if you want to encourage people to do things in this kind of climate that we have now, you can't say oh, because it's a good thing. That's not an answer. You can't say because it's whatever your religious tradition is. It's the tradition of our religion. It's the way the world is. It's not particularly pragmatic. But if you begin to help people understand that they're destroying themselves by doing this, this might be something that you could use as a way in. So it's not just for the interrogated, it's for the interrogator.

Female: Could you talk a little specifically from your experience in working with people who felt that they had committed violence against other people, how exactly, what do you mean by it destroys you? What does that mean? (?) the experience that's negative?

Culbertson: So many things popping into my head right now. There are two ways to handle hurting somebody else. One is to just split, and do your job. And the other is to get into it. And both are very easy. Both happen very quickly. And neither is actually who you wanted to be. And so what I've found in what I've done is that most people talk about not forgiving other people, not forgiving the people who betrayed them, not forgiving the leader for going to crazy. But the one they don't forgive is themselves. Even if you would look at it objectively and say, "You didn't do anything wrong," that person would say, "I did, because that person died. And that is my fault."

So even with people who didn't actually do something in an objective sense, there's the sense that they did. And there are many levels on which that haunts. It changes simply the way that you're going to respond to another person. It changes the way, all those kinds of PTSD things. It goes farther than that.

Arrigo: I think this is really a deep consideration that you're making. Because generally the way we handle that is that we put it in the hands of something else. I think of always the covert operators. Those are the throwaway people. So we put it in their hands, we sacrifice those people. But in this case, it's the psychologist, okay? We're identifying with those. So this argument that well, it will be those people that we'll throw away doesn't work now because it's us as psychologists. It's not you as anthropologists or you as theologians. It's us as psychologists. So you're probably getting to the heart of why Steven and I are sitting here, and why Colleen is—

Male: First they came for the anthropologists—

Male: Yeah, exactly.

Male: —then they came for the theologians. And now they're coming for the psychologists.

Arrigo: They're coming for the psychologists! And now we're going to stand up. [laughter]

Female: And there's no one left to stand up. We're all gone.

Arrigo: Yeah. But this has gotten too close now.

Culbertson: Sorry. Anyway—

Male: Well, Ms. D, from the military psychiatry perspective yesterday, talked about developing ways of training in the use of adaptive defenses like splitting and dissociation that these can be trained for soldiers because in combat they're, in not deployment, in deployment they're critical for survival.

Culbertson: Yeah. And then she also talked about training to unwind those after, which I thought was interesting. So the military is beginning to—

Male: (?) has really emphasized the need for that.

Culbertson: Yeah. So part of what I think would help to make that kind of thing happen, to make this point, and make people aware, is to begin to look at some of the vocabulary that we use for this. That's an easy way to start. So if you look at the vocabulary that we've been using this time, for example, you realize that you can explore the words and become a part of a sort of unthinking vocabulary of conflict. The word that I've just really taken away from this meeting as being incredibly exciting, no, that's not the right word, covering over, is detainee. And then didn't you say it was eliminate the target?

Male: Right. That's across the board in the army. They've, over the years, they've changed the wording so that it's not so, it's not a matter of killing.

Male: So it's impersonal.

Male: Right. It's not personal. And that's been attributed to the whole transition into the kinder, gentler army.

Male: Collateral damage.

Male: Right.

Culbertson: Right. Collateral damage.

Male: Where instead of like it used to be search and destroy. Now it's something else.

Culbertson: Neutralize or something.

Male: Right.

Culbertson: Yeah. So I think just looking at these words and how they're used shows that we're obviously covering up something that we're kind of worried about or concerned about. And that people must have reactions to saying "killing," or they wouldn't bother to change it, you know. So I think, looking at what these words mean and what the changes mean, might give us a way to begin to do what's sort of behind all my thinking on this, which I suppose I haven't quite made clear, is the problem you have is that you can think of all this stuff and you can make nice decisions on how things are going to work. But if you don't get the public and institutional support for what you are doing, it will have no effect. So the only way to do that is to begin to work with people where they are. And provide them what you might call a motherhood and apple pie rationale for why this is important.

Arrigo: Roberta, you've, in a way, evoked a topic that we haven't raised about the psychologists here, about the psychologists' involvement. It's all been discussed in terms of utility. But an alternate view of it is that it has nothing to do with utility, but it has everything to do with legitimization. And that, we won't run that argument, but we have run that argument, and there's a great deal in the documentation to support that argument.

Culbertson: Yeah. Right. I think I know where you're coming (from?)

Male: Why don't (?) version, because—

Arrigo: Go ahead.

Male: Just so they know. (Jane Mayer?) says that one of the critical reason the psychologists were needed was that when they were developing the legal memos to justify why this really wasn't torture, the (?) memos, etcetera, that these focused on the intent to do harm. And psychologists were critical because they could then (?). Here's this person with this PhD in behavioral science who says that this is the way to get information. And that that would play a legal defense role in saying that the intent was not to do harm, the intent was to acquire intelligence. And therefore provided a second level of legal protection, should there ever be attempts at accountability. And she argues that that is one of the critical reasons why psychologists had to be there.

Culbertson: Well, it would seem that who could be your best allies on the other side of that argument, which to me is the argument of dehumanizing the people involved would be the people who did it. It wasn't just the matter of extracting information as they experienced it. So, well, anyway, I had basically, that was four things.

Bennett?: I mean, that's important distinction. The interrogator's job is to extract the information. The psychologist's job who is there is to break the person's will.

Culbertson: Right.

Bennett?: There's two different roles there. The psychologist's job is not to extract information. He's not interested in getting intelligence, that's not his function there. That's the interrogator's function.

Male: Did you, it was the second part of your sentence which raised some eyebrows to go up a little bit.

Bennett?: The job of the psychologist there, if we go with this notion of participation of psychologists in the interrogation settings, his job is not to extract information. His job is to break the person's will, to get him to cooperate.

Male: Was that point stressed during our discussion?

Male: No. But that was quite explicit. Mitchell was a student of Marty Sullivan, who

evolved the theory of learned helplessness. And he explicitly said, basically, the point is to break the person's will so they'll become totally dependent upon the interrogator. And much of the literature, the Camp Delta standard operating procedure explicitly talks about breaking the person so that they will become—

Bennett?: Why is the interrogator there? He's there to extract information. Why is the psychologist there?

Male: All right. We all accept that the job of the interrogator is to get the information. I don't think this group has accepted, I don't think the question has come up yet explicitly over the last four days, that the role of the psychologist is to break—

Male: We're saying it has been, we're not saying—

I'm just saying, it's important for my purposes not to have that as accepted, if that, in fact, is the role which anyone wishes to assign to the psychologist, then we can pack up our stuff and leave right now.

[all talking]

Well, that's how they've been used thus far.

That's how they've been used. The APA will completely deny it. So (?) Debatto has been around trying to recognize the historical reality so that whatever policy, whether it's (?) not to be built on a recognition that what happened did not work.

Well, we need a euphemism for "break the will."

Well, it's called being a consultant to the interrogation.

It's called being a safety officer. The euphemism was safety officer.

Culbertson: No, no, no, go ahead. I was waiting for you to say something.

Female: I guess I have sort of an underlying, which may be totally naïve and unrealistic, but a question about this, well, kind of relating, well, if a psychologist isn't there, then the interrogator is not only trying to extract information, but at some level he's trying, he may be trying to break the will of some people.

Well, of course he is.

I'm going to say that was the goal that I understood of every interrogation was that's how you extracted the information was by first having groped with these same issues. And that was the goal, I mean, they were high fiving each other—

First you extract the fingernail, then you extract the information. [laughter]

You know, we broke them, and that was it, that was the goal.

Culbertson?: So that could have been done in sort of a very nonviolent, rapport building way. But at some level, you're kind of getting them, perhaps, you're getting them to change their orientation to the information you're trying to extract.

Bennett?: Yes, you're getting them to cooperate to give you the information.

Culbertson?: But this whole thing with the Geneva conventions, isn't there something in there about that the only thing that captured soldier is obligated to share is like their name and rank. So where does that come in this whole thing of interrogating people who are in uniform or not in uniform? Where does it come from? That it's ethical?

Those are the orders given to the United States military.

Culbertson?: Okay, it's not in the Geneva Convention?

Based in the Geneva Convention is give their name, rank, their serial number—

And date of birth.

That is what's obligated (?) captured United States military personnel. This is information he legitimately can give. Anything else—

No, that's not true, David. That's not true.

What?

Any person detained under the Geneva Conventions is only obligated to give those (big four?)

I don't know if you— [several talking]

I've received extensive training.

No, yeah, it's in the conventions.

Bennett?: Any person you take under the Geneva Conventions, whether they are a signatory to or not, if you say that you are a signatory to the Geneva Conventions and say that you will treat detainees that you have in your custody according to these conventions, you accept that the only thing that they are obligated to tell you are those four items.

Ray?

The way I look at it, the way I was trained, is that was the only thing I was authorized to

give.

Is this in the common articles that everyone agrees upon to a non-uniformed, nontraditional fighters?

Bennett: Well, we've taken the Geneva Conventions out of the whole discussion.

They're quaint, currently. They're quaint and they don't apply. We're not operating.

Well, supposedly the Supreme Court returned them.

Bennett: Well, it's about damn time. It's about damn time.

Arrigo: Colleen's question—

Female: (?) the ethical sort of foundation of the whole thing we're talking about in terms of, there's an assumption—

Bennett: Here's the twist—

Female: Some of that information, you don't stop until you—

Bennett: The only obligation that is there is that the person being interrogated is only obliged to tell those big four items. I as the interrogator am not only obliged to ask for those four items. I can ask for whatever I want. He's only obliged to give me those four answers.

So what happens when he gives you those four answers? Do you stop?

Bennett: No. I can ask whatever I want. I am not limited by the conventions to ask for only those four things.

Why do we have the conventions for if you're not limited? [all talking]

But the obligation of the captured person, if this is what he's authorized to (?) the interrogator is seeking from him information that will assist his manner in the conduct of the operate, just to put it the simplest way, (?) in the short term tactical situation, I'm the commander, correct, what I want to know about the enemy in front of me, there's a lot of things I want to know about in terms of strength, location, and so forth. But tactically speaking, in (?) combat, I want to know about the enemy, one of three things. Okay. Is he going to attack? Is he going to defend in place? Or is he going to retreat? And on the basis of that (?) my operational plan. And this is in the short term tactical (?), correct me if I'm wrong, this is the sort of thing you're trying to get out—

So if the person gives you the name, rank and serial number and stops, they know that that's all they have to give, what do you do then?

Bennett: Well, I can keep asking.

(?)

Female: Ray would not go so far as to torture them, but he would try to find creative ways—

There's nothing in the Geneva Conventions that says that he can't ask.

Bennett: I can continue asking, he can continue to deny, and I can take no, I cannot take no punishment.

I could not say anything.

Bennett: You'd be a very hard nut to crack. But— [all talking]

Culbertson?: Give you five minutes. I think one of the problems is, though, that that is a model that works if you have certain kinds of situations. But what we're talking about, situations that aren't like that, when we're using, when we don't even know the difference between whether the person we have is a combatant or a noncombatant. And in fact, maybe that's a line that doesn't need to be drawn and shouldn't be drawn. But I think that what we're talking about here is interrogation situations that actually go in which the lines are really not clear. And what is supposed to be gotten is not really clear, except that something has to be gotten. You have to have some kind of report, and it better have something in it that people want to read. So I think it's in that context that you have to start looking at the possibility of the dehumanization of the interrogator as well as the interrogated.

And how do you do that? So then what you have to begin to do is in terms of creating advocacy for that particular position, that humane interrogation is essential not just for those people we don't like and we hate and think they hate us, but it's essential for us to not keep creating, you know, people who have PTSD. People are very concerned right now about the condition of people coming back from Iraq. I think what you have to do then is you have to have a strong vocabulary of what you can do as, in this process, who you work with, and what's reprehensible. So the psychologists have to have those things very well labeled, and it has to be extremely clear and extremely simple. Because at the time that these things are going on, simplicity is absolutely key to staying within limits.

So, and I think words that we need to work on, I'm sort of going to hurry because I want to get so you all can ask, continue the conversation. But I just want to get some more ideas out there. The words that we've defined, we haven't defined them, we've conflated the whole time we've been here, and I think it's very important to clear up, are torture, interrogation, what you might call ego disruption, mind control. These are words we're using, but we're not really defining. And I think they have to be defined very, very clearly. And I think they also will then raise awareness of the problem at hand. Because you can begin to recognize that there's really a whole vocabulary that's very unthinking about the effects of violence on us as human beings.

And then second, I think you can take the cases that we heard this weekend as kind of literary texts. And that means that you can analyze them carefully, not only for what they show about ethical abuses, but also about the assumption that perceptions that set the mind up for such abuses. And I think Sam's reports, testimony, whatever you want to call it, give us all kinds of ways to look at how abuses come about, and what kinds of lack of clarity create those abuses.

Third, I think we can explore the pragmatics of humane versus inhumane treatment. As a way to begin to meet those, to see the world in the instrumental terms where they live. No change will occur if it doesn't begin with the acceptance of people's current ways of thinking, and an assumption that all human beings suffer equally when the world is an inhuman place. There's a way in which—

When was that?

Culbertson?: Hmm?

When was that?

Culbertson?: What?

The world was an inhuman place?

Culbertson: It is all the time, if violence is going on.

Oh, okay.

Culbertson: When violence is going on, books aren't read. Music isn't sung. People draw in little corners. All the things that make us human rather than simply survival machines, stop. And that is, in my experience of all these people, that's the most painful part of the violence is that they lose who they were.

Now fourth, I think, so that was third, is really helping people understand what happens when you go into this kind of almost continuous violence in which interrogation becomes just one part. And then the fourth way, I think, that you can work with people and that you can begin to think how to take this forward is to focus on the experience of interrogation from the inside, as both the interrogator and the interrogated experience it. And assess whether it can be the case that the most effective processes are those that allow both to retain respect for themselves, and to see themselves as warriors serving their respective causes, and not as mutually (sucking?) and fundamentally flawed. It seems like that's what Ray's talking about is that there's a way in which, there's a whole, as David Grossman talks about, there's a whole way of conceiving of yourself as a warrior that is very different from conceiving yourself as somebody trying to stay alive in a circumstance in which no one cares.

So a couple of other things that occurred to me is, I think, rapport-based interrogation is something that needs to be looked at to me, it's perhaps as morally questionable as any other form of interrogation. And psychologists in teaching people to do that should probably think about that in relation to their own obligations as helpers and healers or

whatever the standard ethical principle are. And second, when the solution seems intractable or the problem is just boringly repetitive, the framing may well be wrong.

And so I'm wanting to suggest to you, what I've been trying to talk about in terms of social context is that there may be some wrong framing going on here so you just keep beating your head against the wall if you're trying to resolve this thing by saying, "These guys have got to become more ethical!" I think you have to understand what the circumstance is in which they're trying to operate.

And then, the effects, one thing we didn't talk about, we talked around, is the effects of ethical or unethical treatment on those who receive it and those who give it. And that's really what I've been talking about a lot.

And then fourth, as we move into new means of interrogation, for example, in the areas that Cheryl brought to us of tapping the thoughts without the thinker's knowledge, we must ask even more deeply who humans are and if there are any, if there's any framework that will allow us to not treat people simply as means. I think that while this has been a characteristic of, every human group has tried to come up with some way to think of human beings as something other than means, I think right now because of the mix of cultures and because of the power in the global economy, it's very difficult to do that, so we need to think about that. And we must realize that we not only save others by acting humanely, but we save ourselves. And thousands of years of thought, struggle, remorse, forgiveness, sadness, that have made us part of the machines. Those are just some comments.

Would you say some more about your doubts regarding rapport-based interrogation?

Culbertson: Well, I think we were sort of talking a little about it before. If you think of it again, think of the interrogation itself. This is not a pleasant discussion. And really what you're trying to do as the interrogator is you're trying to get something out of a person who is not supposed to give it to you.

Bennett: I'll tell you that I don't really like the term rapport-based interrogation. It's one that we've used for lack of a better term. And the word "rapport," really, in and of itself, you think that we have rapport with people always means that we're on friendly terms. And there's negative rapport as well. Rapport is really just, is an understanding between the two people that this is the nature of our relationship. Even the torturer has rapport with the tortured. They have an understanding, this is the nature of our relationship.

In the interrogation log of al-Kahtani?), which is the prototypic torture case of the US now, there are sessions where he was brought in, bolted to the floor, and then it says, "This will be a rapport-based session." [laughter]

Bennett: Yes. It is, the interrogators were, al-Kahtani was literally shackled. The interrogators were figuratively shackled because they couldn't remove that shackle. That was imposed upon them by the detention facility, by the policy of the detention facility, that detainees, when they're in the room, supposedly out of safety concerns or whatever, will remain bolted to the floor. How am I going to maneuver in that environment? I have very little maneuver room as the interrogator.

Roberta's calling into question the very idea of interrogation, I think.

Culbertson: No, I'm saying that you have to, I mean, you have to understand—

Because it really, in one way or another, manipulates a person to say things that they would not otherwise say. And so there's manipulation and deception involved rather than (?) forms of coercion.

There can be.

Culbertson: There can be. I mean, the way that you're talking about it, Ray, there might not be. And especially between two warriors who aren't ideologically informed by things that would require them to be, that would say they were going to hell if they talked or whatever. I'm speaking very bluntly, not very sophisticatedly. But if you were to talk about those kinds of things, in all cases of torture that I've read, the point, one of the things that happens is that the person, not read but also heard, is that the person is made to do things that he or she would never do otherwise.

And if you think about it, interrogation has that edge to it. Unless you have a soldier who's perhaps just in the mix and is there and you can make him say something. But I think that it's always important to understand what that dynamic is, and what that tension is, in the room. Now whether you want to say it's an ethical question or whether you say well that's just morally reprehensible to do, because maybe not, because many, many other people will be killed which of course is a particular perspective on it. But I think you have to deal with that.

Arrigo: We've actually spent a long time dealing with that. Because in November '06, seven of us psychologists got together with four interrogators, of whom Ray was the leader, the organizer, and tried to— I mean, he organized the interrogators.

Bennett: But the others didn't know that I was the leader. [laughs]

Arrigo: Well, you invited them.

Culbertson: You were the convener.

Arrigo: Yeah, he was convener, okay.

Culbertson: You had such a great rapport with them. [laughter]

Arrigo: And our explicit task, which we fulfilled, we believe, was to explain in psychological terms how non-abusive interrogations work. Now I think by the standards that you two are holding, they would not be considered non-abusive, okay? Nevertheless, the levels of persuasion and so on were about the level that they're used in ordinary society. I mean, people seduce each other, they get each other to buy (?) this or that and all that stuff.

Culbertson: That doesn't make it—

Arrigo: No, it doesn't. But if we're having a conversation in which we're suddenly trying to hold people in this one interrogation scene to sort of extremely kind of high standards of relationship which are way beyond what most of us engage in our ordinary lives—

Culbertson: And I'm not suggesting—

Arrigo: I don't think we can—

And also it's in the context of war, where people are going out and killing each other.

Culbertson: No, I'm not suggesting anything like that. What I'm suggesting is that you have to understand what's going on for both parties in that circumstance.

Arrigo: Okay.

Culbertson: You have to understand that they will use whatever methods are available to them because the stakes are so high.

Arrigo: But that was, the idea was that—

Culbertson: I know what you're trying to do is to not let that happen.

Arrigo: But the interrogators themselves, all right? The senior interrogators and others I've talked to don't believe that if you're going for broke that you will bring out the thumb screws, okay?

Culbertson: No, and you don't even have to go to torture, what I'm talking about is this—

Arrigo: But going for broke might mean extreme self awareness, you know, extreme ability, you know, kind of Zen master ability to be just someone in the present moment, kind of existential kind of finesse and things like that. So I hope that we would not sort of drive this to the ethical, to the moral level where it's so far beyond what we as ordinary citizens do in their ordinary lives. That has to be constrained.

Cordes?: One thing that I have felt, when you're talking about the context of the dehumanization, I have felt over the last few years that the American public has allowed ourselves to be dehumanized around this issue because we accept the premise that there's got to be a way of getting the information out of people. Yes, maybe we're for torture, maybe we're not for torture, but we accept the premise that you keep at a particular individual until you get what you want out of them. And I feel that that's dehumanizing.

Arrigo: But the interrogators will pass on and say we don't have all successes.

Male: I feel that it's all too human. That's the problem.

Cordes?: Right. But I feel that it's somewhere we weren't in former wars. In other wars we weren't there as a public, at least.

Arrigo: As a public.

Cordes?: And I think American soldiers had a reputation, rightly or wrongly gained, that the American reputation of handling prisoners of wars was not what it was. But what I hear Roberta emphasizing is even if you do this in a gentle, kind way, the suffering of the person who has betrayed their people might be intense. I mean real psychological, I'm not saying that means you don't interrogate people, but I think we should have it out on the table. It's the reality.

Culbertson: The point is not to get at what shouldn't, okay, we can't do anything, we can't interrogate people, even with the kindest means.

Arrigo: This is too simple a model that the person who's given information has always betrayed people. He can do lots of other things. He can disengage himself from a system which was terrible to him and his family. He can save people. There's lots of other things that happen in this situation besides this model.

Culbertson: But then you're talking about something like debriefing. What we're talking about, what I understand when we're talking about interrogation, we're talking about, the only point I want to make, I'm not trying to argue, but the only point I'm trying to make is you have a situation that is not essentially normal. It puts both people who are in an extreme place. If the rules aren't clear about what they can do and how they act, then the intensity of that situation, and what each side has to do, is strong enough to take them in directions that they later will regret. And if you want to say well, a person in there finally gets to tell the truth, I think that's a slippery slope. And all I think is that it's important as an educational tool for people to see their decision as—

So what you're emphasizing is the importance of clear rules and boundaries, which is what Ray has emphasized now that senior interrogators have internalized those rules. So the fact that in this war those boundaries and rules have been weakened from the top has probably less affected, you know, the senior interrogators who have this internalized, than more junior people who don't have it internalized (in the past?)

Arrigo: Well, we may need to understand a lot more about that situation. But I've talked to interrogators from previous times who will say the person being interrogated is terrified of the people who sent him there. That that's what you're working on is his terror not of you but of the people who sent him there and how to protect him from that and all that stuff. There's huge complexities here.

Culbertson: Yeah, well, that's fine. I was just pointing out one piece of it that—

Sam?

What I was going to say is I've understood the whole introduction of enhanced and alternative interrogation techniques came from the interrogators saying in order for us to supply the demand, we cannot do what we normally would do. We have to do it another-

Bennett: Okay, let's reframe that and say that if you want, the interrogators have said, if you want that information now-

We can't do it the normal way.

Bennett: We can't do it the normal way. Because, and that wasn't a voluntary statement. That was a statement of after the immense pressure on them to produce results now, interrogators said we can't produce them now using legal methods.

Right. And then they started brainstorming, what else can we do since we can't do it this way.

Bennett: Well, it's not that the interrogators started brainstorming-

No, they did. It came from the top and the bottom, and they met halfway.

Bennett: Depends on what you mean by interrogator.

Because the interrogators can't say, I can't do it. Because it's not an acceptable answer.

In the case of Zubayda, who was the first of the high level al Qaeda people captured, at least Catherine Eban's account is that all the information that was gotten from him was gotten from him by the FBI prior to, and that in fact what happened was that Washington was very happy with the information until George Tenet found out that the FBI had done it and would get the credit. And then he ordered that a CIA team get there immediately and take over. So it has as much to do with territorial issues within government agencies and other matters as to failure of the rapport-based techniques. At least according to our account. There is, since he's come from sources, this and that, there are other accounts. But that's Eban's account.

This example also gives the lie to the ticking bomb scenario. Because the reliable information came from non-abusive interrogations. And only after that did they resort to torture and abuse.

All of this is (long carried?) after capture, and none is the ticking time bomb.

The ticking time bomb scenario basically functions to normalize or make acceptable torture.

Bennett: Yes. It does. That's all it does. It's trying to pay got you. That's all.

Arrigo: So we really have to have a deep understanding of how these systems issues interact with interrogation methods. I mean, we have hints of it, but we have to get to the heart of that.

Cordes?: Systems issues in terms of violence?

Arrigo: Well, the time, okay? These guys have said, "You have to get it now." It's not acceptable to send back a report. I mean Willie, the guy who wasn't here, said, "You win some, you lose some. Same with surgery. Same with bombing missions." Right? We don't say, "Okay, you have to have a new bomber because these guys didn't hit the target this time," right? You win some, you lose some. So he says you let them go by. Or somebody we've talked to—

Bennett: We've given up that. And this goes back to what you were saying, this notion nowadays that wasn't there before, that we must have the information at all costs.

Arrigo: Out of each person.

Bennett: Yes.

Arrigo: So the surgeon has done all these heart transplants, but he's not going to miss one.

Bennett: Before we were willing to accept well, we're going to give it our best shot within legal bounds to get that information. And now we've removed, we're going to give the legal bounds part and we're saying gloves are off, etcetera, etcetera.

And you'll get the information anyway. [all talking]

Bennett: That's almost beside the point. Unfortunately.

I mean, you'll get information, but it might not be true. But at least you'll have a report to send.

Arrigo: That's the system issue, right?

Provance? That's right. Because that's what was happening in Abu Ghraib, where we had a quota system where there had to be reports on a certain timeline, regardless. And the interrogators were admittedly sending up false report, or knowing that what they were sending was false. And they were happy because their job was done. But in the meantime, these reports were being used by soldiers in the field. And then you're getting more innocent people apprehended or killed, and it's an endless cycle.

Has that come out?

Arrigo: Isn't that classical sociological theory about dysfunctions, bureaucratic dysfunctions?

Culbertson: Well, the other thing I would watch out for your group, and this is why I go up to the level of sort of, go to the level of what's happening in the room, and how to help, and people getting human vision of that. And of course it's complicated. But, you know, that can be illustrated. And then also how people's minds are working around the whole subject plays an important, because once you guys start to go after something like systems issues, you're just going to get crucified. There's just nothing you can do there, I think, that can really be very effective. Because you're not in the position to do so. And you can spend years spinning your wheels and actually then creating a, and I'm not saying you're doing this, but I mean—

Arrigo: You could.

We could. [laughter]

Culbertson: —outlast anything you can do. This is going to outlast anything.

Bennett: Absolutely. I agree.

Culbertson: And that's not where (?)

Bennett: You have to shame them into doing the right thing.

Culbertson: Yes. I think that's really (?) shaming.

And I mean, what sort of situation is that to be in?

Yeah, and I think we have wandered a bit between two sort of very different goals for this project, one of which is to delineate the systems things to show our psychological colleagues how complicated this issue is, and the kind of autonomous moral agent view that Steve Behnke represents that all you need is anti-torture resolution to say what you don't do, doesn't work. From, to implicitly trying to resolve all the systems issues that involve redoing the whole military, the whole— and where exactly we end up. I mean, their cautionary note—

You can't redo the military. I think that's way beyond the scope of what Jean Maria had in mind. [all talking]

Arrigo: I've wasted my time!

Our discussions have wandered in lots of ways, but raising lots of—

It does have to do with the other side, to define standards of behavior and ethics related to

this question of involvement with the United States military intelligence system.

Arrigo: Yes.

What is the appropriate role for psychologists or the APA, whichever—

Arrigo: Recognizing how the system works (?)

Recognizing how the system works, and what you, ethically, as a psychologist can do within that system. And the simpler you can make that—

But we are talking here about the goal of interrogation. And we're reflecting about how this changed, and how that has led to ethical abuses.

Believe me—

So I think somehow that can be, I think that it can make what we recommend sound more realistic, but we can put in some of the stuff like what Sam just said about American lives being lost because false reports were tortured out of people. You can throw a couple of sentences in there and it's like a reality check for people who say you're not being realistic when you talk about ethics.

All right. The reality check here, and you'll excuse my being dogmatic about this, is going back again to *plus ce change*. The more things change, the more they remain the same. Roberta puts that very well. The sadness, if you will, that people like herself are feeling, the abandonment of standards in getting to a more cruel thing. A series, I think it was (?) who ran that on television a few years ago, Alistair Cooke, I guess, it was a historical thing. And one of the questions he asked one of the guests, a distinguished social scientist, what was unique about the nineteenth century. And this has stuck in my mind over the thirty years since I saw this. There was a change in Western civilization from regarding kindness to one's fellow human being as a demonstration of sanctity as expected behavior. And that was (?) If you realize that the last dismembered body, you know, was hung in London in 1832, you realize how fast we've gone. Flogging in the American Navy only stopped in the 1850s. It didn't stop in the British Navy until the 1880s. Now these were the standards of the way you treated people. We won't even begin to talk about slavery. But the point, we saw a long period in which the norm, which was cruelty, changed a lot. It's no accident that the Geneva Conventions came in during this very period. Of course, the total madness of the first world war and so forth. The point is that, or not the point, but an aspect of this is to accept that the sort of brutality and disregard for other human beings and so forth is unhappily, has been far more the norm.

So we get away, we want to talk about basically the ideals that we've developed and are enshrined in our constitution, and the American perception of what we are, who we are and how we do things. Maybe a little divorced from reality, but— [laughs] who we are, I would think, looking toward the ideal. And that's what, I think, Jean Marie, you want to express to your fellow psychologists is not to accept the dreadful reality of what you have to do, but try and move toward the ideal. Again, that's maybe an idealistic statement or

naïve statement.

Culbertson: No, I think most things are as they are, and because there is that natural tendency to survival, that every step beyond that is very hard won and very easily lost. So that's what you're really talking about. You're calling people to that higher standard.

I just want to tie together a couple of these strands. You know, the theme of the moral complexity, I would say, of interrogation is relevant, to my thinking, on psychologists there because if one take seriously the ethics code, principle A, psychologists strive to benefit those with whom they work and to do no harm, it seems to me that it's very difficult to be involved directly in interrogations and not to be in violation of that.

Now one of the complexities, what you're saying is, do we want to take a stride to push people toward the ideal. One of the issues, I think, and I think it's another reason we're involved in this beyond the torture issue, per se, is that psychology is at a point where there are many ways, and it's probably always been the case, in which this is violated. I forget who yesterday said advertising, which is the one I think about. And it's faced with the moral question of how far the sort of technology of behavioral science, or whatever one wants to call it, technology crap, whatever it is, will be used to manipulate people, and to what extent this principle A will have some reality.

And these are very profound questions that go beyond, that this is sort of a cutting edge issue that is being fought over. But that does get back to a lot of these broader cultural questions that we're dealing with, and to what extent to push for an ideal that many of our colleagues think is ridiculous. How dare, what we get back, the biggest opposition and the APA council is debating this now, because we have a petition that's going to be voted on that would stop some of this, is how dare they say that I can't do whatever I want to do and have whatever job I wanted to do?

So it's a very complex set of things about what is psychology, and hence what are other professions as well that are at stake here in addition to the issues around torture, the relations with the military and stuff.

Arrigo: I think we need to take a break now and do the reimbursements. And let's try to reconvene around twelve. So don't stray too far—

She said we convene when?

Around twelve.

Arrigo: I mean, sorry, eleven. Eleven. By twelve, I mean eleven.

It's a fascinating three days. And I would love to be locked up in a room again with Jean, all of you people, anytime. Fascinating conversation.

Culbertson: Is that rapport-based?

No. [laughter]

Have you ever thought of all these questions in relation to an interrogations (?) by law enforcement? [all talking]

Arrigo: The reason that we distinguish it in this case is because of all the legal, how do I say, all the legal safeguards here. I understand that bad things happen. We have forensic psychologists that work with us. But there's habeas corpus, there's the Miranda laws, there's the fact that victims can complain. Go get their own attorneys. So even though there are abuses there, the framework isn't the same as the military framework.

But I'm speaking pragmatically as far as the methodology of the interrogation itself.

Arrigo: Oh, yeah. I've got letters from detectives saying this is how we do it, why don't they have us in there. And that's the idea about the FBI is that they're essentially using investigative methods and detectives.

And in fact in many of our minds, deal with issues in the criminal justice system is on the agenda, it's just we want to deal with one set of issues first. In fact, some of our greatest allies and some of our strongest opponents are forensic psychologists because they're very concerned that whatever is decided here (?) for what kind of work they can do and can't do, because some of our criminal justices make Guantanamo look like heaven.

Province: Well, Guantanamo's kind of its own animal because there's not that many detainees there, and they're all supposedly explicit suspects.

Arrigo: Taxi drivers.

Eighty percent were bought and they (?)

Thousands of dollars.

Province: But I mean as opposed to a normal place like an Abu Ghraib or a Camp Buka where you just have a whole herd of people in there, and you have no idea what you have. Mostly they're normal citizens that I would foresee they're more successfully being interrogated in the same manner that a police officer would interrogate somebody, rather than in a combat zone kind of a context.

Arrigo: And this is the systems problem of why do the wrong people get put into doing the interrogations of someone that we've been trying to track down. But the forensic thing is big in the CIA, I mean the APA (?) Because a lot of people who don't like torture are still going to vote with the APA leadership because they're worried that this could get into the prison system and affect forensic work.

Province: Oh.

Arrigo: And they're trying to protect that.

Provance: I understand George's thing because I remember once saying that it would be hard to be an interrogator while wearing what would be his new bracelet. [laughter]

Arrigo: That's great.

[more chit chat, including explanation of Behnke as chief opponent]