

**BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY : AN INTERPRETIVE
PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS STUDY OF POST 9/11
AMERICAN ABUSIVE VIOLENCE IN IRAQ**

John K. Tsukayama

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
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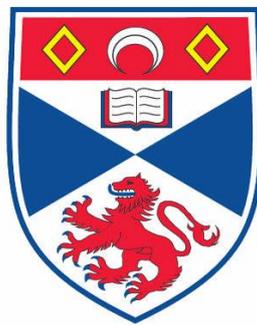
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This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment for the degree of
PhD
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Abstract

This study examines the phenomenon of abusive violence (AV) in the context of the American Post-9/11 Counter-terrorism and Counter-insurgency campaigns. Previous research into atrocities by states and their agents has largely come from examinations of totalitarian regimes with well-developed torture and assassination institutions. The mechanisms influencing willingness to do harm have been examined in experimental studies of obedience to authority and the influences of deindividuation, dehumanization, context and system. This study used Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to examine the lived experience of AV reported by fourteen American military and intelligence veterans. Participants were AV observers, objectors, or abusers.

Subjects described why AV appeared sensible at the time, how methods of violence were selected, and what sense they made of their experiences after the fact. Accounts revealed the roles that frustration, fear, anger and mission pressure played to prompt acts of AV that ranged from the petty to heinous. Much of the AV was tied to a shift in mission view from macro strategic aims of CT and COIN to individual and small group survival.

Routine hazing punishment soldiers received involving forced exercise and stress positions made similar acts inflicted on detainees unrecognizable as abusive. Overt and implied permissiveness from military superiors enabled AV extending to torture, and extra-judicial killings. Attempting to overcome feelings of vulnerability, powerlessness and rage, subjects enacted communal punishment through indiscriminate beatings and shooting. Participants committed AV to amuse themselves and humiliate their enemies; some killed detainees to force confessions from others, conceal misdeeds, and avoid routine paperwork. Participants realized that AV practices were unnecessary, counter-productive, and self-damaging. Several reduced or halted their AV as a result. The lived experience of AV left most respondents feeling guilt, shame, and inadequacy, whether they committed abuse or failed to stop it.

Declarations

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I, John K. Tsukayama hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 100,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

I was admitted as a research student in September, 2009 and as a candidate for the degree of PhD in May, 2010; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St Andrews between 2010 and 2013.

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2. Supervisor's declaration:

I hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations appropriate for the degree of PhD in the University of St Andrews and that the candidate is qualified to submit this thesis in application for that degree.

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I acknowledge the participants individually here with their aliases. Their stories, if not their names, have added to our understanding of abusive violence. Thank you to Aaron Bennett, Antonio Hayes, Brandon Peterson, Charles Wilson, Chris Alexander, Frank Wright, Harold Turner, Louis Sanders, Richard Miller, Roy Hughes, Sam Bailey, Stephen Scott, and Wayne Watson. You all know who you are and that I wish you peace.

Contents

Abstract	ii
Declarations	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
List of Abbreviations	xi
Chapter I: Understanding the move from contemplation to vicious action	1
Obedience to Authority	4
Dehumanization	9
Deindividuation and Situation	12
Real World Atrocity.....	16
World War Two	16
Late Twentieth-Century Greece and Brazil.....	18
Ervin Staub and the Continuum of Destruction.....	22
Appearance of Decency	27
Two Previous American Cases: Abu Ghraib and Operation Iron Triangle	31
Zimbardo and Abu Ghraib.....	32
<i>The Person: Ivan Frederick</i>	32
<i>The Situation: Abu Ghraib Tier 1A Night Shift</i>	33
<i>The System: The War on Terror, National Leadership, and Failures to Prevent</i>	35
<i>Zimbardo on Objecting to Evil</i>	37
Mestrovic and Operation Iron Triangle.....	38
<i>Reference Groups</i>	40
Grossman on Killing.....	43
Sources of Abusive Violence, Methods Transmission, and Reflections on Experiences	47
Data Analysis Method	50
Data Collection Method	57
Research Ethics Considerations	57
Recruitment	58

Researcher-Participant Interactions	61
Possible Issues Relating to Participant Travel and Pre-qualifying Participant History	66
The Participants.....	68
Why Participants Joined Up	71
A Tally of Abusive Violence	73
Abuse Types	74
We Just Came Up With That	79
Interrogation Training and Abusive Violence	79
“Theory” and Practice in the Absence of Expertise	81
The Interrogation Assembly Line	84
A Tempting Mix: Frustration, Power, Isolation and the Helpless Deserving Enemy	88
Distanced and Routinized Pain	92
The Uncommon Experience	94
Bursting the Moral Bubble	97
Mottled Reflections.....	102
Chapter 4: The Combat Arms Soldiers	108
The Invisible Haze.....	109
I was basically instructed to haze.....	109
Why would you not do it to your enemy?	112
Mission Shift and One Long Drive-by.....	117
The Mission	117
Staying Alive	120
There was certainly logic to it	122
One long drive-by.....	125
You are by definition a terrorist.....	131
The Experience of Objecting	134
This is kinda going over the line	134
You can’t just do that	139
That’s why I’m not going to do it	145
But we never tortured people	148

Chapter 5. Chris and Frank: Testimonies of Abuse	154
Chris and Frank.....	155
War Fascination and Lessons in Abusive Violence.....	156
I was always in awe	156
No other way to learn things about yourself	158
That’s pretty brutal	159
They keep it real.....	161
Abuse in Iraq	162
Better him than me	162
I wasn’t there really to ensure their freedom	164
I wanted to kill ‘im.....	165
Why even bother taking him in?	168
What could happen if they messed with us.....	171
It always seemed logical at the time	175
I’m not into that	177
Oh my God, these people really will kill me	179
It was a unique and wonderful feeling	184
Casual Fun	191
Chapter 6. Chris and Frank: Themes and Reflections	194
Bureaucrats and Battalion Commanders	194
Being mean for mean’s sake	198
Stop you’re going to hurt yourself.....	199
Just don’t say anything	202
Bottling it up and holding it in.....	202
Keep me in and the world out	205
Compassion and humanity	206
Everything is a contradiction	208
The hallowed crucible	209
Not conducive to building your soul	211
It’s what I did	212

Shared Themes.....	213
Good violence versus bad violence.....	213
Objecting as Hazardous.....	214
Abusive Violence Hurts the Abuser.....	214
Frank’s Themes	214
Human Dignity, Humanity, and the Human Animal	214
Abuse Properly Applied Works	214
Chris’ Theme	215
The glamour of absolute supremacy	215
Chapter 7. Richard Miller	216
Pre-deployment	217
Abusive Violence in Iraq.....	220
The entire population was terrorists	220
To disrespect their religion and their people.....	221
The worst part of me.....	228
The mechanisms of routine atrocity	235
I never wanted to kill a kid	237
It was ineffective and pointless	240
American or Iraqi, it’s still a human life	242
We were all monsters	246
There’s a special place in Hell reserved	247
Richard’s Themes	248
Facilitating Abusive Violence	249
Inhibiting Abusive Violence.....	249
Aftermath of Abusive Violence	250
Chapter 8. Findings, Implications, and Conclusion	252
Findings in Relation to Prior Research	253
Obedience to Authority	253
De-humanization and deindividuation	254
Hyper-masculinized environment.....	254

Social and political conditions.....	255
Progression.....	255
US military studies in Iraq	256
Rejali on American Post-9/11 Method Transmission	259
Original Research Questions	261
Why did using AV makes sense at the time to participants?	261
How did AV abusers choose the method of abuse employed? How did they learn of possible methods from which to choose?	263
How do veterans now view the abusive violence they observed or perpetrated? ..	264
Superordinate Themes.....	266
Survival of Us justifies any aggressive measures thought useful for survival	267
Dehumanized Other allows abusive violence against detainees and general population.	267
360o Threat Environment means EVERY Other represents danger/deserves punishment	267
Frustration/Anger/Revenge/Rage/Domination create pressure that AV relieves ..	267
Re-humanized Other prompts reduction/cessation of AV	268
Self-reproach persists	268
Findings derived/implied by superordinate themes.....	268
More can lead to less: A proposed progression model of AV inception, escalation, and reduction	270
The proposed progression model	271
Suggested Further Research	272
Conclusion.....	274
Appendix 1: Participant Harm Mitigation, Confidentiality Protections and Lone Worker Risk Mitigation Protocols	279
Participant harm mitigation	279
Confidentiality protections	280
Risk Assessment and Mitigation	282
Lone Worker Risk Mitigation Protocols	282
Appendix 2. DIS Webpage from School of International Relations	284
Appendix 3. unspokentruths.org webpage.....	285

Appendix 4. Participant Information Sheet Text	290
Appendix 5: Rapport Building Efforts.....	293
Appendix 6. Instruction and Background.....	295
Appendix 7. Abusive Violence Self-disclosure Sheet	298
Appendix 8. Interview Schedule	299
Appendix 9. University Ethics Committee Approval	300
Bibliography	301

List of Abbreviations

ACU	Army Combat Uniform	IBA	Interceptor Body Armor
AIT	Advanced Individual Training	IED	Improvised Explosive Device
AO	Area of Operations	IPA	Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis
AV	Abusive Violence	MOS	Military Occupational Specialty
BC	Battalion Commander	MRE	Meal Ready to Eat
CNN	Cable News Network	NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
COIN	Counter-Insurgency	PA	Physician's Assistant
CT	Counter-Terrorism	PR	Public Relations
EPW	Enemy Prisoner of War	PT	Physical Training
GWOT	Global War on Terror	SAW	Squad Automatic Weapon
HUMINT	Human Intelligence	SOP	Standard Operating Procedure

Chapter I: Understanding the move from contemplation to vicious action

In the spring of 2004 the world learned the name Abu Ghraib. I remember being disgusted at the pictures of military police exulting over pyramids of nude detainees and the stories of humiliation, threats, and other abuse taking place there. These outrageous images documented violations of stated American norms of prisoner of war treatment first established by George Washington in 1775¹. As an investigator with more than twenty years' experience of conducting interviews and interrogations, I was mystified that anyone would think this kind of behavior would achieve the rapport I knew was crucial to getting reluctant people to tell you their most intimate secrets. In subsequent weeks, I was further disturbed to read comments made by my fellow citizens arguing that these "terrorists" deserved what they got, and that the soldiers were merely protecting Americans from the next 9/11. These attitudes seemed to hint at why engaging in abuse and torture seems to be a regular companion to war as practiced by the country that proudly claims the title of world standard bearer of truth and justice. The "American Way" apparently included a willingness to contemplate psychological and physical torture of helpless captives

¹ The American army has long understood the importance of properly treating captured prisoners and the civilian population during incursion into or occupation of foreign territory. George Washington issued clear instructions to Benedict Arnold in his September 14, 1775 Order regarding the invasion of Canada, some of which were quite detailed in regard to the treatment of prisoners, Canadian civilians and their religion:

Any other Prisoners who may fall into your Hands, you will treat with as much Humanity and kindness, as may be consistent with your own Safety and the publick Interest. Be very particular in restraining not only your own Troops, but the Indians from all Acts of Cruelty and Insult, which will disgrace the American Arms, and irritate our Fellow Subjects against us....As the Contempt of the Religion of a Country by ridiculing any of its Ceremonies or affronting its Ministers or Votaries has ever been deeply resented, you are to be particularly careful to restrain every Officer and Soldier from such Imprudence and Folly and to punish every Instance of it. (Washington, 1775a)

Washington's accompanying letter to Arnold of the same date directs strong action in the case of transgressions:

Should any American Soldier be so base and infamous as to injure any Canadian or Indian, in his Person or Property, I do most earnestly enjoin you to bring him to such severe and exemplary Punishment as the Enormity of the Crime may require. Should it extend to Death itself it will not be disproportional to its Guilt at such a Time and in such a Cause... (Washington, 1775b)

Washington's practical reasoning for elevated concern for the good conduct of his troops is made plain when, referring to the Canadians and Natives in the Order; he writes, "you must carefully inculcate upon the Officers and Soldiers under your Command that not only the Good of their Country and their Honour, but **their Safety depends upon the Treatment of these People**" (Washington, 177a, emphasis mine). Washington spells out the compelling reasons for any army in any age to discourage its soldiers from committing abusive violence.

while at the same time decrying the barbaric nature of extremists. What Abu Ghraib made undeniable is that Americans can and did move beyond contemplation to vicious action.

This study seeks to understand the lived experiences of American military and intelligence operatives who were presented with the choice to abuse captured enemies in the Counter-Terrorism (CT) and Counter Insurgency (COIN) campaigns following September 11, 2001. Specifically, I have tried to find and interview veterans of military and civilian US forces who had first-hand experience with captured insurgents and terrorists in the so-called Global War on Terrorism. Thirteen military veterans and one civilian intelligence operative agreed to provide their individual stories after being promised anonymity. Most did not engage in the perverse behavior depicted in the photographs from Abu Ghraib. That being said, the study documents that some of the fourteen abused detainees in ways far more atrocious than did the Abu Ghraib military police guards. All were confronted with the choice to commit, eschew or oppose abusive violence (AV). The military personnel all served in Iraq, and it was there that the majority of their experience with abusive violence was gained. They all had opportunities to see abusive violence against both detainees and the general populace.²

In this study I have used the following definition for abusive violence: *violence directed at people not necessary for immediate self-defense*. This definition was meant to include violence and the threat of violence against non-combatants including both detainees and members of the public; it was not intended to include normal combat operations. The definition did not appear to prompt confusion among the study participants, some of whom did participate in traditional combat during the invasion of Iraq or while under attack in convoys, patrols, or raids. It should be understood that the definition contemplates unnecessary force against people who are unarmed at the time of the violence. This appears reasonable as none of the study participants chose to include armed persons when describing abusive violence they observed or committed.

This study uses three primary questions as means of approaching the experience of Americans who elected to commit abusive violence. First, why did using abusive violence makes sense at the time to participants? Second, how did AV abusers choose the method of abuse employed, with a corollary as to how they learned of possible methods from which to choose. Finally, how do veterans now view the abusive violence they observed or perpetrated?

² The civilian intelligence operative only worked with a single high-value detainee outside the United States.

This study is situated in the discipline of Terrorism Studies, specifically that branch of Terrorism Studies that considers counter-terrorist measures and responses. For more than thirty years Paul Wilkinson wrote about his views of the correct approaches democracies should use in response to terrorism. A key element of what he termed “the hard-line approach and the rule of law,” was his third principle: “the government and security forces must at all times act within the law. If they fail to do this, they will undermine their democratic legitimacy and public confidence in, and respect for, the police and the criminal justice system (Wilkinson 2006, 62).” Wilkinson addressed the US war-framing of post-9/11 counter-terrorism, the abandonment of criminal justice systems, and the rise of a view that “in some circumstances inhuman and degrading treatment of suspects and even torture may be justified in the name of the ‘War on Terror’ (2006, 63).” Wilkinson describes the problems at the heart of polices countenancing such abusive treatment:

By abandoning the due process under the rule of law and by violations of human rights of suspects, we betray the very values and principles are the foundation of the democracies we seek to defend. We are also corrupting our democracies and those public officials, members of the military and others who are ordered to carry out such policies. (ibid.)

Wilkinson also noted the value of such violations in the propaganda and recruitment campaigns of al Qaeda arousing potential recruits by reminding them of abuses against Muslims at Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib.

Part of what Terrorism Studies should do is to identify which measures are effective in combatting terrorism. In doing so, efforts should be made to examine those counter-terrorism measures that may have unintended or adverse consequences, a segment of what perhaps may be called “what doesn’t work.” Inasmuch as this study is occasioned by American military and intelligence services which have failed to control, or intentionally allowed, abusive violence in CT and COIN campaigns, it may be looked at as studying, at the individual level, what Wilkinson described as the corruption of public officials and military service members carrying out policies that allow abuse and torture.

Some of the information revealed in this study may also address certain of the research desiderata that were first developed by Alex Schmid while he was with the United Nations’ Terrorism Prevention Branch. Berto Jongman’s 2007 update of Schmid’s list includes a number of topics related to the present study. Their consolidated list included some 490 topics organized within 25 categories. Under the category titled “Counterterrorist measures and responses” are the following topics:

- Interrogating terrorists: licit and illicit practices.
- Torturing terrorists for purposes of intelligence gathering: how widespread is the practice?
- The 'export' of terrorist suspects to regimes known for torture practices.
- The justification and effectiveness of a policy of 'terrorizing the terrorists' (do to the terrorists what they do to innocents). (Jongman 2007)

While this study is anchored squarely in the lived experiences of fourteen individuals presented with potential abusive violence while part of large CT and COIN campaigns, their accounts can help us understand something of the "corrupting" effects of a liberal democracy overwhelmingly employing a war model, with forces that were poorly prepared to resist the pressures to be abusive.

Since the Abu Ghraib abuse was publicly revealed, much has been written about the steps taken by the American government to create a regime in Iraq, Guantanamo Bay, and at foreign detention centers operated by the Central Intelligence Agency that permitted the interrogation of detainees using physically and psychologically coercive methods (Siems 2011, Jaffer and Singh 2007, Mayer 2009, Sands 2009). While I will touch upon some of the history where it intersects with the actions of trained military intelligence interrogators in Iraq, this study considers little of the state-level decision-making relative detainee combatant status and legalistic opinions of what constitutes torture. As indicated in the research questions, I look much more closely at the thoughts and experiences of those individuals who were tasked with carrying out America's CT and COIN initiatives, paying particular attention to the moments when abusive violence was presented as a viable option. Others before me have asked similar questions, mostly with respect to government-organized torture and killing campaigns. The answers drawn from social psychology and history provide potential ways of understanding the individual experiences related by my study's participants.

Obedience to Authority

When Stanley Milgram began his years-long exploration of obedience to orders to inflict harm on others he was addressing the question of whether Americans in the late twentieth-century could be functionaries in a repeat of the kind of genocide carried out by Nazi Germany (Zimbardo 2009). His series of experiments revealed how ordinary people tend to obey authority when it directs them to harm others. The experiments, although by now famous to many students of human behavior, bear some description.

In each experiment a research subject, dubbed the “teacher,” was directed to administer an electric shock to a confederate of the researchers who was dubbed the “learner.” The shock was to be given in progressively higher voltages after any failure of the “learner” to properly recite a short word list. The “teacher” was seated at an apparatus with 30 switches used to deliver the shocks that were labeled with voltage levels ranging from 15 volts (marked as “slight shock”) through 375 volts (marked as “danger: severe shock”) up to two values, 435 volts and 450 volts (marked simply “X X”). The “teachers” were instructed by an authority figure, a researcher dressed in a lab coat, in the procedure to be followed (Milgram 2009).

At certain points in the proceedings the “teachers” heard the “learner” reacting to the shocks, at first in apparent discomfort, then with progressively vehement expressions of pain, followed by demands to be released from the experiment and later by a declaration that his heart condition was being aggravated. At the higher voltage ranges the “learner” was silent when the “teachers” actuated the shock switches. If “teachers” expressed doubt or reluctance to continue shocking the “learner,” the research experimenter would tell them that the experiment required that they continue. Unknown to the “teacher” subjects of the experiments, the “learner” was a middle-aged volunteer who had been trained to utter the graduated expressions of pain and fear, and that the apparatus did not deliver any shocks at all to him (Milgram 2009).

Milgram found that more than 60% of the subjects in his initial two experimental designs remained obedient to the lab-coated researchers’ admonition to carry on with the experiment until the highest voltage shock was delivered (2009, 35). Milgram ran a number of variations in the experiment including, among others, changing the distance between the “teacher” to the “learner;” having confederate “teachers” provide examples of disobedience; and changing the proximity of the authority “researcher.” He was able to demonstrate conditions that would affect the number of “teachers” willing to inflict the top-level shock. In the design where the subject’s involvement was distanced from actually pressing the punishment switch (by being assigned the role of helpful accomplice to the person doing the shocking) the level of obedience rose to 92.5% (Milgram 2009, 119). As Milgram explained, “Any force or event that is placed between the subject and the consequences of shocking the victim, any factor that will create distance between the subject and the victim, will lead to a reduction of the strain on the participant and thus lessen disobedience (2009, 121).”

The linchpin concept for Milgram (2009) was the “agentic state” in which the individual internalizes an identity as the agent for carrying out the orders of another, the other having an acknowledged authority over the individual. To the extent that

the individual accepts the role as agent for the authority figure, and at the same time denies personal responsibility for the acts imposed upon others and the consequences of those acts, he will accede to the directives to inflict harm.

Before reaching the agentic state, there are a number of preconditions Milgram theorized which facilitate the submission of the individual to the mandates of authority, especially authority in a hierarchy. These include the experience of being raised within the original hierarchy where obedience is learned (the family), which experience is followed by similar hierarchical structures such as school and employment. In each situation the individual is conditioned to follow the directions of the authority figure (parent, teacher, or boss) through a series of personal experiences and observations which reinforce obedience via rewards and punishments. Eventually, the individual also learns that authority does not only derive from the person of the authority figure (as with a parent), but that authority can derive from the acknowledged relative social position the other occupies (as with a higher-ranking soldier) (Milgram 2009, 138-139).

With specific regard to the ability of individuals to accept morally reprehensible dictates from authority figures, Milgram (2009) describes the importance of the authority's ideological framing of the situation and the actions and the individual's acceptance of both the legitimacy of the authority defining the frame and the consequent acceptance of the situational definition. The importance of the individual holding this perspective is of signal importance to Milgram as he explains, "it is this ideological abrogation to the authority that constitutes the principal basis of obedience. If, after all, the world of the situation is as the authority defines it, a certain set of actions follows logically (2009, 145)." Presumably, soldiers, no less than experimental subjects, can be expected to carry out the logical corollaries flowing from the situational definitions laid down by their legitimate superiors.

Once the individual has accepted the legitimacy of the authority figure to issue orders and the framing of the situation as handed down by that authority, the individual is within the agentic state that promotes obedience. That the orders so issued may be contrary to the normal desires and actions of the individual little influences this obedience since the individual is able to shift the responsibility for the actions to the authority. Indeed, at this point the individual measures his own morality based upon how effectively he carries out the dictates of authority. The individual carries out these orders with a clear conscience since as Milgram states, "for a man to feel responsible for his actions, he must sense the behavior has flowed from 'the self' (2009, 146)." With the actions flowing from the authority, and his obedience simply a consequence of providing socially demanded obedience, the individual can administer the injurious actions with little self-censure.

Milgram (2009) describes what he calls “binding” factors that prevent the individual from breaking from the agentic state and obedience to authority. Among them is the repetitive nature of the task. With each recurrent infliction of harm the individual builds a growing commitment to the correctness of his participation since it becomes more difficult to repudiate the sheer number of times the individual has obeyed the harmful order. Milgram also notes that the social agreement made by the subject to carry out the experimenter’s instructions creates a situation from which it is very difficult for the subject to break. Keeping one’s promises, being obedient to authority, and avoiding the appearance of rudeness or arrogance are all social conventions the subject would have to breach in order to refuse to carry on with the conduct demanded by the authority. Finally, the prospect of disobeying engenders nebulous emotions of dread in the individual, what Milgram calls “anxiety.” This anxiety steers the individual away from disobedience. Accordingly, recurrence, obligation, and dread bind the individual to continued obedience in carrying out harm (Milgram 2009, 148-153).

Given that the Milgram experiments were conducted in the 1960s and 1970s, it is a reasonable question to ask whether contemporary Americans would still be as obedient to authority. In 2006 Santa Clara University researcher James Berger (2009) conducted a modified replication of the Milgram experiment. The timing of his study I consider to be useful with respect to my research since it falls in the midst of Post-9/11 American CT and COIN campaigns around the world, and well into the deployments of American military and intelligence personnel to Iraq and Afghanistan. Burger’s experiment was modified to take into account ethical questions that were leveled at the Milgram research relating to the potential harm to participants who were duped into believing that they had administered maximal electric charges to another human being. Noting that nearly 80% of Milgram’s subjects who crossed the 150 volt threshold in the most familiar of the experimental variants progressed through to the 450 volt level, Burger designed his study to halt the progression once subjects had indicated their choice at the 150 volt decision point. Burger, describing the 70% of subjects in his base experiment who were willing to proceed beyond 150 volts, wrote that, “this rate is slightly lower than the percentage who continued beyond this point in Milgram’s comparable condition (82.5%), although the difference fell short of statistical significance (2009, 8).” Burger’s research does not fundamentally question Milgram’s findings or theories. Indeed, as he states, “my partial replication of Milgram’s procedure suggests that average Americans react to this laboratory situation today much the way they did 45 years ago (2009, 9).”

Burger selected the 150 volt level as the cut-off for his experiment since it was to the Milgram results, in his words, “something of a point of no return (2009, 2).” In

Milgram's experiment, of the 82.5% of participants who went beyond 150 volts, about four in five (79%) actually went to the fullest extent allowed, or 450 volts. In examining Milgram's reported levels of compliance over the fourteen experimental variants where any subjects exceeded 360 volts, one detects an even stronger "point of no return" than that reported by Burger.

The machine used in the experiment was marked with a variety of word descriptors for various ranges of shocks. The first six descriptors were *Slight*, *Moderate*, *Strong*, *Very Strong*, *Intense*, and *Extreme*. At the 375 volt level the labeling changed. Here Milgram's machine used a specifically cautionary shock descriptor of *Danger: Severe* (Milgram 2009, 28). This seems inconsistent with the scripted reply meant to prod subjects concerned with the "learner's" exposure to harm: "Although the shocks may be painful, there is no permanent tissue damage, so please go on (Milgram 2009, 21)." As such, the shocks delivered at levels above 360 volts were done under more dire³ labeling than the lesser levels.

The level of continued compliance by those who proceeded to the *Danger: Severe* levels and continued to the full 450 volt switch was even more pronounced than the 150 volt threshold. Of the 261 subjects in these 14 experiments who went to 370 volts, 97% went all the way to the upper limit (Milgram 2009, 29,60-61,94-95,118). While Burger's analysis relating to 150 volts as a predictor of likely persistence in obedience to higher levels of pain infliction was applied to his experimental design, it seems a reasonable expectation that this logic may translate to real-world situations where engaging in serious levels of abusive violence might signal enduring obedience. In other words, one might reasonably expect that troops who commit heinous acts in CT and COIN operations will continue to do so when so ordered.

³ The next and last level of descriptor was *XXX*, covering the final two switches of 435 volts and 450 volts.

Table 1: Obedience at Upper Range: % of Milgram participant exceeding 360 volts continuing to maximum voltage

Milgram Experiment #	No. to 375 volts	No. to 450 volts	% to full 450 volts
1	27	26	96%
2	25	25	100%
3	17	16	94%
4	12	12	100%
5	27	26	96%
6	20	20	100%
7	11	9	82%
8	26	26	100%
9	18	16	89%
10	19	19	100%
13	4	4	100%
16	13	13	100%
17	5	4	80%
18	37	37	100%
Aggregate	261	253	97%

While Milgram's experiments provide keys to understanding why many, perhaps most, people will obey orders to inflict pain, other sources of atrocious behavior exist that may well also govern how abusive violence is carried out in CT and COIN.

Dehumanization

The subjects in Milgram's experiments each met the actor posing as the learner and shared an initial identity as "volunteer" until separated into their "teacher" role through a sham lottery. In some variants of the experiment the actor mentioned some trepidation over receiving shocks when mentioning a fictional heart condition. As such, the subjects were given ample opportunity to meet the actor as a human being, even as one deserving sympathy. What might have happened if the humanity of the "learner" had been called into question, if he had been dehumanized? ⁴

Placing other humans into an outgroup is associated with both neurological responses of arousal and disgust as well as prejudicial thinking and assignment of negative attributes to the outgroup members (Bandura, Underwood and Fromson 1975; Fiske, Harris, and Cuddy 2004). One might consider the dehumanized other as

⁴ The OED defines dehumanize as "To deprive of human character or attributes (Oxford University Press 2013)."

the ultimate outgroup. Stanford University professor Philip Zimbardo contends that “dehumanization is the central construct in our understanding of ‘man’s inhumanity to man.’ Dehumanization occurs whenever some human beings consider other human beings to be excluded from the moral order of being a human person. . . . Dehumanization is a central process in prejudice, racism, and discrimination. . . . Under such conditions, it becomes possible for normal, morally upright, and even usually idealistic people to perform acts of destructive cruelty (Zimbardo 2008, 307).” How this process operated in one important study provides additional insight to the lessons from Milgram’s study.

In 1975 Albert Bandura, Bill Underwood, and Michael Fromson reported on their study of processes that contribute to the lessening of self-restraint in aggression. They posited that such lessened self-restraint, or “disinhibition,” of aggression stems in part from a process by which individuals apply standards of conduct to themselves and are hesitant to violate those self-standards since, “they do things that give them self-satisfaction and a sense of self-worth but refrain from conduct that produces self-devaluative consequences (Bandura, Underwood, and Fromson 1975, 254).” Assuming that avoiding committing cruelty and aggression toward others is part of the individual’s standards of conduct, such practices are expected to be inhibited.

In their study the authors describe why dehumanization helps in disinhibition of aggression. They write that, “inflicting harm upon individuals who are regarded as subhuman or debased is less apt to arouse self-reproof than if they are seen as human beings with dignifying qualities. The reason for this is that people who are reduced to base creatures are likely to be viewed as insensitive to maltreatment and influenceable only through more primitive methods (Bandura, Underwood, and Fromson 1975, 255).” The study designed a means of observing the effects of dehumanization in a laboratory setting.

Study subjects, recruited from junior colleges⁵, were, as with Milgram’s subjects, assigned the task of activating a shock generator in response to correct or incorrect solutions supposedly proposed by a group of decision makers. The subjects were alone in a booth with the shock generator and were signaled by amber or red lights to withhold or inflict shocks. Subjects were allowed to choose from among ten levels of shock to administer, so were free to act with more or less punitiveness. There were no actual decision makers, and the machines generated no shocks.

⁵ In the United States, junior colleges refer to two-year institutions of higher learning, which do not award bachelors degrees, and commonly enroll persons directly out of high-school. This study may offer particularly useful information for my project as eight of the fourteen DIS participants entered military service while in the seventeen to nineteen year age bracket.

Prior to commencing the exercise, the study subjects were duped into believing that they had overheard a candid conversation between two researchers in which the fictional decision makers were described in one of three ways, “for subjects in the *humanized condition*, the decision makers were characterized as a perceptive, understanding and otherwise humanized group. By contrast, in the *dehumanized condition*, the decision makers were described as an animalistic, rotten bunch. In the *neutral condition*, no evaluative references were made as to the characteristics of the group (Bandura, Underwood, and Fromson 1975, 258).” In addition to being divided into groups exposed to differing descriptions of the decision makers, the subjects were divided into other groupings: those who believed that they alone determined the level of shock inflicted and those who were under the impression that the shock delivered was an average of three subjects’ independent inputs. This created the impression that the subjects either were solely responsible or were punishing the decision-makers under diffuse responsibility.

Bandura found that individuals who believed that they were not solely responsible for choosing shock levels elected higher levels than those with purely individual responsibility, regardless of the labeled humanity of the decision-makers (1975, 258-259). In other words, when believing that they were acting as part of a team selecting punishment levels, individuals were more punitive, and when fully responsible for the choice of pain infliction, were more lenient.

The labeling was found to be, as Bandura reported, “highly effective in creating differential evaluations of the group members. . . . All three conditions differed significantly from one another . . . with the dehumanizing, neutral, and humanizing characterizations inducing degrading, neutral, and favorable evaluations, respectively (1975, 258).” The level of perceived personal responsibility also caused differences in aggression. Once subjects administered a shock in the first trial, the shared-responsibility cohort turned to escalating levels of intensity which were significantly higher than the individual-responsibility subjects. Also, when punishment failed to produce desired improvement in performance, the shared-responsibility group persisted in applying punishment while the individualized responsibility cohort tended to abandon higher levels of aggression. Put simply, if at first aggression does not succeed; group actors will try and try again.

In the same study Bandura examined the thought processes of the subjects in justifying the punitive sanctions they selected. Their acceptance of such justifications varied according to the decision makers’ labels. As Bandura explained, “when performers were humanized, subjects strongly disapproved of physical punishment and rarely excused its use. By contrast, when performers were divested of humanness, subjects seldom condemned punitive techniques but often voiced self-

absolving justifications. The neutral condition, in turn, produced an intermediate diversity of responses. Essentially the same pattern of results is replicated under both individualized and collective responsibility (1975, 262).” The willingness to allow oneself to commit aggression is therefore apparently even more dependent upon the labeling applied to victims than the individualized or shared responsibility for that aggression. Of course, one expects that a combination of diffuse responsibility and negative victim labeling will be worse than either condition operating alone.

While this study demonstrated some of the effects of the briefest of exposure to dehumanizing labeling, disinhibition of aggression can also be achieved in other ways. The study report lists a number of additional effective practices: “one method is to make reprehensible behavior personally and socially acceptable by construing it in terms of high moral principle. Euphemistic labeling provides a convenient linguistic device for masking reprehensible activities or according them a respectable status. Self-deplored acts can also be made benign by contrasting them with more flagrant inhumanities. Moral justifications and palliative comparisons can serve as effective disinhibitors of aggression because they not only eliminate self-generated deterrents but also engage self-reward in the service of inhumane conduct. What was morally unacceptable becomes, through cognitive restructuring, a source of self-pride (Bandura, Underwood, and Fromson 1975, 254).” In these studies, Milgram, Berger and Bandura looked primarily at the roles of authority, diffusion of responsibility, and labeling for clues to explain infliction of harm, but other factors have also been identified as working to bring out the worst in people.

Deindividuation and Situation

Researcher Philip Zimbardo (2008) conducted the Stanford Prison Experiment (SPE) in 1971, a ground-breaking study which sought to determine the relative power of individual disposition and situation to create or resist change in the individual thrust into the context of an immersive prison simulation. Zimbardo uncovered evidence relating to the power of role adoption and situational context in creating behavior, both atrocious and submissive. The SPE utilized an artificial prison setting in which university-age men were randomly assigned the roles of either prison guard or prisoner. The participants had been screened by the research team to ensure a largely homogeneous group which Zimbardo described: “the prisoners are not more violent, hostile, or rebellious than the guards, and the guards aren’t more power-seeking authoritarians (2008, 33).” Zimbardo observed the powerful forces exerted upon the participants as they assumed their roles. The “guards” enforced the rules of the “prison” as they set about to maintain routine and order, cementing the situation

as virtually real for the prisoners, the guards, and even Zimbardo himself who was the self-designated warden in the experiment.

The effects of the experiment were so rapid and profound that Zimbardo failed to recognize the harm being perpetrated upon the participants until castigated by a visiting colleague. The authoritative domineering change in one of the guards as he went “on duty,” alerted the colleague that much was amiss, and prompted objection to Zimbardo’s glee at the demeaning march to the toilets of hooded prisoners who were leg-hackled together. Shortly after deciding to halt the experiment, but before announcing the termination, Zimbardo observed one of the most disturbing episodes of prisoner treatment as guards forced prisoners to simulate sodomy on one another. Of the transformation in the two groups of participants, Zimbardo wrote, “It is hard to imagine that such sexual humiliation could happen in only five days, when the young men all knew that this is a simulated prison experiment Yet, some guards have transformed into perpetrators of evil, and other guards have become passive contributors to the evil through their inaction. Still other normal, healthy young men as prisoners have broken down under the situational pressures, while the remaining surviving prisoners have become zombie-like followers (2008, 172).” Given the even greater level of power that Americans exercised over detainees in CT and COIN contexts, for periods often far longer than the SPE’s five day duration in which that power is exercised, and some superficial similarities between the SPE and Abu Ghraib, it is useful to examine Zimbardo’s explanation for the transformation.

Writing his fullest account of the SPE decades after it was conducted, and after having served as an expert consultant to the legal team defending one of the Abu Ghraib guards, Zimbardo incorporates into his explanation of the cruel behavior at the SPE and Abu Ghraib the obedience to authority dynamics described by Milgram and the effects of victim dehumanization and diffusion of responsibility on aggression disinhibition studied by Bandura. He places greater emphasis, however on the situation in which the actors were placed and the system which maintains such situations (Zimbardo 2008).

Zimbardo (2008) also describes the role of deindividuation⁶ in creating situations in which abuse will flourish. Deindividuation can be achieved by altering the individual’s appearance so that she is disguised, takes on an anonymous appearance, or is not distinguishable from others in a group or crowd. In a study involving women who were either individually identified or deindividuated through the study protocols, the duration of electric shocks supposedly delivered to research

⁶ The OED Online defines *individuation* as “the condition of being an individual; separate and continuous existence as a single indivisible object; individuality, personal identity (Oxford University Press 2013).”

confederates posing as creativity test takers was measured. The bogus test-takers/shock-victims were also ascribed by the subjects in either unfavorable or favorable terms based information also provided by the test procedures. Under the experiment protocols the subjects could choose to press the electric shock button for any length of time or not at all. All chose to administer some duration of shock to the victims, although those in the deindividuated state delivered shocks for twice as long as the individualized subjects, increased the level of shock over the series of trials, and did so without regard to their previous perception of the victims (Zimbardo 2008, 299-300).

Zimbardo interpreted the psychological effect of deindividuation on the women: “the escalation of shock, with repeated opportunities to administer its painful consequences appears to be an upward-spiraling effect of the emotional arousal that is being experienced. The agitated behavior becomes self-reinforcing, each action stimulating a stronger, less controlled next reaction. Experientially, it comes not from some sadistic motives of wanting to harm others but rather from the energizing sense of one’s domination and control over others at that moment in time (2008, 300).” The forces described by Zimbardo, especially when considered in the light of the SPE and the Abu Ghraib scandal appear to further explain the behavior of the guards in each situation.

Zimbardo describes the strong influence of deindividuation and exposure to state of consciousness altering factors. Zimbardo writes that the latter can include, “using alcohol or drugs, arousing strong emotions, engaging in hyper-intense actions, getting into an expanded present-time orientation where there is no concern for past or future, and projecting responsibility outward onto others rather than inward toward oneself (2008, 305).” These factors will reduce the individual’s ability to evaluate his own actions as he is subsumed by the situation. Instead, as Zimbardo explains:

Deindividuation creates a unique psychological state in which behavior comes under the control of immediate situational demands and biological, hormonal urges. . . . A state of arousal is often both a precursor to and a consequence of deindividuation. Its effects are amplified in novel or unstructured situations where typical response habits and character traits are nullified. . . . In the extreme, there is no sense of right and wrong, no thoughts of culpability for illegal acts or Hell for immoral ones. . . . What is possible and available dominates what is right and just. The moral compass of individuals and groups has then lost its polarity. (2008, 305-306)

If one looks at the results of the SPE, the outcomes are well explained by the processes Zimbardo describes. The guards were given uniforms and mirrored sunglasses by which their deindividuation was accomplished. In addition, they were thrust into a novel situation dealing with persons whose dehumanization was accomplished by labeling them as “prisoners,” a nomenclature denoting moral transgression. Their humanness was also reduced by only allowing them to be addressed, or to refer to themselves, by a prisoner number. Further removal from normal society was achieved by clothing the prisoners only in hospital gowns tied (only partially) at the back, *sans* underwear. The guards were addressed by title and last name, denoting their elevated status as both authority figure and full human being.

In the briefing of the guards, the authority (in the person of Zimbardo as “Warden”) clearly defined the roles they were to inhabit for themselves and to create for the prisoners: the powerful and the powerless. He did so through this situation-setting address:

We cannot physically abuse or torture them. . . . We can create boredom. We can create a sense of frustration. We can create fear in them, to some degree. We can create a notion of the arbitrariness that governs their lives, which are totally controlled by the system, by you, me. . . . They’ll have no privacy at all, there will be constant surveillance—nothing they do will be go unobserved. They will have no freedom of action. They will be able to do nothing and say nothing we don’t permit. . . . In general, what all this should create in them is a sense of powerlessness. We have total power in the situation. They have none. (Zimbardo 2008, 55)

If Milgram’s agentic state can be achieved with experimental subjects during a situation of short duration with one lab-coated authority figure giving neutral prompts such as “the experiment requires that you continue” (Milgram 2009, 21), how much more dedication to carrying out Zimbardo’s regime can one expect when the situation and desired outcomes are explicitly described by the authority both in verbal exhortation and the accoutrements of domination including locked cells, shackles, and rules conferring the guards with nearly absolute power over the prisoners?

The form of probable aggression does not depend upon more explicit orders from the authority. Rather, it would rely on the ability of the guards in the SPE, and indeed Abu Ghraib, to interpret or imagine how best to execute the desirable outcomes as defined by the authority. As Milgram explains, “if, after all, the world or the situation is as the authority defines it, a certain set of actions follows logically. . . . The relationship between authority and subject, therefore, cannot be viewed as one in

which a coercive figure forces action from an unwilling subordinate. Because the subject accepts authority's definition of the situation, action follows willingly (2009, 145)." The dedicated agent in the SPE, Abu Ghraib, and elsewhere, will willingly carry out the actions that "follow logically."

Having considered the ways in which individuals can be brought to obey orders to commit abuse, it is useful to next consider the contexts and situations under which those orders have been given outside the confines of social sciences laboratories, and how some men have acted when placed under such orders.

Real World Atrocity

The studies by Milgram, Bandura, and Zimbardo viewed the propensity to commit harm in short term laboratory circumstances. Other research has examined harm infliction carried out in the real world and over longer periods. Milgram's experiments were intended to examine possible underlying factors leading to the Jewish Holocaust by the Nazi regime in Germany. One remarkable study of actual events from the war years tends to dovetail strongly with his findings.

World War Two

Historian Christopher Browning examined the personal experiences of perpetrators of the Holocaust by examining transcripts of investigative interviews of former members of German Special Order Police Battalion 101, which unit was involved in roundups, deportations to concentration camps, and mass killings in territories occupied by the Nazis (Browning 1998). He found wide variation in the willingness among the officers and men in the unit to participate in operations involving clearing villages and city neighborhoods of Jews and other regime targets. Many of those operations consummated with the victims being marched into nearby woods to be killed by the police.

Browning described some officers, especially the battalion commander, as very reluctant overseers of mass murder. He found that the majority of men accepted the orders to kill during the first field extermination operations, even though they were given the opportunity to withdraw. In his estimation, only ten to twenty per cent of the police officers either initially refused to participate or withdrew after first shooting some Jews. Browning noted that even among the willing participants, morale after the first operation was dismal. Later operations were structured in ways that relieved the men from their distress. Distancing from the actual killing became a feature of the battalion's participation. The men were assigned largely to clearing Jewish districts and sending victims to the concentration camps where the actual killing occurred. In

addition, the Germans imported killing troops recruited from ethnic minorities within prisoner of war camps holding captured Soviet soldiers.

One of Browning's findings was that the Special Order Police officers who shunned killing were for the most part still bound by loyalty to their comrades. Rather than denouncing the massacres as evils they refused to commit, the non-shooters characterized their unwillingness as a disability or weakness on their part, saying that they "could not" carry out the killings (Browning, 1988, 185). This approach kept them from openly criticizing their fellows. In some cases the police officers who refused to directly kill allowed themselves to contribute by manning cordons in the woods to prevent escape by the victims. Even among those who did sometimes shoot, their behavior would sometimes waver from the atrocious. When they were not under direct supervision of others, some of the police would aim to miss, not shoot, or would abandon their posts.

Perhaps one of the more remarkable findings that Browning's study reveals is that even in the atmosphere of official commands to conduct extermination operations, men were allowed to refuse to participate. There were no serious threats to join the victims or receive any other punishment for refusals. Browning found that the complicit police officers claimed to their interrogators that they were forced to kill because they were under orders to do so, and felt that they would be themselves at grave risk, but that while this thinking might have been an actual motivator, the threat was not based on actual consequences within their unit or indeed elsewhere in the Third Reich. Browning wrote that, "no defense attorney or defendant in any of the hundreds of postwar trials has been able to document a single case in which refusal to obey an order to kill unarmed civilians resulted in the allegedly inevitable dire punishment (Browning 1998, 170)." Recalling the results of Milgram's experiments, one can easily see that the complicit shooters at the time acted just as Milgram described those in the "agentic state" would after receiving orders to commit harm.

Browning accepts many of the conclusions of the above-referenced social psychologists and others as he summed up the factors at work with the Special Order Police:

There are many societies afflicted by traditions of racism and caught in the siege mentality of war. Everywhere society conditions people to respect and defer to authority, and indeed could scarcely function otherwise. Everywhere people seek career advancement. In every modern society, the complexity of life and the resulting bureaucratization and specialization attenuate the sense of personal responsibility of those implementing official policy. Within virtually every social collective, the peer group exerts tremendous pressures on

behavior and sets moral norms. If the men of Reserve Police Battalion 101 could become killers under such circumstances, what group of men cannot?" (1998, 188-189)

This view is not universally accepted, however. Another researcher of Battalion 101, Daniel Goldhagen, differs in his analysis (Goldhagen 1997). He calls into question the underlying premise that mechanisms were necessary to overcome a reluctance to kill in the Holocaust. He instead believes that the Holocaust was perpetrated largely by willing and deliberate Germans who were motivated by a particularly virulent anti-Semitism that pervaded German life for decades before Hitler rose to power. In his view, Germans, including the killers of Battalion 101 were far from naively acted upon by social-psychological mechanisms that prompt obedience and aggression. He wrote that "simply put, the perpetrators, having consulted their own convictions and morality and having judged the mass annihilation of Jews to be right, did not want to say 'no' (1997, 14)." Although Goldhagen and Browning have publicly disagreed with one another, I do not find that their separate explanations are necessarily mutually exclusive. Some of the perpetrators were willing, but many were clearly reluctant and had to become inured to their atrocious tasks. Furthermore, others, subject to the same cultural influences working on the enthusiastic perpetrators, refused to participate at all, or changed their minds after committing some murders. Goldhagen concentrates his scrutiny on the individual as fully responsible actor, and while dismissive of more conventional explanations for the Holocaust, offers an additional means of considering actions the of American CT and COIN operatives after 9/11. Specifically, Goldhagen's conclusions invite the considerations that American AV was not committed under force of orders, but might have been willingly and enthusiastically undertaken.

Late Twentieth-Century Greece and Brazil

Others have written about the use of abduction, torture and murder in post-World War Two CT and COIN campaigns. In particular, 1960's-1970's Greece, and 1960's-1980's Brazil, developed institutionalized atrocity within their respective internal security institutions. (Haritos-Fatouros 1988; Huggins, Haritos-Fatouros and Zimbardo 2002).

Haritos-Fatouros (1988) found that in Greece a very discriminating mode of identifying would-be torturers was employed. The method consisting of selecting recruits who espoused loyalty toward the government and strong anti-communist sentiments. The recruits were then placed into a training environment where their political beliefs were groomed and their hatred of communists and their sympathizers was inflamed. Selection into the specific torture training was judged by a recruit's "(a) ability to endure beating of all kinds and exercises to exhaustion; (b) obedience to

the demands of authority, even of the most illogical and degrading kind; (c) free selection on the part of the recruit to go through the 3-month hard training... (1988, 1114).” The selection was simply the beginning of a system of further selection and training.

Haritos-Fatouros identified a number of methods that were used to bind individuals to the regime, their military police corps, and the elite torturer profession. Once an individual was selected for torture training, they were subjected to a ritualized initiation ceremony, a grueling period of initial training, constant reminding of their elite status and privileges over ordinary soldiers and officers in the army, and the use of specialized jargon. Interestingly, the trainees did not use their true names during the training, instead nicknames were used to keep their identities secret, a method of deindividuation Zimbardo would certainly recognize (1988, 1114-1115).

The Greek trainees were subjected to behavior modification methods to create an instantly and completely obedient subordinate. The carrying out of pointless and illogical orders, some of which were degrading and painful, became automatic. Trainees were desensitized to torture by a gradual process of exposure and limited participation that began with observing torture and progressed through increasing stages of involvement with prisoners including guarding and delivering limited beatings. Trainees were themselves beaten by senior soldiers who also verbally abused them as a means of modeling the behavior they were to mimic (Haritos-Fatouros 1988, 1117). The trainees were also threatened whenever they were lenient with a prisoner. Distrust was sown among the trainees who were told that each of them would inform on the others. Trainees were threatened to be imprisoned and flogged. Threats were also made that included trainees’ families.

In addition to this negative reinforcement, rewards were also used to motivate and elevate the trainees, especially the membership in their elite profession. Haritos-Fatouros wrote, “the fact that they belonged to a highly esteemed, highly feared, and all-powerful army corp was the strongest long-term positive reward of all, because they enjoyed many standing privileges and rights during and after completing their military service (Haritos-Fatouros 1988, 1117-1118).”

In 2002 sociologist Martha Huggins with Haritos-Fatouros and Zimbardo published an examination of the world of Brazilian police hit-squad assassins and torturers of the 1964-1985 era. Perhaps less formulized and formalized in their methods than the Greek military police, the Brazilian police were nonetheless successful in using indoctrination in national security ideology; desensitization to abuse through beatings of trainees and increasing exposure of trainees to abuse of prisoners; and other methods of creating obedience to authority previously identified

by Milgram, Bandura, and Zimbardo. Huggins and her co-authors also described certain sociological and organizational influences that they believed contributed to the creation of both hit-squad assassins and interrogational torturers (Huggins, Haritos-Fatouros and Zimbardo 2002).

Like their Greek counter-parts, the Brazilian police were initiated into their work through training that encouraged obedience, adherence to the norms of the police and military cultures, and for some, a disregard for pain, either their own or that of others. Some members of the Militarized Police were forced to undergo degrading, exhausting, and painful training. This method, as with the Greeks, was useful in creating the future atrocity police. As Zimbardo explains, “this general training model clearly prepares police to become more effective at carrying out atrocities. Their own threshold for pain is raised to make them less sensitive to the pain they experience or that they inflict on others. There is no room for ‘unmasculine’ emotions of compassion, caring, concern, or empathy with a victim’s plight or pleas. . . . Recognizing that people come to love what they suffer for and then go on to advocate its virtues⁷, it is clear that Militarized Police preservice training set the stage for atrocity, which often manifested itself as quick-fire slaughter of anyone designated as an enemy of the Brazilian State (Huggins, Haritos-Fatouros and Zimbardo 2002, 248).” This initiation into a world of violence and disregard for suffering was aided by other influences that created police willing to torture and murder.

The former Brazilian police revealed an inward-looking world created by the kind of work they did and separation from the rest of Brazilian society. The rigid secrecy necessary for preventing their work from being discovered by the public and the specific national security emphasis of their duties meant that the assassins and torturers were insulated from structures and messages that would have interfered with their ability to carry out their dreadful work. Secrecy became pervasive, and the men generally kept their activities from their friends and family. According to Zimbardo:

This insularity spread to protect atrocity perpetrators by shielding them from oversight by legal and religious systems, from the public, from their families, and eventually from their own prior values. . . . By rarely talking about what they were doing, these men seem to have stopped thinking about their violence within any abstract or conceptual framework, either legal, moral, or ethical. When that happens, the insularity reaches inside the individual’s being, isolating behavior, cognition, and affect from each other. Such mental

⁷ Zimbardo cites Aronson, E., and J. Mills, 1959. The effect of severity of initiation on liking for a group. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 59, pp. 177-181.

defenses, when overutilized, often have dysfunctional psychological consequences. (Huggins, Haritos-Fatouros and Zimbardo 2002, 249).

Huggins et al report that the Brazilian police interviewed in their study described a system in which a kind of hyper-masculinity was promoted. One salient measure of that group masculinity was violence. Zimbardo wrote, "Atrocity was boosted by normal masculine competition, which was further exaggerated by its functioning within a competitive bureaucracy powered by a climate of war. . . . Ordinary masculine competitiveness is augmented when demanded by superiors in an elite atrocity unit that insulates actions from negative external consequences (Huggins, Haritos-Fatouros and Zimbardo 2002, 249)." The war climate, masculine competitiveness, and protection from external consequences are factors which one might also expect when military units find themselves fighting a CT and COIN campaign while occupying a foreign country, such as in Iraq.

The Brazilian atrocity police described aspects of their insular world which exposed the prominence of menace, both internal and external, in shaping their views and actions. The police were forced to judge the amount they could rely on their fellows to hold their nerve in dangerous situations, enact violence when it was demanded, and to act quickly in crises. They were also in an organization that told them that the hidden subversive and terrorist threatened Brazil itself and that they must act decisively to protect the state. The nature of such an outlook is that it allows little leeway for erring on the side of mercy or leniency. Everyone could be a subversive, or a hardcore terrorist, so they might be withholding vital information on an unfolding attack. Within such an outlook torture has a certain logical imperative, and the ever-present threat of terrorist attack fueled an unrelenting urgency, as "in Brazil's war against subversion and crime, victory depended on the speed with which security forces could make captives confess vital information about enemy plans (Huggins, Haritos-Fatouros and Zimbardo 2002, 247)." In CT and COIN there are obvious reasons that having a suspect produce information before his confederates can evade capture, secrete materiel, and alter plans is desirable; those reasons no-doubt underlie the adoption of some torture carried out in Brazil.

Zimbardo points out another aspect of the hazing suffered by the Greek and Brazilian recruits. "Hazing also gave a personal reality to the kind of violence that would be acceptable in the recruit's later career. For example, in both Brazil and Greece, trainees had to run the gauntlet, which involved being beaten repeatedly as they were pushed and tugged between two lines of seniors, a technique commonly used by Brazilian atrocity perpetrators themselves in their post-training violence work (Huggins, Haritos-Fatouros and Zimbardo 2002, 237)."

Thus far I have examined information describing the internal psychology that results in obedience to authority and leads to actions for which the individual suspends his own moral norms and judgments. I have also examined methods from outside the laboratory that have been used to deliberately create men willing to carry out murder and torture. In fully developed torture regimes, these methods are formally incorporated into a process of habituation of abuse and killing. One writer has theorized the factors and steps that may explain individual readiness to commit abusive violence even without the intense methods of the Greek and Brazilian regimes.

Ervin Staub and the Continuum of Destruction

Ervin Staub, like Zimbardo, Huggins, and Haritos-Fatouros, sees the creation of torturers as part of a process. He conceptualizes the process as a movement along what he labels as a “Continuum of Destruction” (Staub 1993). He described three key factors that prepare the future torturer for travel along the continuum: the classification of self into an in-group and the other into an outgroup (Differentiation); the negative discrimination and description of the other and its outgroup (Devaluation); and the eventual placement of possible victims beyond the class of beings whose treatment is governed by moral values (Moral Exclusion) (Staub 1990). Staub’s taxonomy provides a more greatly nuanced understanding of the factors of situation and system that Zimbardo and Mestrovic cite as enabling abusive violence.

With regard to differentiation, Staub wrote, “It is a very basic human tendency to differentiate people into members of ingroups and outgroups, into ‘us’ and ‘them.’ . . . Humans tend to fear and dislike the unfamiliar, the strange, and especially what is discrepant from their own experience. . . . In the course of the socialization, children’s dispositions for us—them differentiation is enlarged: They are taught to like some people and to dislike and mistrust others” (Staub 1990, 52). He pointed out also that this tendency is strengthened during the further socialization into larger “us” groupings of school, community, and nation. He further stated that differentiation is followed by devaluation of, and negative discrimination against, outgroup members. It appears entirely necessary that such social-identification of the self into a larger group of similar selves occurs in order to formulate the concept of “us.” The “us” in this study was variously described by participants as either Americans in general, or Americans deployed to Iraq, or the much narrower grouping of small military units such as the squad or platoon.

Of devaluation, Staub wrote, “devaluation makes it easier to harm people, given a motive or reason for doing so. Intense devaluation may by itself generate the desire to harm. . . . Devaluation can include at least two somewhat separate components: one is a dislike, or a negative view of the capacities, intention, and moral

character of a group, and the second one is a view of the other as an enemy that seeks to harm or destroy one's group, oneself included, or endangers it by its very nature" (Staub 1990, 52-53). Staub contends that, "one focus of the training of would-be [torture] perpetrators is the devaluation of the victim group. This seems to have been true in all known instances and even characterizes the training of soldiers when the enemy or potential enemy is known" (ibid., 54). The two facets of devaluation, dislike and expectation of hostile intent, are both present during many of the interviews conducted in the current study. Participants described recoiling from the foreign and, after the start of insurgent violence, fearing attack from an enemy hiding among the population.

Staub noted the effects of sharp differentiation and devaluation on the individual's view of the intrinsic worth of the outgroup. Such a combination "not only limits caring and empathy for members of the other group but also excludes them from the *range of applicability* of moral values. . . . People do not apply moral values such as justice or responsibility for the welfare of other humans equally to all people. Some people are excluded from the universe of moral concerns, and moral values become inapplicable to them" (emphasis original) (1990, 53). Staub also contends that the application of "Just World" thinking, through which the victim is viewed as deserving of the harm done, further facilitates the ability to do harm (Staub 1989, Staub 1990). It appears to me that moral exclusion is unlikely to precede devaluation, or will be greatly aided by prior devaluation of the outgroup in the mind of the actor. In addition, the creation of the dehumanized other, which in my view is an analog in the human/animal dichotomy for "animal," is readily explained by extreme forms of differentiation and devaluation resulting in extreme aggression. For many, animals are food sources, to be destroyed and consumed. For soldiers who are exhorted by leaders such as Colonel Steele to become the predator on the battlefield, the enemy other has as little claim to morally correct treatment as does a piece of meat.

In addition to the factors already discussed, Staub also cited devaluation that stemmed from "Obedience to Authority," "Ideology and Higher Ideals," "The Defense of the Physical or Psychological Self," and "The Need for Control and Personal Power." With respect to the "Defense" factor, Staub wrote that

A substantial body of laboratory research shows that threat to or attack on either the physical or psychological self result in anger, hostility, and aggression. . . . Attack on either one's body or one's self-concept, values, and ways of life generate the motivation to defend the self. One way to defend the psychological self or to deal with a diminished self is to elevate oneself over others" (1990, 57-58).

Building then on this in the context of CT and COIN operations, when the enemy other cannot be distinguished from the native population until he raises a weapon to strike, or in the case of the roadside bomb continues to be indistinguishable, the predator not only views the entire native population as potential threat and potential prey, but does so with the anger, hostility, and aggression Staub describes.

Staub wrote also about the need to obtain a sense of power or efficacy:

When people face persistent problems in their lives that they cannot effectively deal with, when they lose control over their lives and the circumstances surrounding them, their need for control can become intense. . . . I believe that it is a feeling of helplessness and lack of control over their lives, which comes from their inability to defend themselves from threat and attack or to fulfill their important goals, that makes people seek a feeling of invulnerability through power over others' well-being, bodies and lives" (ibid., 59).

Soldiers deployed where there is an active insurgency that attacks and kills without warning, and who are in an alien environment that causes the suffering of extreme heat, cold, and deprivation of other desired material comforts, find themselves powerless to improve their circumstances. Staub leads one to expect that the natural tendency is for soldiers to reclaim their potency by aggression of the kinds found in abusive violence.

Staub wrote about the role of guards, in which power plays an important part:

One aspect of the role of guard, especially when the victims are placed outside the rule of law, as torture victims usually are, is tremendous power. Without clearly drawn limits and accountability, power can lead to a feeling of limitless right to determine the fate of victims and to unbridled excess. Less systematic use of torture, especially against the lower strata of society, often occurs when enforcement agents such as the police are not carefully supervised and made accountable. Such torture is made easier and more likely by existing devaluation of lower social groups. The limitations in the rights and power of such groups reduces the accountability of the police and other authorities. (1990, 55).

One can come to grim predictions for what the mix of Defense of the Physical Self, Need to Claim Power, and Guard Role would produce in situations such as Abu Ghraib or other CT and COIN detainee circumstances. Nearly by definition, a soldier with a detainee, while in the field, during transport, or in temporary holding facilities, enjoys not only the tremendous power of a guard, but is often subject to drastically fewer

clearly drawn limits and accountability than are guards in formal detention facilities. Participants in this study described the most extreme abuses in just such super-empowered situations.

The factors that instill a readiness to commit abuse can be assisted by group factors. Staub wrote about the individual within a group:

Belonging to a group makes it easier for people to act in ways that are out of the ordinary. Joining a group enables people to give up a burdensome self and adopt a shared and valued social identity. At the same time they can shed the inhibitions and limitations of individual identity. . . . Thus as group members they can open up emotionally. . . . Anger and hate toward outsiders can come to the fore, especially when the group's beliefs promote these feelings. And they no longer need to take individual responsibility for their actions; no one is responsible, or the group is responsible, or the group's leader. . . . Powerful emotions spread through contagion. It becomes difficult to deviate from group perceptions or values. . . . When group norms shift, it is difficult for the individual not to follow. . . . People predisposed to harm-doing may find membership in certain groups highly satisfying. Hostility toward outgroups becomes desirable; the authoritarian structure is familiar and comfortable; the camaraderie provides a haven in a hostile world. (1989, 77-78)

One would expect that membership in a sub-group, such as an elite military service, or even a smaller sub-unit of that branch, coupled with any basic societal "us" versus "them" contextual signaling, would combine to make entry into aggression against the enemy other a near certainty.

The continuum of destruction that Staub describes is based upon the readily grasped concept that one becomes habituated to novel, and previously unattractive, activities through both repeated exposure and gradual increases in intensity; such habituation changes the individual and those changes also increase the willingness to commit escalating harm (Staub 1990, Staub 1989). He described some of the consequences of the movement along the continuum:

As a group engages in lesser harm doing... or engaging in torture that is limited in scale and level of destructiveness—psychological changes result. As I noted earlier, people learn by participation; they change as a result of their own actions. Just-world thinking and further devaluation, and exclusion from the range of applicability of moral values makes it possible to harm victims more and to feel less responsibility for their suffering. The self-perception of the

perpetrators is likely to change; they come to see themselves as willing and able to torture and kill, usually for a higher purpose. (1990, 64).

Staub describes also that “mistreatment of a victim group, or a cycle of violence between opposing groups, results in changes that make increasingly greater levels of violence possible. Almost universally, with progression along the behavioral and psychological continuum of destruction, both the range of victims and the intensity of violence against them expand” (ibid., 64-65). Most of the soldiers in Iraq were well aware of their participation in the “cycle of violence between opposing groups.” Furthermore, study participants made clear that opportunities for abuse of detainees, and the Iraqi population as a whole, were present in settings as varied as street patrols, roadblock checkpoints, base entry control gates, as well as night-time house raids and interrogations carried out both in the field and in the formal interrogation center. Participants described what Staub’s theory would have predicted: a progression of violence that started at verbal abuse while brandishing weapons and ran the gamut through beatings, scarring torture and ultimately to killings.

The further consequence of habituation to abuse allows for motives unsanctioned by authority to creep in to the lethal situation. Staub wrote that “as the destruction process evolves, harming victims can become ‘normal’ behavior. Inhibitions against harming or killing diminish, and extraneous motives can enter: greed, the enjoyment of power, the desire for sex or excitement” (1989, 84). With respect to abuse in Argentina, Staub noted that “over time it became possible to casually torture kidnapped people, to torture as a private whim, and to kill as a private whim” (1990, 65). Hazing, beatings, and torture were reported by participants to satisfy whims of curiosity and amusement.

In addition to the above-noted factors regarding preparation for violence and the process that leads to the creation of torturers, Staub describes possible dispositional factors that aid the process:

At times people enter situations in which the use of certain kinds of force is required. The guards at Abu Ghraib chose to be soldiers and were members of the military police. Individuals who join the police tend to be more authoritarian, which means that they find satisfaction in submitting themselves to higher authority and using authority over others. Those who join a volunteer army are also likely to be different from the average person. . . . Obviously, not all soldiers are the same. But if they enter certain groups with some inclination to fight, this makes learning by doing and a personal evolution in violence easier. (2011, 254)

Clearly, in an all-volunteer military force, the prospect of combat is not only accepted by its members but, as reported by several study participants, is also greatly welcomed.

Although Staub documents what he believes are the ways in which abusers are created, he does make note of two factors that will cause moderation. He wrote that, “people do not devalue victims whose innocence is clearly and definitely established” (1989, 79). This is probably in keeping with the Just World perspective of punishment as deserved. Staub also wrote that “whereas defining people as ‘them’ and devaluing them motivates or allows harming them, defining them as ‘us,’ as similar to or like oneself, generates caring for them and empathy with them. People so seen are more likely to be helped and less likely to be harmed. . . . Sometimes opponents in war are humanized, with a change in feelings and behavior toward them” (1990, 53). Several study participants report lessened aggression toward detainees who were recognized as non-insurgents captured in dragnet sweeps. Similar aggression moderation was described when participants found themselves imagining how they themselves would react to the treatment they meted out to the Iraqis. This mental role-assumption led some participants to conclude that the Iraqi enmity was not evil, but rather a natural human reaction.

Staub’s theories brings us closer to understanding how an alignment of factors can bring about readiness to abuse even when the institutions in which it occurs may not intend to create torturer training schemes in the same ways as the Greek or Brazilian cases. In democratic institutions one would expect that the oft-espoused respect for human rights and dignity would prevent the creation of such a system. Sometimes, however, democracies do decide to employ torture. When they do, they have a built-in image management problem. One historian has examined how democracies create openings for torture that conceal the coercive nature of their torture from the public, courts, and in some ways even from the agents that carry out the abuse.

Appearance of Decency

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted by the United Nations in 1948, makes clear the reasons for the protection of human rights, including, “if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law (United Nations 1948).” Of specific interest here, the UDHR fifth article states plainly: “No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or

punishment (United Nations 1948).” While this was a sentiment nobly stated by representatives of a world having only recently survived World War Two, it was nearly four decades until the sentiments were given specific legal force through the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT) (United Nations 1984). Under the CAT, member states are obliged to make torture illegal in the territory under their jurisdictions, to prosecute such crimes, and to not expel persons from their territories to places where they are likely to be subjected to torture. Societies such as the United States and the United Kingdom claim the moral high ground when condemning the brutality of totalitarian regimes for, among other things, the widespread use of torture by security forces. As signatories to the CAT, they cannot retain legitimacy in this area in the international arena if they are seen to allow torture.

This does not of course mean that member states have prevented all of their agents from committing torture from time to time since 1948. In the democracies, strong pressures are exerted that result in torture. According to leading torture historian Darius Rejali:

In some cases torture occurs because a national security bureaucracy overwhelms the democratic institutions that were designed to control it. But in other cases, the demand for torture arises out of two other factors: unsound judicial practices and public fear of crime or perceived breakdown in civic order. Police, either on their own or with tacit consent, set about torturing to create safe streets. They hand criminals over to judges with confessions extracted through torture. . . . Some judicial systems value confessions inordinately, and police have strong incentives to secure them by any means. (2007, 22)

Rejali reports from his extensive study of the history of torture, with special emphasis on its use within modern democracies, that in situations where confessions are judged legitimate only when they are voluntarily given, the state must contrive methods of torture which are undetectable. Thus tortures that leave no marks, so-called “stealth” or “clean” tortures, are preferred.

Rejali has compiled a list of clean tortures⁸, combinations of which he has classified under such names as *French modern*, *Slavic modern* and *Mediterranean modern*; of interest here: “Anglo-Saxon modern is based around stress and duress

⁸ Rejali’s primary method groupings: Electrotorture; Beating (Instruments); Beating (Hands); Water Torture; Dry Choking; Air [cold]; Exhaustion Exercises; Positional Tortures; Positional Devices; Restraints; Salts and Spices; Drugs and Irritants; Sleep Deprivation; Noise; and Sensory Deprivation (Rejali 2007, 554-556).

techniques usually supplemented with water tortures, beatings with various instruments, noise, and drugs. Electrotorture is not part of this tradition normally (Rejali 2007, 553-554).” The American and British historical experiences stretching from Northern Ireland, to Africa, the Middle East, Iraq, Afghanistan, Southeast Asia, and Chicago are replete with reported examples of these techniques (Harbury 2005; Conroy 2001; McCoy 2006; Cobain 2012). After 9/11, American military intelligence personnel proposed enlisting a number of those clean techniques in CT and COIN campaigns in Guantanamo, Afghanistan and Iraq.

I do not intend herein to examine the entire chronology of efforts leading to senior military officials’ approval for specific interrogation techniques, largely because it has been well documented by others (Jaffer and Singh 2007) and exceeds the needs of this study. I will, however, point out the documented methods that were employed by American military personnel in Iraq which seem to match the typology described by Rejali along with the changing and ad hoc nature of authorizations for their use.

On September 14, 2003 US Army Lt. General Ricardo Sanchez issued a memorandum to Abu Ghraib intelligence units responsible for the questioning of detainees. In his memorandum he authorizes the use of twenty-nine specific techniques with names such as “Pride and Ego Up,” “We Know All,” and “Mutt and Jeff.” The list ended with descriptions for “Change of Scenery Up,” “Change of Scenery Down,” “Dietary Manipulation,” “Environmental Manipulation,” “Sleep Adjustment,” “False Flag,” “Isolation,” “Presence of Military Working Dogs,” “Sleep Management,” “Yelling, Loud Music, and Light Control,” and “Stress Positions” (Jaffer and Singh 2007, A-232 - A-235). While this list was superseded in another memorandum a month later that no longer listed the last ten items from the September authorization, the later document did not specifically prohibit them. The October memorandum clearly contemplated that other methods might be authorized if requests were properly framed including a legal review, full description of the method and proposed safeguards (Jaffer and Singh 2007, A-238 - A-243).

According to US Army Lieutenant General Anthony Jones, who was tasked with investigating the intelligence gathering function at Abu Ghraib in the aftermath of the detainee abuses, the guidelines in the Sanchez September and October memoranda were incorporated into an “Interrogation Rules of Engagement” (IROE) chart by Abu Ghraib interrogation section operations officer Captain Carolyn Wood. In reviewing the figure below, which the news program Frontline attributes as the Wood IROE chart, there are a number of significant features worth noting (Interrogation Rules of Engagement 2005). First, the items no longer authorized by the October Sanchez memorandum appear under the heading “Require CG’s Approval,” referring to Commanding General Sanchez. The same column includes an entry which was not

included in either Sanchez memorandum: “Sensory Deprivation.” Jones notes also, “what was particularly confusing was that nowhere on the chart did it mention a number of techniques that were in use at the time: removal of clothing, forced grooming, hooding and yelling, loud music and light control (Fay and Jones 2004, 28).” However confusing or incomplete the IROE chart may have been, the tactics it and the Sanchez memoranda countenanced, and the other techniques identified by General Jones, are all well within the tradition of non-scarring methods described by Rejali.

INTERROGATION RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

<p><u>Approved approaches for All detainees:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct Incentive Incentive Removal Emotional Love / Hate Fear Up Harsh Fear Up Mild Reduced Fear Pride & Ego Up Futility We Know All Establish Your Identity Repelition File & Dossier Rapid Fire Silence 	<p><u>Require CG's Approval:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change of scenery down Dietary Manip (monitored by med) Environmental Manipulation Sleep Adjustment (reverse sched) Isolation for longer than 30 days Presence of Mil Working Dogs Sleep Management (72 hrs max) Sensory Deprivation (72 hrs max) Stress Positions (no longer than 45 min)
<p><u>Safeguards:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ Techniques must be annotated in questioning strategy ~ Approaches must always be humane and lawful ~ Detainees will NEVER be touched in a malicious or unwanted manner ~ Wounded or medically burdened detainees must be medically cleared prior to interrogation ~ The Geneva Conventions apply within CJTF-7 	

EVERYONE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ENSURING COMPLIANCE TO THE IROE. VIOLATIONS MUST BE REPORTED IMMEDIATELY TO THE OIC.

The use of the techniques are subjects to the general safeguards as provided as well as specific guidelines implemented by the 205th MI Cdr, FM 34-52, and the Commanding General, CJTF-7

Figure 1: Abu Ghraib Interrogation Rules of Engagement

(Interrogation Rules of Engagement 2005)

Captain Wood explained her inclusion of at least two techniques based upon her judgment and initiative. She wrote:

We began interrogation operations at AG [Abu Ghraib] using accepted Field Manual 34-52 norms and techniques. We were moving from a tactical to an operational or insurgent environment and it increasingly felt to me like my experiences in Afghanistan. . . . I saw the situation moving to the “Bagram” model. . . . I increasingly felt the need to draw on my experience in Afghanistan. We had used “sleep adjustment” and “stress positions” as effective techniques

in Afghanistan. . . . Because we had used the techniques in Afghanistan, and I perceived the Iraq experience to be evolving into the same operational environment as Afghanistan, I used my best judgment and concluded they would be effective tools for interrogation operations in AG. . . . we continued to use FM-34-52 procedures, as well as sleep management and stress positions from our experiences in Afghanistan, as I believed these to be reasonable, given the similarity of the situations. (quoted in Jaffer and Singh 2007, A-196)

The environment at Abu Ghraib, and elsewhere in Iraq where interrogations took place, was one in which rules governing permissible methods were impermanent, sometimes confusing, and subject to interpretation and alteration depending upon the judgement of sometimes very junior military leaders. Some of the participants in this study were military intelligence interrogators forced to operate within this environment, and their experiences were shaped in part by the need to work under rules in Iraq that went beyond those described in their formal training, and in some cases seemed to contradict that training.

Abu Ghraib can hardly be looked upon simply as the result of rule confusion among interrogators, especially since the most infamous abuses at Abu Ghraib were committed by Military Police personnel who were only peripherally involved in actual interrogations. It is also known that instances of abusive violence took place in the field during the immediate aftermath of combat. Examinations of Abu Ghraib and a separate field combat encounter that led to murders, provide useful information to understand the factors that contribute to abusive violence against detainees by Americans in CT and COIN operations. This is especially so since the case studies present circumstances more like those experienced by my study participants than those from the Brazilian, Greek or Nazi regimes thus far considered.

Two Previous American Cases: Abu Ghraib and Operation Iron Triangle

The present study, while exploring the lived experiences of its fourteen participants, exists within the context of America's wider involvement in CT and COIN and associated instances of abusive violence that have been widely publicized and where American military courts martial have been held to try the soldiers involved. Two case studies are considered here as they have been presented by social scientists. The most famous such case is the 2003 detainee mistreatment at Abu Ghraib which sparked my initial interest in the subject. Psychologist Phillip Zimbardo was retained as a defense expert witness by one legal team and conducted a detailed analysis of the causes of the abuse (2008). Sociologist Stjepan Mestrovic, was retained as an

expert witness in a later case. He examined the causes contributing to the 2006 killing by American soldiers of three Iraqi males taken prisoner during Operation Iron Triangle. In the army unit involved in the killings it was generally understood that the Rules of Engagement allowed for the killing of all military aged males (2009). The main arguments of each analysis are presented here.

Zimbardo and Abu Ghraib

Zimbardo's Stanford Prison Experiment (SPE) and subsequent experience led him to believe that the abuses at Abu Ghraib should be viewed by considering what he described as the "triadic elements" contributing to such abuse. He sought to understand "the Person, the Situation, and the System that had put this person in that place to commit such crimes" (2008, 331). Zimbardo gained access to specific information regarding Abu Ghraib as an expert witness and consultant retained by the attorney for, Ivan "Chip" Frederick II, one of the military police soldiers court-martialed by the US Army for his role in detainee abuse at Abu Ghraib. Frederick was charged with crimes involving conspiracy, dereliction of duty, maltreatment of detainees, assault, and indecent acts, all of which he conceded were true as part of his trial (ibid., 370-371).

The Person: Ivan Frederick

Zimbardo's research into Ivan Frederick's background included a review of his personal family background, religious beliefs, medical and criminal histories, and civilian and military work, training and commendation records (2008, 337-342) as well as interviews with Frederick and his family members (ibid., ix). Zimbardo also examined the psychological assessments of Frederick, concluding that he "shows no evidence at all of a psychopathic personality that would predispose him to be abusive without guilt in his work setting. He also falls into the 'normal healthy range' with regard to schizophrenia, depression, hysteria, and all other major forms of psychological pathology" (342).

Zimbardo specifically noted that the psychological tests results demonstrated that Frederick was "experiencing extreme exhaustion, which is the defining quality of burnout. Specifically, the assessment indicates a person who is emotionally drained and chronically tired. His recovery cycles are not providing sufficient rest or relief from work to permit him to replenish his energy, leading to a condition of chronic weariness. . . . Overall, this profile indicates a person experiencing job burnout that is specific to the work situation in question" (2008, 344). This is significant to Zimbardo who concluded that Frederick's "ordinary level of cognitive capacities was indeed overwhelmed by the inordinate load imposed on him by the situational demands he faced nightly at [Abu Ghraib]" (ibid.).

Zimbardo summarized his assessment of Frederick, the Person:

There is absolutely nothing in his record that I was able to uncover that would predict that Chip Frederick would engage in any form of abusive, sadistic behavior. On the contrary, there is much in his record to suggest that had he not been forced to work and live in such an abnormal situation, he might have been the military's All-American poster soldier on its recruitment ads. . . . The military could have used [Frederick] as a superpatriot who loved his country and was ready to serve it to the last drop of his blood. (ibid.)

In short, Zimbardo considered Frederick to be an ordinary American soldier, lacking dispositional factors that would make one expect that he would commit the abuses he admitted to.

The Situation: Abu Ghraib Tier 1A Night Shift

Zimbardo reported that the prisoner population that Frederick was responsible for rose from some four-hundred detainees to more than one thousand in the space of weeks. The rise was due in part to large numbers of military-aged males swept up by American and allied forces responding to attacks by foreign terrorists and a home-grown Iraqi insurgency. Frederick became the leader of more than fifty American and Iraqi guards assigned to guarding the Iraqi detainees. He had never before been responsible for such a large operation. (2008, 345-346).

In addition to the burgeoning responsibilities Frederick was assigned, Zimbardo noted the lack of training, accountability, and procedures Frederick worked under. Zimbardo's assessment of Frederick's personality had shown that such buttresses were crucial. In Zimbardo's opinion, "there would never be any clear written procedures, no formal policies, and no structured guidelines. There was none of the procedural support that Chip Frederick needed to follow in order to be the kind of leader he hoped to be in this most important mission in his life" (2008, 347). Frederick also lost contact with other normal supports.

Zimbardo found that Frederick worked an untenable number of days without break; the longest stretch of twelve-hour shifts was forty days long. Frederick lived in a rodent-infested disused cell elsewhere in the prison. His nutrition was compromised by his schedule, as were his ability to exercise and socialize with friends. Zimbardo wrote that "more and more his life revolved entirely around his prison supervision and the MP Reservists working there under his command. They soon became what social psychologists refer to as his 'reference group,' a new in-group that would come to have a big influence on him. He was enmeshed in a 'total situation,' of the kind. . . described as facilitating mind control in cults and in the North Korean prisoner-of-war

camps” (2008, 347-348). Frederick’s fatigue, diet, and immersion in the hours of the night shift were joined by other aspects of Tier 1A to make up the situational context surrounding his conduct.

Zimbardo reported that Abu Ghraib Tier 1A on the shift supervised by Frederick (the place and time-frame of the infamous abuses) was characterized by a number of factors that contributed to the eventual misconduct that occurred. Among the factors cited by Zimbardo was a lack of in-person supervision by military officers; the presence of civilian interrogation contractors who gave directions (contrary to military regulations) to Frederick and other MPs on how to prepare the detainees for interrogation; the frequent visits by military and other government agency personnel who interrogated detainees without presenting identification or giving their names to the MPs responsible for prisoner custody; the detention of prisoners for whom there were no official records kept as required under normal prison procedures; and the physical abuse of detainees by the anonymous interrogators. One such interrogation ended with the death of the detainee. Zimbardo commented on the impact of this free-wheeling atmosphere: “the effect of the MPs on night shift witnessing these and other instances of grim abuse by a variety of visitors on their Tier 1A was certainly to establish a new social norm of abuse acceptability. If it were possible to get away with murder, what harm was there in just smacking around some resistant detainees or embarrassing them by making them take humiliating positions? (sic) they reasoned” (2008, 350).

Zimbardo also reported on the anonymity that arose in Abu Ghraib and its effects on Frederick and his fellow MPs:

Anonymity of place combined with anonymity of person, given that it became the norm to stop wearing their full military uniforms while on duty. And all around them, most visitors and the civilian interrogators came and went unnamed. No one in charge was readily identifiable, and the seemingly endless mass of prisoners, wearing orange jumpsuits or totally naked, were also indistinguishable from one another. It was as extreme a setting for creating deindividuation as I can imagine. (2008, 351)

Such deindividuation, according to Zimbardo, leads to “the ‘Mardis Gras effect’ of living for the moment behind a mask that conceals one’s identity and gives vent to libidinous, violent and selfish impulses that are ordinarily contained. Behavior then erupts in response to immediate situational demands, without planned conspiracy or malicious forethought.” Zimbardo continued, stating that in both Abu Ghraib and the Stanford Prison Experiment (SPE), “standard social constraints against aggression and

antisocial action were suspended as people experienced extended latitudes of behavioral freedom” (2008, 367).

In addition to deindividuation, Zimbardo cited constant fear of assaults by prisoners, dehumanization and boredom as factors present within the situation at Abu Ghraib. He reported that staged photographs of detainees in humiliating and posed sexual simulations were the result of directions from interrogators; the enacting of status-elevating dominance by MPs over detainees; and punishment/revenge for attacks on MPs and others (2008, 366-67).

Zimbardo is explicit that while the Army did not direct Frederick or the other Abu Ghraib MPs to enact sadistic sexual abuse on the detainees, he found that, as in the SPE, “a general norm of permissiveness prevailed that created a sense that the guards could do pretty much what they felt like doing because they were not personally accountable. In that context, traditional moral reasoning is diminished, actions speak louder than old learned lessons Moral disengagement operated then to change the mental and emotional landscape of those caught up in its web” (2008, 368).

The System: The War on Terror, National Leadership, and Failures to Prevent

For Zimbardo, the Abu Ghraib situation extant at the time of Frederick’s detainee abuse did not appear simply as a result of the unique mix of location and the breakdown of normal military discipline and procedures that made the abuse probable. Situations such as that at Abu Ghraib Tier 1A exist as a result of system influences. Zimbardo explains that “the System consists of the agents and agencies whose ideology, values, and power create situations and dictate the roles and expectations for approved behaviors of actors within its spheres of influence” (2008, 446). The system that influenced the actions at Abu Ghraib, was responsible for what Zimbardo characterized as:

A new kind of modern evil, ‘administrative evil’ that constitutes the foundation of complicity of the chain of political and military command in these abuses and tortures. Both public and private organizations, because they operate within a legal framework, not an ethical framework, can inflict suffering, even death, on people by following cold rationality for achieving the goals of their ideology, a master plan, a cost-benefit equation, or the bottom line of profit. Under those circumstances, their ends always justify efficient means. (2008, 383-84)

In Zimbardo's view, the system that created and maintained the situation at Abu Ghraib was a complex one that stretched up the entire American chain of military and civilian command. He is specific in his description of the system:

We can think of the torture dungeon at Abu Ghraib . . . as having been designed by the senior 'architects' [President] Bush, [Vice President] Cheney, [Secretary of Defense] Rumsfeld and [CIA Director] Tenet. Next came the 'justifiers,' the lawyers who came up with new language and concepts that legalized 'torture' in new ways and means. . . . The 'foremen' on the torture construction job were the military leaders such as Generals Miller, Sanchez, Karpinski and their underlings. Finally, came the technicians, the grunts in charge of carrying out the daily labor of coercive interrogation, abuse, and torture—the soldiers in military intelligence, CIA operatives, civilian contract and military interrogators, translators, medics, and military police, including Chip Frederick and his night shift buddies. (2005, 403)

Zimbardo blames President Bush for framing the post-9/11 America as being at war with Terror, and that, "the central premise of this new war was that terrorism is the primary threat to 'national security,' and to the 'homeland,' and that it must be opposed by all means necessary" (2008, 430). Zimbardo noted that such rhetoric had been previously used in Brazil, Greece and elsewhere to justify "aggression, as well as repression" (ibid.). He further stated that Vice President Cheney's war framing and an assumed catastrophic and national existential threat from terrorists served as justification within the American administration for taking pre-emptive and extraordinary measures to counter that threat. In Zimbardo's view, the major pieces of the system that supported the situation that bred the abuse included the signaling of national-level approval for the war on terror; the coercive interrogation of terrorists; the widespread commission of abuses by Americans against detainees in both Afghanistan and Iraq, with very little punishment of officers who should have prevented such abuses; the removal of previous separations between civilian and military interrogation tactics and the traditional MPs' custody and care mission; and the lack of systemic changes to prevent abuses at Abu Ghraib.

Zimbardo found that in addition to the acts committed by those within the entire chain of command that set the framing of the War on Terror and specified harsh treatment of detainees, there were other more subtle acts of omission that also contributed to the abuse. Zimbardo wrote:

What is significant to me is the number of people who knew of abuses, witnessed them, even participated in them in various ways and did nothing to prevent, stop or report them. They provided "social proof" to the MPs that it

was acceptable to continue doing whatever they wanted to do. Their smiling, silent faces provided social support from the surrounding network of the general interrogation team that gave thumbs up to abuses that should have received reprimands. . . . we see the evil of inaction facilitating the evil of action. (2008, 396)

Zimbardo, citing evidence from a number of military, civilian government and NGO reports on the Abu Ghraib scandal, stated that among those who knew about the abuses and did not act to stop them were military medical personnel; company (junior) and field grade (middle-level) officers; military interrogators; military intelligence analysts; and military dog handlers (2008, 396-97).

While the abuses at Abu Ghraib were the result of the actions and omissions by untold individuals, including Chip Frederick and his six fellow soldiers convicted in the aftermath of the scandal, Zimbardo believes that the System which defined the universe in which those abuses occurred was the result of deliberate decisions made in Washington DC. He wrote that “the seeds for the flowers of evil that blossomed in that dark dungeon of Abu Ghraib were planted by the Bush administration in its triangular framing of national security threat, citizen fear and vulnerability, and interrogation/torture to win the war on terror” (2008, 412).

Zimbardo on Objecting to Evil

Zimbardo considered Joe Darby, the low-ranking soldier who was the whistleblower in the Abu Ghraib scandal, an important hero-example. Zimbardo’s work includes certain prescriptions for fostering in potential “heroes” the impetus to object to evil. He commented about lessons learned from the SPE that he considers important to the kind of active opposition that can curtail abuse.

In telling the story of the SPE, Zimbardo recounted how he was shocked out of his complicity in the harm to his participants by a colleague named Christina Maslach who denounced what was happening and exhorted him to halt the study. Her analysis of her actions included the following salient points:

1. The most important aspect of the situation was not her sole act of protest, but rather the wholesale manner in which everyone else, including the participants and the researchers, had been pulled into an acceptance of the seeming reality of the “prison” and their respective roles within it.
2. Her own ability to see matters as abusive was because, as she stated, “I was a late entrant into the situation, and I was an ‘outsider.’ Unlike everyone else, I had not been a consenting participant in the study. . . . I had no socially defined role within that prison context. . . . I was not there

every day, being carried along as the situation changed and escalated bit by bit. Thus the situation I entered at the end of the week was not truly the 'same' as it was for everyone else. . . . For them, the situation was construed as being still within the range of normalcy; for me, it was not—it was a madhouse" (qtd. in Zimbardo, 2008, 458).

3. She evaluated the significance of her acts in terms of whether they were effective in halting the abuse. In her view, Zimbardo was sufficiently influenced by her objections to stop the study, and she was spared the burden of making a decision to go above his head to halt the experiment.

Zimbardo quoted Maslach's more expansive comments about objecting to evil, which she couched in terms of the minority of the Milgram experiments' participants who refused at some point to escalate the apparent abuse to the subject who was being "shocked." Maslach commented:

If you disobeyed, refused to continue, got paid, and left silently, your heroic action would not prevent the next 999 participants from experiencing the same distress. It would be an isolated event without social impact unless it included going to the next step of challenging the entire structure and assumptions of the research. Disobedience by the individual must get translated into systemic disobedience that forces change in the situation or agency itself and not just in some operating conditions. It is too easy for evil situations to co-opt the intentions of good dissidents or even heroic rebels by giving them medals for their deeds and a gift certificate for keeping their opinions to themselves. (2008, 459)

For Zimbardo, the outsider's view enhanced the ability to see the situation as abusive and to allow for effective objections which challenged the situation and system created in the SPE. The next case analysis, presented by sociologist Stjepan Mestrovic, similarly emphasizes the outsider's vantage as important to forcing the system to scrutinize abuse.

Mestrovic and Operation Iron Triangle

Stjepan Mestrovic conducted an extensive study of Operation Iron Triangle and the military prosecutions of low-level soldiers who were directly involved in the killings of three unarmed detainees and the cover-up of those killings. A description of the specific day's events is useful at this juncture as the incident may not be as well

known to the reader as those of Abu Ghraib⁹. Thereafter, Mestrovic's primary points relevant to this study relating to the causes of the killings are presented.

In May 2006 soldiers from the US Army 101st Division, Third Brigade Combat Team, under the command of Colonel Michael Steele were helicoptered to a suspected insurgent stronghold at Objective Murray. They were operating under Rules of Engagement that they believed allowed and required them to shoot any military aged males they found at the objective and elsewhere in the surrounding vicinity. Finding no insurgents at Objective Murray, members of Charlie Company were dispatched to search other buildings. Upon approaching one building, a squad of soldiers fired at and killed a seventy-year-old man. Three other males, one adult and two teens, and a number of women were discovered and detained. The capture was reported upward, eventually coming to the attention of the senior non-commissioned officer in the company. He was reported to have demanded of the squad's platoon leader, "Why do I have three fucking detainees that should have been killed?" The response was filtered down to the squad. (Khatchadourian 2009)

After an incident in which another man was captured at another site, the squad returned to the house where the first man had been killed and three males remained detained. The squad leader spoke to the squad members and killing the three detainees was discussed. At least one soldier objected to the idea and debated the matter with the squad leader. Two other soldiers exited the house, cut off the detainees' wrist-restraints and directed the detainees to run away. While the detainees ran, the two soldiers shot and killed them. Afterward the two soldiers and the squad leader conspired to claim that the detainees had broken free, assaulted the soldiers, and were shot while trying to escape. To lend credence to the claim, one of the soldiers was struck in the face and the other was cut with a knife (Khatchadourian 2009).

Word of the cover-up circulated among the soldiers of Charlie Company and others within their battalion. A number of snipers who had occasionally operated with Charlie Company later persisted in bringing the matter to the attention of Army investigators. They provided formal statements regarding what they had heard about the detainee killings and subsequent cover-up, and other incidents in which they understood that soldiers from Charlie Company advocated the killing of Iraqi males who did not pose threats. (Mestrovic 2009). Four soldiers were convicted of various crimes including murder, aggravated assault and negligent homicide (Khatchadourian 2009).

⁹ The presentation of events is taken from the account provided in Raffi Khatchadourian's article "A War Crime in Iraq," in *The New Yorker* magazine and details supplied by Mestrovic in *The "Good Soldier" on Trial: A Sociological Study of Misconduct by the US Military Pertaining to Operation Iron Triangle, Iraq*.

Reference Groups

Mestrovic considered the concept of the “reference group” as an important lens through which to understand the behavior of American Soldiers. Mestrovic, citing the use of the term in Stouffer’s “The American Soldier,” explains “reference group” by writing that “people in general and especially soldiers evaluate and judge everything by the particular-peer group they use as a standard of reference” (2009, 2). He contended that Stouffer’s findings regarding World War II soldiers’ reluctance to kill and the stress alleviating influences of high morale and the comforting reliability that accompanied relatively low turnover within units were seemingly ignored during the Iraq War. Instead, “constant re-shuffling of troops prevented bonding and the formation of real ‘reference groups,’ and unit morale was poor. Numerous soldiers suffered from various forms of combat stress and PTSD” (ibid.).

Metrovic reported that Colonel Steele’s soldiers were subjected to behavior modification methods intended to make them much more willing to hate and kill the enemy than were American soldiers during World War II. A key factor was the explicitly stated philosophy of combat communicated to the soldiers directly by Steele. Metrovic cited the speech delivered by the colonel just prior to the Iraq deployment, some parts of which follow:

Over the next ten days, everyone in this room will get on a plane and we will fly to Southwest Asia. . . . We are going into the worst part of Iraq. . . . This is real, and the guy who is going to win on the battlefield is the one who gets violent the fastest. So that’s the context. Here are the things I want you to know. Number One, anytime you fight, anytime you fight, you will always kill the other son-of-a-bitch. Always. Do not let him live today, so he will fight you tomorrow. Kill him today. They’ll make more of them, they’re out there damn everywhere, there’s plenty of them. Kill him today. Don’t let him live. . . . I listen to guys talk [about capturing the enemy and treating them well] and after we’ve befriended them they are going to tell us all this intelligence. Man that is bullshit! That is bullshit. So I want to be very clear. If you go out and somebody presents a lethal threat to you, then you shoot him. Do not feel bad and think that you should have brought him back because I didn’t want to talk to him. . . . You send the message that I am the dominant predator on this street, and if you mess with me I will eat you. . . . We are not going to be driving around Iraq raping, bartering, pillaging, being undisciplined. That’s not what I’m talking about. . . . Man, it’s time to go hunting. And that’s exactly the attitude I expect you to have. Every time you walk out that gate, you are hunting. You are the hunter, you are the predator, you are looking for the prey, and that’s all. (qtd. in Mestrovic, 2009, 20-21)

In addition to their brigade commander's fiery rhetoric, the soldiers of Charlie Company were subjected to specific methods intended to reinforce their aggression and overcome their revulsion to killing. Colonel Steele made it a practice to reward individual soldiers who killed the enemy with tokens of esteem such as special coins and knives. Charlie Company itself maintained a board at headquarters that showed the tally of enemy killed. The company first sergeant explained that it was intended to help condition the men to kill. (Mestrovic, 2009).

Mestrovic found that Steele espoused the views of Dave Grossman, the author of a book about killing in combat which included advice on how to overcome soldier reluctance to killing through techniques of operant conditioning. Mestrovic reported that Grossman's book was distributed by Steele to members of the brigade and that Grossman spoke to brigade members at Steele's request. Mestrovic noted a difference in interpretation of the findings of World War II Army Historian S. L. A. Marshall:

Grossman begins his book with Marshall's central finding: American soldiers are extremely reluctant to kill, except in self-defense, such that only 20% of them will generally open fire on an average combat mission. Whereas I follow Marshall's conclusions from this overall finding, namely, that soldiers are not machines and that long-term killing wears them down and ultimately destroys an army through combat stress, Grossman pursues a different line of reasoning. Grossman's overall aim is to show that the reluctance to kill can be broken down by standard conditioning techniques. . . . He turns to Stanley Milgram's famous study of obedience to authority and draws a conclusion that is completely different from the lessons drawn by a preponderance of professors who cite Milgram. The lesson drawn by college professors is that blind obedience to authority is a bad thing which can lead to atrocities. The lesson drawn by Grossman is: "Never underestimate the power of the need to obey." (Mestrovic 245)

Mestrovic found that the Army's priority was not to protect soldiers from the dangers identified by Marshall, but instead was apparent in a shift to a reference group emphasizing other goals:

The connections among the central message in Grossman's book, his role in Steele's pep rally, and the outcome on the tragic mission of May 9th are clear and disturbing. Grossman's book is about conditioning the soldier to kill because of the well-established fact that the American soldier is reluctant to kill. Grossman's participation in Steele's rally may explain the use of the kill board, coins, and other rewards used to "condition" soldiers in the brigade to

kill. In his sworn statement [First Sergeant] Geressy referred to the kill board as a technique intended to "desensitize" soldiers toward killing. All this constitutes the application of behaviorism and operant conditioning toward the desired goal of increased killing. On the other hand, the disconnect between the intellectual reference group of the army and the intellectual reference group of civilian university professors could scarcely be greater. And which approach is more valid? Marshall and scores of academics have found that soldiers who go on missions for more than 100 days invariably develop symptoms that disable their performance as soldiers, from PTSD to suicide, alcoholism, accidents, and aggression. The more important point is that the army does not seem to pay attention to the reference group of civilian professors and researchers, and listens to its own reference group of intellectuals who try to transform the American soldier into a killing machine. (Mestrovic 245)

Mestrovic also found that Steele's approach to counter-insurgency was consonant with the philosophy of the American national leadership:

In no way was his order atypical, given that in the current war on terror, the United States established the pre-emptive strike as public policy. This policy came to be known as the Bush Doctrine and the US attacked Iraq even though Iraq showed no hostile intent and posed no danger toward the US. The brigade commander's speech and order are a microcosm of the pre-emptive strike doctrine: the ROE for Operation Iron Triangle basically involved a pre-emptive strike on unsuspecting, unarmed, and non-hostile Iraqis. This is an unmistakable cultural pattern." (2009, 23).

This was the underpinning of the shift from the war of self-defense viewpoint and reluctance to kill the enemy Mestrovic considers emblematic of US soldiers during World War II. He noted that:

The traditional American soldier did not have the concept of "predator" in his vocabulary as a self-descriptor. The new factor in the current war is the introduction of the nontraditional, predatory idea of the pre-emptive strike, at all levels, in conjunction with demands for rigid obedience and a highly stratified social system. This formula helps to explain the tragedy of Operation Iron Triangle, the abuse at Abu Ghraib, torture at Guantanamo, and scores of other events that have damaged the reputation of the United States in the current war. (2009, 24)

Mestrovic noted also the differences in attitudes toward enemy prisoners of war during World War II and the Iraq War. He claimed that the United States made a conscious effort to treat captured Germans kindly, giving them food rations better than most American civilians enjoyed, allowing them beer in captivity and providing them ample opportunities for the staging of cultural activities in prisoner of war camps. These methods were employed to keep prisoners content and unlikely to become unruly, to demonstrate by example the desirability of living under American democratic principles, and to ensure reciprocal good treatment for Americans held captive by the Germans (2009).

Mestrovic cited difference in war aims held at the national and individual soldier levels in World War II that were in marked contrast to those in the post-9/11 era. Mestrovic stated that “in World War II, America had clear objectives for defeating the enemy it felt compelled to fight purely for purposes of self-defense, and for treating the enemy with mercy and kindness. The government goals were in line with commonsense and with religious teachings . . . such that a chaplain could summarize government policy in a coherent manner. . . . But in the current war on terror, the American government’s objectives for defeating the enemy and for treating enemy as well as its own prisoners are not clear or coherent” (2009, 264-265).

Of particular import to this study are Mestrovic’s conclusions regarding reference groups and the individuals who were able to force the situation into the light of day:

American soldiers are extremely reluctant to kill or abuse the enemy. When they do commit war crimes, they always act in the context of reference groups that exhibit poisoned command and social climates. The soldiers who are able to notice and criticize the war crimes are typically affiliated with different reference groups with a healthier command and social climate — this is clearly the case with the snipers who worked with but did not belong to Charlie Company. Similarly, the whistleblowers at Abu Ghraib were not locked into the daily misery of working in the poisoned social climate in Tier 1A. (2009, 50-51)

His views are very similar to those held by Christina Maslach as reported by Zimbardo: it is the outsider who has an independent perspective and is free of entanglements of the immediate situation who is able to take decisive action to halt abuse.

Grossman on Killing

Mestrovic takes Steele, and by extension Dave Grossman, to task for misapplying Marshall’s findings about World War II soldiers’ reluctance to kill the

enemy on the battlefield. He decries the use of operant conditioning to maximize killing behavior by Steel's soldiers in Iraq and at the crucial moments during Operation Iron Triangle; and he is critical of the army's shift from the reference group of academics to military men such as Grossman. In doing so, Mestrovic ignores much of Grossman's message about the psychological costs of killing.

Grossman (1996) acknowledges Marshall's findings with respect to American soldiers fighting against either the Japanese or Germans that, "only 15 to 20 percent of the American riflemen in combat during World War II would fire at the enemy. Those who would not fire did not run or hide [], but they simply would not fire their weapons at the enemy, even when faced with repeated waves of banzai charges" (1996, 4). As a result of his study of the roots of this phenomenon, Grossman concluded that, "there is within most men an intense resistance to killing their fellow man. A resistance so strong that, in many circumstances, soldiers on the battlefield will die before they can overcome it" (*ibid.*). He goes on to state that "with the proper conditioning and the proper circumstances, it appears that almost anyone can and will kill" (*ibid.*). To this limited extent, Mestrovic provides an accurate picture of part of Grossman's writing. There is more to Grossman's work, however, and some parts of it are useful for gaining an understanding of the question of American involvement in abusive violence.

Grossman charts the factors that allow the soldier to overcome the reluctance to kill (1996, 142). They include Demands of Authority, Group Absolution, Predisposition of Killer, Total Distance from Victim, and the Target Attractiveness of Victim. The first factor includes much of the obedience to authority described in Zimbardo and Milgram; however, Grossman adds the conditions that the authority figure must be legitimate, both in terms of possessing the superior position granted by hierarchical position, and the legitimacy that comes from respect granted by the subordinate to courageous and prudent leaders.

By "Predisposition of Killer," Grossman refers to the combination of training, conditioning, recent experiences, and temperament. The modern soldier's training includes operant conditioning to fire on human shaped targets, unlike the bulls eye targets of World War II. This factor is cited as a major explanation for increased killing behavior by soldiers subjected to such modern training. In addition to training, Grossman states that "the recent loss of friends and beloved leaders in combat can also enable violence on the battlefield. The deaths of friends and comrades can stun, paralyze, and emotionally defeat soldiers. But in many circumstances soldiers react with anger [], and then the loss of comrades can enable killing" (1996, 179). Temperament for Grossman can also include a willingness to kill separate from training-conditioned behavior. Accepting research citing a 2 percent rate of soldiers

predisposed to killing, Grossman concludes that “there is 2 percent of the male population that, if pushed or given a legitimate reason, will kill without regret or remorse. What these individuals represent—and this is a terribly important point that I must emphasize—is the capacity for the levelheaded participation in combat that we as a society glorify and that Hollywood would have us believe that all soldiers possess” (ibid., 180-81).

Of specific interest in Grossman’s theory on what enables combat killing for the 98 percent of the population who are not what he terms “natural soldiers,” is the collection of mechanisms that reduce the guilt felt by the soldier. One of the most important factors, in Grossman’s opinion, is the influence of the group during battle. He cites the ability of the group to provide surveillance on the individual to encourage compliance with kill orders. The group also provides the diffusion of individual responsibility, and therefore lessened guilt, which allows the individual to participate in the killing activity. This is especially evident in the literature which demonstrates that soldiers operating crew-served weapons such as machine guns and artillery reached a firing rate of nearly 100 percent during World War II (1996, 153). This combination of reinforcement of the order to kill through certain detection of failure to comply, plus the reduction of responsibility afforded to those who merely carry out a portion of the required killing steps, bring to the fore the strength of the group in overcoming individual resistance to killing.

Grossman devotes a considerable portion of his writing to atrocity. He recounts his personal experience of being an enlisted soldier who rose through the ranks. At frequent intervals during training he and his fellow soldiers discussed various ways and reasons to evade the proscriptions of the Geneva Conventions against killing non-combatants or using illegal weapons against combatants. He described such a situation where a military chaplain tried to dissuade the soldiers based upon moral and legal principles from killing future prisoners (which was the accepted position of the group). Grossman observed that the men were not swayed in the least. He chose to address his men directly by pointing out that if the enemy learned of such killing, they would stiffen their resolve and fight the Americans to the last (thereby increasing the potential of the Americans suffering casualties). Humane treatment of the enemy would encourage surrender rather than resistance. Finally, he told the men, “the last thing you ought to know is that if I ever catch any of you heroes killing a POW, I’ll shoot you right on the spot. Because it’s illegal, because it’s wrong, because it’s dumb, and it’s one of the worst things you could do to help us win a war” (1996, 204).

Grossman’s research describes the ways in which the ability to overcome the repugnance to killing that most soldiers have can be taken to the extreme of

committing atrocity. He wrote, "All of us would like to believe that we would not participate in atrocities. That we would deny our friends and leaders and even turn our weapons on them if need be. But there are profound processes involved that prevent such confrontation of peers and leaders in atrocity circumstance. The first involves group absolution and peer pressure. . . . Human life is profoundly cheapened by these acts, and the soldier realizes that one of the lives that has been cheapened is his own" (1996, 224-25).

Grossman considers the most important safeguard against unrestrained killing is the inviolable and universal rule in American military training that soldiers only unleash their killing abilities upon orders from authority. According to Grossman, "It is essential to understand that one of the most important aspects of this process is that soldiers are always under authority in combat. No army can tolerate undisciplined or indiscriminate firing, and a vital—and easily overlooked—fact of the soldier's conditioning revolves around having him fire only when told to by a higher authority and then only within his designated firing lane. Firing a weapon at the wrong time or in the wrong direction is so heinous an offense that it is almost unthinkable to the average soldier" (1996, 260).

Grossman has definite views on the costs to the soldier who participates in atrocity, even when acting under authority. He wrote: "The psychological trauma of living with what one has done to one's fellow man may represent the most significant toll taken by atrocity. Those who commit atrocity have made a Faustian bargain with evil. They have sold their conscience, their future, and their peace of mind for a brief, fleeting, self-destructive advantage. . . . The killer can be empowered by his killing, but ultimately, often years later, he may bear the emotional burden of guilt that he has buried with his acts. . . . The guilt and trauma of an average human being who is forced to murder innocent civilians don't necessarily have to wait years before they well up into revulsion and rebellion. Sometimes the executioner cannot resist the forces that cause him to kill, but the still, small voice of humanity and guilt wins out shortly thereafter" (1996, 222-23). Mestrovic's characterization of Grossman's position on how soldiers are enabled to kill fails to include Grossman's strong opposition to atrocity by soldiers, even when those soldiers are operating under the perceived behest to kill.

Of particular interest to the present study is Grossman's contention that soldiers are always under authority in combat. He wrote from his perspective of a soldier who was trained to face the Soviet menace on a conventional battlefield. He did not address the effect of small squad-sized units of troops operating autonomously in the patrols characteristic of the COIN tactics in Iraq. Those patrols were under the leadership of young squad leaders and existed within the insular world

at the bottom of the war machine, distant from officers and senior NCOs who can provide the prudent leadership necessary to avoid atrocity.

Grossman similarly does not write from the perspective of a force confronting an enemy who has been declared devoid of the legal soldier status that serves as the threshold for dignified treatment by the capturing force. His perspective is anchored firmly upon what he characterized as “America’s position on the role of atrocity in combat and this is the logic behind it,” namely, that “the American reputation for fair play and respect for human life had survived over generations, and the decent actions of American soldiers in World War I had saved the lives of many soldiers in World War II” (1996, 205). The Post-9/11 era American government, as described by Zimbardo and Mestrovic, changed the national reputation, and the rules that soldiers perceived to apply to detainee treatment.

Sources of Abusive Violence, Methods Transmission, and Reflections on Experiences

This study has found a number of surprising features about abusive violence as reported by the participants. These findings partially answer the basic questions of the research and are briefly described here.

First, abusive violence was most often reported as an emotional response to feeling frustrated, angry, or under pressure to improve intelligence gathering or insurgency suppression. Second, participants describe being almost entirely unprepared to effectively interrogate in an insurgency campaign, or to reduce violence against occupation forces. As such, participants were not engaging in abusive violence as part of carefully designed and controlled sets of tactics. Instead, abusive violence was enacted by troops who were frustrated by encountering a population the Americans thought possessed key information necessary to identify terrorists and insurgents who appeared to be stubbornly affecting ignorance in order to aid the enemy. The Americans, viewing everyone as either an active terrorist/insurgent or an enemy sympathizer, believed that harsh methods were justified in order to combat violence against US forces.

In many other cases the viewpoint was put much more simply: participants acted abusively toward detainees and Iraqis in general because they could. They could because they had the overwhelming force of arms, the authority to exert powers of detention and transportation to secluded and sometimes illicit locations, and therefore the ability to abuse with impunity as long as comrades remained silent. The participants described fear, frustration, rage and a desire to reclaim power in an environment where the insurgent held the power to attack Americans by bomb or

ambush and avoid capture by disappearing into the populace. This classic counter-insurgency fighter's problem, the unseen foe, raised anxiety, frustration, and anger.

The participants also describe the weakness of constraints against abusive violence, and the frequent tacit or explicit encouragement they discerned from their immediate and senior commanders to forgo prohibitions in favor of being effective. Implicit in this interpreted message was a belief signaled to the troops that abuse, intimidation, and fear were the best tools to obtain information or to separate the community from the insurgent.

The stated respect for human rights that would represent a barrier to such abuse prevented the Americans from creating formal types of torture training of the kinds that occurred in regimes less punctilious in such matters. As such, an informal, ad hoc, and improvised approach was employed by abuser participants. They did what they knew. They hazed because they had been hazed. They punched, kicked, and beat because these are what angry people do. They used abuse techniques that they learned from movies, fathers, other abusers, and even from detainees who described what had been done to them by other soldiers. They sometimes could not explain why they chose to maim or disfigure; yet in recounting those incidents they expressed the most concern about their own enjoyment of atrocity.

In the main, participants express disappointment with their behavior. As abusers, observers, or objectors all but one regret the abusive violence they saw or enacted. To varying degrees participants were marked by the experience of abusive violence. Some consider the abuse they committed to be the worst experiences of war they carry. Others are gnawed by regret that they did not do more to prevent the abuse, as much because of harm to the perpetrators as to the victims. Only one participant believed that the abusive violence was necessary and tactically effective after the fact; however, even he described the devastation that the worst abusers in his unit suffered after discharge. They became drug users, lost their families, and went to jail. Other abusers regret the gratuitous brutality they committed and report post-service bouts with anger, violent ideation and behavior, and suicidal thoughts and attempts. Abusive violence is viewed retrospectively as unnecessary and toxic to everyone involved.

To this point I have described various laboratory studies that attempt to explain how atrocity is enabled; the examples from World War II, Brazil, and Greece that show how actual situations of deliberate officially-sanctioned atrocity are realized in extreme military and police missions; the methods in which democratic states choose to undertake torture in ways that do not strip them of their morally superior appearances; and how the commands of senior American generals in Iraq were

themselves poorly defined and were adulterated by subordinates issuing confusing guidance to interrogators, or simply disregarded as other methods were employed. I have also given a précis of the general thematic findings communicated by participants.

In Chapter two I describe the methods employed in this study, both in terms of data collection protocols and the method known as Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). In the same chapter I describe the group of study participants and some of the abusive violence that they reported observing and committing. In Chapters three and four I commence presenting the central information provided by the participants, which is not the catalogue of gross and minor abuses, but rather what they tell us about what the experience of abusive violence means, both in terms of how it comes about and how it affects the individual at the time and months and years later when those experiences are considered in the light afforded by time and distance. I bring forth certain superordinate experiential themes common to some or the majority of participants. Chapter three specifically addresses aspects most salient among the intelligence operatives. Chapter four is centered on those soldiers employed in combat patrols, raids, and convoys. In Chapters five, six, and seven, I examine in detail the experiences of three individuals with personal involvement in small units that routinely committed abusive violence, some of it including acts of scarring torture and murder. Those experiences tell us much about the descent into heinous atrocity and what it is like to live years later with a divided self-image of monster, unforgivable sinner, and patriot.

It should be understood that IPA is a method which endeavors to report in detail the experiences of individuals and to identify the meaning of those experiences, both as described by the individual and as interpreted by the researcher. The method does not attempt to describe how all individuals may react to situations where abusive violence is of real potential. It does provide vivid description of what those experiences were like for these people. There has been little research done resulting in such rich description from veterans of America's Global War on Terror and abusive violence as they experienced it. This study will add to such scant information and may be useful in serving as a foundation of other qualitative research of broader scope and wider implication.

Chapter 2: Method and Participants

This research was conceived, planned, and conducted as an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) study seeking to understand the lived experiences of men and women who were exposed to abusive violence as part of their involvement in America's "Global War on Terror" campaigns. IPA studies can be done in various ways, but the preferred method is through the analysis of transcripts of semi-structured interviews (Smith and Osborn 2008). I therefore sought to identify and recruit Americans with direct experience with abusive violence carried out in American CT and COIN operations after September 11, 2001.

Once the interviews were conducted, transcripts were prepared and IPA methods were used to identify themes that characterized the accounts, both within individual accounts and in some cases across multiple accounts. While the cross-account themes are useful for understanding the possibility of commonality of experience, they are not intended to describe any further incidence of the themes beyond this set of individuals. IPA does not look at a set of study participants as a statistical sample, but rather as discrete whole persons with individual experiences. Considering those experiences in detail can provide for rich descriptive empirical information not well suited to collection through quantitative research methods. The collection of that data required planning the study to address issues of research ethics, effective recruitment, and rapport-building which would allow participants to freely share their recollections of events that included many memories which continue to haunt them years after they occurred.

Data Analysis Method

As noted above, this study endeavors to seek understanding of the phenomenon of abusive violence in the American Post-9/11 case. The difficulty of obtaining data from a large sample of veterans in the CT and COIN campaigns willing to disclose their exposure to and involvement in abusive violence has meant that the selected approach would have to concentrate on the individual. This reliance on the individual account and comparison to a small number of similarly situated willing study participants dictates that the insights achieved from the study are not designed to be generalized to the larger population of all, or even any, other intelligence and military veterans. It is, therefore the objective of this study to discover what can be learned about abusive violence in CT and COIN from the experiences of individuals and the meanings emerging from those experiences. The method for the analysis of the data was therefore selected based upon the limitations and aims of the study.

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), first described by Jonathan A. Smith (1996), is a qualitative research approach aimed squarely at understanding the lived experiences of individuals and the meanings they ascribe to those experiences (Smith, Flowers and Larkin 2010). According to Smith (1996), IPA is theoretically based on phenomenology and symbolic interactionism. Being informed by phenomenology, IPA concentrates in part upon the “individual’s personal perception of an account or event as opposed to an attempt to produce an objective statement of the object or event itself (1996, 263).” Symbolic interactionism guides IPA by asserting that “the meanings individuals ascribe to events should be of central concern to the social scientist but also that those meanings are only obtained through a process of interpretation (ibid.).” The interpretation of meanings from the words used by individuals to describe significant life events is the key task of the IPA researcher.

IPA then relies upon a dual-interpretive process. At the first stage of the process, the individual must interpret the event in some fashion and express both an account of the events and the meanings she places upon them. At the second stage, the researcher must attempt to interpret what the individual has said, both explicitly and implicitly in the account provided. The researcher “is trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world (Smith and Osborn 2008, 53).” The researcher cannot simply relate the words of the individual; he must approach those words with a critical eye while seeking to represent the individual’s point of view. The researcher should be attuned to the possibility of meaning and subtext being communicated that perhaps the individual does not identify; the researcher is expected to interpret, not simply repeat.

Using IPA, the researcher does not conduct a straight-line, single pass, analysis of the data presented. The process of analysis employed in IPA takes into account, and indeed relies upon, the researcher’s evolving understanding of the individual’s lived experience. He will look at the information, typically in the form of interview transcripts, multiple times and attempt to discover the meaning from the text while considering the individual, the specific situation described, that situation’s place within a larger context, the event in relation to the individual’s greater life story, and his own growing understanding of such situations based upon his contact with both the individual, and other individuals in similar situations. As Smith et al explain, “the process of analysis is iterative – we may move back and forth through a range of different ways of thinking about the data, rather than completing each step one after the other. . . . The idea is that our entry into the meaning of a text can be made at a number of different levels, all of which relate to one another, and many of which will

offer different perspectives on the part-whole coherence of the text (Smith, Flowers and Larkin 2010, 28)."

Although Smith and others describe IPA as a "process," this does not imply that there is a single method employed in IPA. IPA is an approach and a sensibility more than a prescribed set of ordered procedures. Smith et al note that "IPA can be characterized by a set of common processes (e.g. moving from the particular to the shared, and from the descriptive to the interpretative) and principles (e.g. a commitment to an understanding of the participant's point of view, and a psychological focus on personal meaning-making in particular contexts) which are applied flexibly, according to the analytic task (Smith, Flowers and Larkin 2010, 79)." In addition, the analysis presented as a result of IPA is reliant upon the text, not a theoretical position. Smith, in explaining his analysis of one individual's experience said that it was "based on a close reading of what is already in the passage, helped by analysis of what the participant said elsewhere in the interview and informed by a general psychological interest but without being influenced by a specific pre-existing formal theoretical position (qtd. in Smith, Flowers and Larkin 2010, 105)." Finally, IPA acknowledges the existence of the individual conducting the interpretive analysis and the grounding of that analysis: "even though most IPA reading is operating close to the text, there is still a reader doing the reading and influenced by all of his/her biographical presence when doing that reading. There is a discipline, however, in staying grounded and attentive, checking one's reading again against the local text itself, and verifying it in the light of the larger text/what is said elsewhere in the interview and one's unfolding analysis (ibid.)."

Although as noted above, IPA does not prescribe a rigid process, there are approaches which are recommended to facilitate the detailed analysis of the participant's account. At the beginning of the process is the data collection, typically using audio recordings of semi-structured interviews, which interviews aim at allowing the participant to lead their own account of the life-experience under study. The recordings are then transcribed and reviewed closely, with individual passages being labeled for the apparent meaning communicated by the individual. This first level review occurs more than once with each transcript. Where the labeled meanings are identified as potential higher-order concepts or "themes" emerging from the multiple close examinations of the transcript, the researcher will encapsulate the theme in a written descriptor. As the researcher continues his consideration of the text the focus shifts slightly, from a sole concentration on the text itself. As Smith and Osborn describe it, "the next stage involves a more analytical or theoretical ordering, as the researcher tries to make sense of the connections between themes, and some may

emerge as superordinate concepts. Imagine a magnet with some of the themes pulling others in and helping to make sense of them (2008, 70).”

One recommended process is the creation of tables of themes for each person as a means of conceptually ordering the insight into the meanings attributed by the individual to the reported life experiences (Smith 1996; Smith and Osborn 2008; Smith, Flowers and Larkin 2010). Attention is first paid to the individual before moving across cases. Again from Smith: “IPA is strongly idiographic, starting with the detailed examination of one case until some degree of closure or gestalt has been achieved, then moving to a detailed analysis of the second case, and so on through the corpus of cases. Only when that has been achieved, is there an attempt to conduct a cross-case analysis as the tables of themes for each individual are interrogated for convergence and divergence (Smith 2008, 41).” While Smith has advocated for studies using as few as one individual as the entire data set (Smith, 2008), IPA studies often use larger groups. In those cases, the level and order of detailed analysis will differ: “if one has a larger corpus, then almost inevitably the analysis of each case cannot be so detailed. In this case, the emphasis may shift more to assessing what were the key emergent themes for the whole group. Here it may even be the case that identifies emergent themes at case level but holds off the search for patterns and connections until one is examining all the cases together. . . . what makes the analysis IPA is the fact that the group level themes are still illustrated with particular examples taken from individuals (Smith, Flowers and Larkin 2010, 106).” This study will apply IPA to two groups of participants with shared experiences and duties. It will also then focus on a pair of individuals whose small units often engaged in abusive violence; in one instance the abusive violence was almost always considered instrumental to achieving mission objectives, in the other the abusive violence was very often used as a means of venting rage. I will also then focus on the account of a single individual whose attitude toward Muslims in general, and Iraqis in particular, fueled everyday beatings and torture, punctuated with the occasional murder. His story arc moves, along with his recognition of the humanness of the Iraqis, to more humane, and even protective, treatment of the populace.

In the instance of this study, I have remained committed to the individual account as the source of insight into the meaning of the abusive violence events experienced by each participant. Each recording was transcribed and read multiple times by me. I utilized a software program, Atlas.ti, with which each transcript was annotated with labels (in Atlas.ti parlance, “codes”). In many cases specific passages were labelled with multiple codes. Some labels were generic so as to allow capture of related passages and meanings within the transcript and for possible later cross-case comparison. Others were of more conceptual significance.

As an example of the initial processing, the following passage was from an interview with Harold Turner¹⁰, who had just described an incident where his superior had violently thrown to the ground an Iraqi civilian at a checkpoint Harold was guarding. Harold had not felt threatened, and in fact had engaged in purchasing goods from the civilian in the days before the incident.

Q: At the time that the team leader intervened, what were you feeling when you saw that happen?

A: Confused, by—like I said immediately my assumption was I [he?] saw something I didn't, because they were, you know, salty and they had experience, so they knew what they were doing. But no, I thought this was horrible and I wanted to like stop it, but it wasn't my place and...

This passage was labeled “AV:Reaction to” and “AVOb: Objectors feel powerless to object.”¹¹ This labeling scheme allowed me to look elsewhere in the individual transcript text for other instances when Harold mentioned his specific reaction to abusive violence and his characterization of helplessness. The software allowed for identifying similar recurrence across the full fifteen-hundred pages of transcripts. This latter ability allowed for the consideration of “objectors feel powerless to object” to abusive violence at the micro-level of an Iraqi guard post in comparison to a desire to object to the macro-level enabling of abusive violence. As an example, Wayne Watson, spoke about the problems associated with objecting in his circumstance as a career intelligence officer:

Well, I think...the—it's important to assess or no—to keep in mind,as all of these things played out, the just about irresistible force of programs once they begin that are formally approved by the entire government and by an institution whose job is to serve and to fulfill the mission and there's relatively little open challenge of the measures that I observed, if any. Because you were part of the team or you weren't and there was a chain of command that you had to—that you were a part of. So that made it very difficult to—it's not a college seminar where there can be endless challenges of any assumption or any practice, and so once the doctrine is developed and the approvals are given and the perceptions are developed, then it's incredibly difficult for an individual to challenge all of that.

¹⁰ All participant names used herein are assigned aliases.

¹¹ Among the hundreds of thematic codes, I used a certain number of abbreviations/categorizations. AV was used as universal shorthand for “Abusive Violence,” while AVOb stood for a large category grouping of “Objecting to Abusive Violence”.

The two passages open the question of what does it mean to these men to believe that “it wasn’t my place,” to object? And what does it mean to have not objected at the time? Is the expression today a re-framing, a self-convincing, that the impetus to abuse was in fact a “just about irresistible force?” The process of interviewing provided rich details of the experiences of the participants. The use of Atlas.ti facilitated the recognition of the events and reflections within and across cases, which offered me the opportunity to consider the more conceptual aspects of what the participants’ accounts contained.

After weeks of reviewing and coding transcripts using the Atlas.ti program, I ended up with 628 codes and 1666 coded quotations. Pretty obviously this resulted in a barely manageable amount of information to sift, if done manually. On a previous research study I had semi-manually sifted transcripts of about the same 1500 page volume by cutting and pasting passages in a word processing program. In that case, I had used only four major descriptors for the initial transcript reviews. With the ability to group codes and primary documents into categorical “families” (e.g. the seventy different codes belonging to “AV Reasons for” or the fourteen “Combat Arms” transcript) it was possible to employ some of the simpler Atlas.ti program tools to group participant quotations into potential thematic clusters.

As an example, seeking to explore the idea that intelligence interrogators were ill-prepared for their duties, and the repercussions that resulted from that lack, I created a research query in Atlas.ti. The query was constructed by selecting from among all of the codes the sixteen codes that seemed to relate to the topic of interest. The resulting query report, (see figure 1) documented the date and time of the query, the codes used for the query, and the document filter used: “Intelligence Operatives.” Forty quotations were returned. All forty were then re-read in the query report. In many cases the originating transcripts were reviewed to get a better understanding of the immediate context from which the quotations were taken.

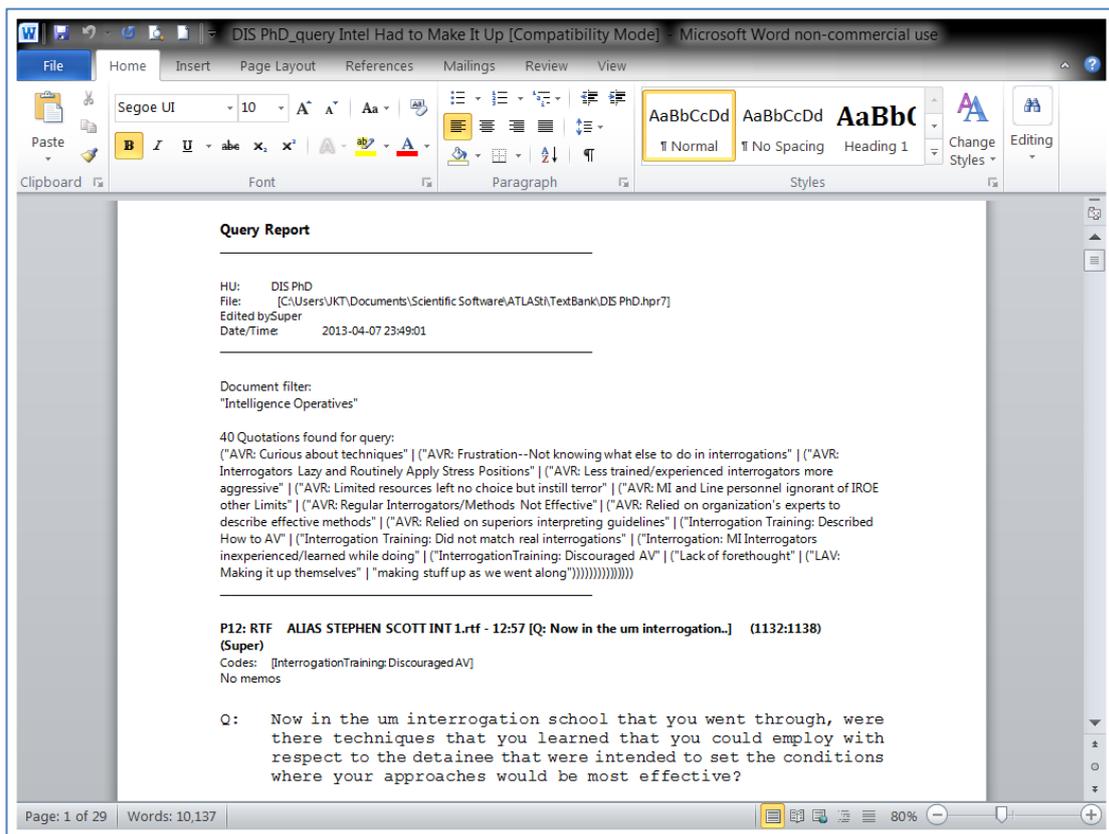


Figure 2. Example of Atlas.ti query report

In order to form the initial data into a more highly processed piece of analysis, I created a research question memo in Atlas.ti (see figure 2). The analysis memo states the specific question being considered, and incorporates the query and filter. Thereafter, the drafting of analysis and incorporation of selected quotations from the returned items in the research query report are placed in the "Answer" section of the memo. The memo then can be set aside for re-drafting as other related quotations come to light during exploration of different themes or as part of the process of returning to the topic with a more developed insight as a result of reflection or new data. In any case, the analysis memo and query report form a basis of documenting the steps taken to reach conclusions which can be an important part of demonstrating the rigor and reliability of the resulting writing incorporated into this thesis.

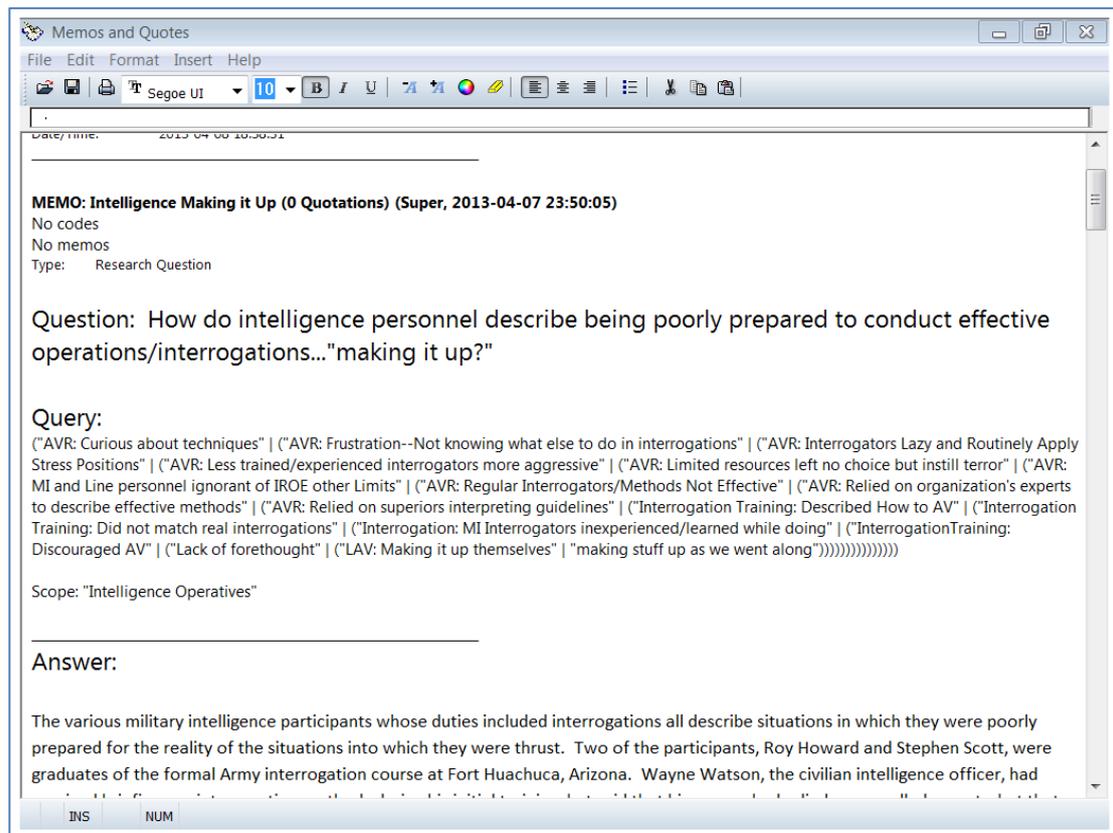


Figure 3. Example of Research Question memo

The process of interviewing provided rich details of the experiences of the participants. The use of Atlas.ti facilitated the recognition of the events and reflections within and across cases, which offered me the opportunity to consider the more conceptual aspects of what the participants' accounts contained. Having considered the processes by which the data was collected and analyzed, I turn now to how the data was gathered for analysis.

Data Collection Method

Research Ethics Considerations

In keeping with requirements related to studying human subjects, I applied for and obtained approval from both the School of International Relations Ethics Committee and the University Teaching and Research Ethics Committee (UTREC) to conduct research interviews of American veterans. As part of the process of obtaining those approvals, I made clear in my application that I would undertake measures to minimize potential harm to participants as a result of aiding the study. Provisions for

participant harm mitigation and confidentiality protections are detailed in Appendix 1. I also prepared a Risk Assessment and Safety Plan related to the field work phase of the study (see Appendix 1).

Recruitment

This study, seeking participants in what is believed to be a relatively rare phenomenon among a very large veteran population distributed across the entire United States, was not considered suitable for recruiting strategies typically undertaken to study university students or participants within small geographic boundaries. However, since the total number of participants for an IPA-based study is much smaller than those required by quantitative research approaches, it was expected that successful recruitment of a small initial cohort of persons might result in additional referral participants of sufficient number to create a credible study. In this case it was decided that twelve participants would be a minimum workable group.

The primary phenomenon of interest in the study was the choice by individuals to participate in abusive violence, some of which violence I anticipated might have included activities such as the types of humiliation and assaults which had already resulted in criminal convictions. I did not think that recruiting participants to a study called "Understanding Torturers and What Makes Them Do It," would be very successful. The more neutral-sounding "Detainee Interaction Study" became the name put forth during recruitment. Recruiting materials were designed to assure participants that their experiences would not be judged negatively, regardless of what those experiences included. The study materials invited participants to share their experiences whether they were simply bystanders or participants in abusive violence directed toward detainees.

I recruited participants in several ways. One of the methods resulted in the recruitment of a single participant who, along with his "snowball"¹² referrals, made up nine of the fourteen total participants interviewed. In keeping with my obligation to keep participant identities confidential I will document the various ways in which I tried to recruit participants but I will not list which methods ultimately led to interviews.

I attempted to make my study known through direct appeal recruitment via local veterans groups in North Carolina, where I was briefly based. Numerous military bases exist in that state and the adjacent states of Virginia and South Carolina and I intended to travel extensively in the region speaking to small veterans organizations meetings. For reasons unrelated to the study or recruiting feasibility in that area, I

¹² Snowballing refers to research participant recruitment using early participants to recommend others to the study, and subsequent participants to do the same.

halted that particular initiative. I relocated to Hawaii and undertook a similar strategy there. This proved entirely unproductive in that location, so I amended my recruitment plan.

I then attempted contact with people who had been associated publicly with detainee interrogations or were directly implicated in abusive violence. Among those were persons who had been mentioned in press reports or who had spoken out about their experiences through interviews or writings. I sought contact through journalists, publishers, and co-authors. In the case of persons who had been accused in court actions as perpetrators of abusive violence, I attempted contact through lawyers, a prisoner advocacy organization, and their family members. In a few cases I sent letters directly to the homes of individuals known to have been involved in detainee interrogations. I did not attempt to recruit any defendants in the Abu Ghraib courts martial, primarily because I felt that this group already had been intensely studied and that any of the defendants would have given their accounts so many times in the past as to create the high likelihood that semi-structured interviews would result in the receipt of well-sculpted and rehearsed renditions closely adhering to earlier testimony.

I contacted the national leadership of a number of organizations made up of former members of the US armed forces and intelligence agencies seeking assistance with a call-for-participants effort. I also sought participants via colleges and universities, in some cases through contact with various academic departments and in others through on-campus veterans' organizations. In total, inquiries were sent to more than 400 individuals and entities.

To support my inquiries, I established an internet presence for the study. A web-page was posted on the St Andrews School of International Studies site (Appendix 2), as was a biography page on me to allow interested persons to take in information about me and the study that would assure them of both my bona fides and earnest commitment to the research and their well-being. I also established a website at <http://unspokentruths.org> (Appendix 3) that provided information about the study and linked to the two pages on the School web-site. Finally, I established a personal Facebook site that I maintained solely for the purpose of presenting a communication and familiarization link for potential participants.

Initial conversations with potential participants included discussions relating to the study aims, procedures, and ethical safeguards. I also tried to pre-qualify participants by asking some general questions about their experience-level with detainees and observing abusive violence. I made clear to each potential participant that agreeing to meet me did not obligate them in any way to proceeding with the

actual interviews. If initial contact was received by email, I sent reply emails with links to the webpages I had established as well as an attachment copy of the Participant Information Sheet developed for the study (Appendix 4). In most cases, the potential participants had received enough information in my initial solicitation or from referral sources to create interest and tentative willingness to participate. I answered any questions that they had regarding my interest in the topic, commitment to confidentiality, probable time commitments, and how their information would be used. I urged them to review the provided information, reflect on our conversation, think of any additional questions they might have, and then to contact me if they wished to proceed. All agreed to do so, but most indicated a willingness to cooperate in the first conversation. I still insisted that they contemplate the matter at least overnight before I would accept their commitment as fully considered.

I only discussed the logistics of meeting after the potential participant made a clear statement of willingness to participate in the study. I then offered to travel to the participants' towns for the interviews, or to meet at some other location of their choosing, with their travel costs covered by me. I also offered to cover the costs of the participant travel to my locale. Participants were also told that if they did not wish to meet in person that a distance interview could be arranged via telephone or video-conferencing.

While working with the second participant, it became evident that the participants would probably benefit from the assistance of spouses or other supporters between the two interviews and immediately after the second interview. Also in the case of the second interviewee, allowing the participant's significant other to meet me appeared to satisfy certain hesitations that she had about the participant's well-being during the interviews. As a result, I concluded that the participants who did not remain at home for the interviews should have the immediate support of a friend or significant other during the time after each interview and during travel home. I wanted to avoid placing participants in situations wherein they, after having spent a first interview remembering and disclosing events that were deeply troubling to them, faced an afternoon and evening in a hotel room alone, without having anyone nearby who knew their mood and with whom they could share their feelings. I hoped that the resort atmosphere in Honolulu would provide sufficient diversion to allow the participants and their supporters to disengage from thinking solely about negative war experiences.

Investigation of travel package expenses showed that it would be feasible to have the participant and a supporter-companion travel to my location for the same or lesser cost of my traveling to most locations elsewhere in the US. After the interviews with the second study participant, each subsequent participant was offered the option

of having a supporter accompany them to the meeting city. Again, this offer was not made until potential participants had already made a strong statement of willingness to be interviewed.

Recruitment efforts resulted in the interview of five individuals attracted by the recruitment campaign. The remaining nine participant interviews were the result of referrals stemming from the first five. The first interview took place during early Spring 2011 and the final interview occurred in the Fall of 2012. All but one interview was done face to face, the exception being via telephone. Of the fourteen interview participants, eleven travelled to Hawaii to be interviewed. Of those eleven, two travelled alone.

I made clear to participants that by covering the expense of the travel, lodging, and food for themselves and a supporter, I was not bargaining for their participation in the study. Some participants expressed doubt that this should be true given the amount of funds being provided. I explained, truthfully, that I would be no worse off if they met me and decided to not proceed with interview regardless of whether this occurred on their doorstep or in Honolulu. Actually, there were a number of reasons why the latter was preferable to me. In the first case I would have had to devote the effort of at least two days' travel before and after the rejection. I would also have had to undergo the effort and expense of arranging suitable interview venues that provided requisite privacy, but not be so secluded as to create a sense of insecurity in the participant or an actual security issue for myself as a lone researcher.

In order to safeguard participant anonymity, participants were responsible for making their own arrangements for flights and hotels within a pre-determined budget limit. I reimbursed or pre-funded the travel expenses in cash so that there would be no financial records connecting participants to the study.

Researcher-Participant Interactions

Building Rapport. As an experienced interviewer on sensitive subjects¹³, I understood that establishing strong rapport would be a key factor in allowing participants to feel safe enough to describe their exposure to abusive violence and to divulge their own indirect and direct complicity in some of that violence. I also believed that allowing participant supporters the opportunity to question me about my motives for the research, commitment to participant well-being, and my study's aims and methods, would increase their confidence in the process on which the

¹³ From 1982 to 2006 I had spent a career as a specialist fraud and threat management investigator. I received extensive training in interview and interrogation methods used in law enforcement and private investigations. My professional experience included many hundreds of witness interviews and approximately 200 suspect interrogations, the majority of the latter resulting in voluntary confessions.

participants were to embark. I therefore discussed with participants who travelled to meet with me the advantages to spending some informal time together before the actual interviews.

I eventually developed a number of ways to enhance rapport and trust with participants and their supporters. A detailed description of those methods is found in Appendix 5.

I believe that the efforts to put participants at ease and to ensure that they were supported and diverted were effective. The amount of time spent with the participants who met in person ranged from four to more than ten hours. During the interviews a number of the participants told me that they had been able to discuss some events that they had never disclosed to others before, including loved ones and therapists. One participant noted that the interview sessions were far more intense than he had anticipated, even more so than with his psychiatrist since the fifty minute counseling hour tended to cut off discussion too early. Several participants said that the interviews prompted recollections of events that they had not thought about in years. When I expressed concern that the memories had been unpleasant and best forgotten, all of the participants told me that they did not feel worse for having recalled them and were happy that they might contribute to the understanding of the study phenomena. Some of the participants expressed appreciation for being removed from their normal home environments while undergoing interview since they were not pressured by the regular household-family requirements and could relax with their spouses for a few days, making the overall experience a positive one.

Interview Settings and Procedures. The Honolulu interviews took place in the large office suite of an international corporation that had agreed to host the study interviews. Two venues were used. The most frequently used space was a conference room that accommodated ten; the other was a small private office within an inner suite. A stereo digital audio recorder sat on a small tripod between us. After several interviews had been completed without technical issue, a single failure occurred during which less than thirty minutes of interview went unrecorded. From that point forward a backup digital recorder was also used. Prior to the start of each first interview I explained to the participant that I would announce when the recorders would be turned on and showed them the lights on the recorders that indicated that they were recording. I also informed each participant that they could request the recorders to be turned off if they wanted to discuss any matters off-line. This was taken advantage of on a couple of occasions when participants wanted to talk about how best to frame their comments to preserve their own or others' anonymity.

I generally tried to provide for once-hourly comfort breaks but also encouraged participants to say when they might want to take pauses. Participants did so on several occasions. If the interview was covering a particularly interesting or intense account by the participant, I would allow the narrative to continue beyond the regular break interval. In some cases participants declined offers of breaks at the hourly point.

After each participant's final interview, I asked most participants to consider referring individuals to the study who might have study-relevant experiences. I told participants that it was my practice not to acknowledge the names of any participants, even if they had made disclosure to third parties themselves. I asked participants to make contact with potential new participants and ask that they contact me if interested in the study and its objectives. In order to preserve participant identities, each referring participant was assigned a code word or phrase that was memorable, and to have the referral mention the code during the initial contact. In this way I was able to receive contacts from anonymous persons who claimed to have been referred, but I would not have to acknowledge the name of the referring individual as a participant. This process worked well, although none of the eventual participants opted to remain anonymous to me.

Pre-Interview and Interview Schedule. The pre-interview was structured to allow for participants to enter the subject of Abusive Violence as easily as possible. Since form filling is a familiar activity, I decided to use this method to set ground rules and expectations for the interviews proper, to collect information, introduce definitions, and to start participants thinking in specific terms about the abusive violence they saw, without their being burdened at that time with the dynamics of conversation that could distract from their own thoughts and prompted memories. The participants were given a sheet of instructions and questionnaire (Appendix 6). The instructions were designed to emphasize the anonymous nature of the study (items 1,2,5,6,8), to remind that an audio recorder would be used (item 7), and underscore the ability to decline to provide information requested by the questionnaire, seek clarification for any questions asked, and to ask for a break at any time (Items 3, 4, 9, respectively).

Item 10 on the instruction sheet introduced a tool suggested by information from a psychologist to assist in helping participants access their reactions to the interview conversation. The Personal Calm Score was devised as a ten point scale the participants used to describe their level of calm or uneasiness:

Table 2. Personal Calm Score Ranges

Score	Descriptor Label
1	Entirely Calm
2-4	Mostly Calm
5-6	Neutral
7-9	Mostly Uneasy
10	Entirely Uneasy

It was hoped that the participants would be prompted to pay attention to their own reactions to the interview and would be open to my asking them about their feelings through the short-hand of the number scale. Participants were normally asked to rate their level at the start and end of the recorded interview sessions and on occasion during conversation when they seemed to be uneasy. During the pre-interview contact with participants I often discussed that I wanted to ensure their well-being during the interviews, but that it was a shared responsibility since only they could know whether they were okay. I also urged participants to let me know if there were points where they did not want to continue discussing particularly problematic topics.

An untitled second sheet was given to the participants as a means of approaching the topics I anticipated would be more difficult for them. The form (Appendix 7) began with the definition of Abusive Violence adopted by the study. The initial question allowed participants to first disclose that they had been present during abusive violence, asking them to indicate the number of times it had been observed by selecting from among “Zero,” “One,” “Two,” “Three to Five,” and “More than Five.” They were then asked to categorize their observations of Abusive Violence by selecting from among a list of abusive practices, placed generally in an order from the mild to most atrocious. This was hoped to remind participants of behaviors that they observed and to introduce to them some methods that they might not have previously considered to fall within Abusive Violence. It was also expected that by first disclosing what participants observed, a de facto disclosure of proximity to Abusive Violence, they would be more open to describing their own conduct. The next section, as with the first, asked participants to indicate on the same frequency scale their own involvement in Abusive Violence. After doing so they were asked to

re-mark the list of methods to indicate those techniques they had personally used. They were also provided space to record methods not appearing on the list.

The two forms filled out by the participants provided me with some quick demographic information and self-disclosures obtained from participants through the comparatively safe method of circling and underlining entries from a pre-composed list. Having those self-disclosures allowed me to initiate the discussion of participant's personal experiences with abusive violence in the actual interviews by referring to information that the participants had already given. This allowed me to bring some structure to the questioning regarding specific methods, and still allowed the narratives to be guided first by the participants own revelations. The interviews thereby benefitted from time-saving in exploring the entire universe of possible Abusive Violence methods and allowed sufficient time to be spent on each individual's experiences and sense-making.

An interview schedule was prepared (Appendix 8) to provide a semi-structured format which allowed for the main topics of the study to be addressed while leaving sufficient flexibility to allow each participant to be the primary guide to the events they experienced and the thoughts those experiences engendered. The order of the questions was tailored generally along chronological lines. The preliminary question ("can you tell me a little about where you're from?") seemed like a basic topic participants would use as an every-day starting point in introducing themselves and it naturally allowed for follow up questions about immediate family, education, personal interests and influences. The individual was then asked to continue his "personal story" by describing the decision to enlist, the crucial entry to the circumstances that would eventually place them in proximity to Abusive Violence. Again, this allowed for the follow-up questions about their naive expectations for military or intelligence agency service, training and pre-deployment service experiences, and expectations regarding interaction with detainees. The discussion also allowed for participants to describe the motivations for joining and some of the underlying attitudes they had about Muslims, Arabs and Iraqis prior to deployment. These initial thoughts, motives, and expectations in most cases were profoundly altered by the experiences of actual CT and COIN operations.

The interview narratives then moved to operational deployments and first impressions of the arrival in-country, most often in Iraq. Participants were asked to describe their initial duties in general and their first encounters with the local populace and detainees.

Participants were then referred to the observations of Abusive Violence they had disclosed in the pre-interview form and asked to describe their first such

experience. Participants were prompted to give an initial account of the event. In order to enhance details, participants were often asked to recall and describe the events in terms of what they heard, saw, and felt at the time of the experience. They were then asked to describe one or two similar events that may have occurred, again with as much detail as possible. They were also asked to describe the immediate aftermath of each event and what they had thought about it at the time.

Participants were asked to provide similar levels of detail regarding their own abusive violence and their related decision-making. This provided some of the richest materials in the study. Similarly rich details were received from participants as their stories continued with post-deployment and post-service narratives. The interviews included participants sharing their present views of their conduct and generally concluded with an open-ended request that participants add whatever they thought important to say about Abusive Violence.

Possible Issues Relating to Participant Travel and Pre-qualifying Participant History

During the planning and execution of the data collection phase of the study, I was cognizant of issues of possible coercion and related matters that the bringing of participants to Honolulu might raise. It was possible that potentially vulnerable persons being brought out of their safe environments might feel dependent on me to the extent that they could not freely exercise their right to withdraw consent from the interview. It was also possible that participants might view their participation as a quid pro quo to the receipt of travel expenses to a desirable vacation location. It might be even further possible that participants would shape their narratives to exaggerate the kinds of accounts they thought I wanted to collect. These possibilities were discussed during planning the study with my supervisor and I believe without question that each participant was a fully informed and free participant in the study.

The Honolulu participants' potential vulnerability to dependence on me was reduced by the presence, with only two exceptions, of their supporters. The supporters, either close friends or partners, offered the participants access to a third point of view if they wanted to discuss misgivings about continuing. Furthermore, the expense money was always provided to the participant before the first interview day so that there could not be any question that their funds would be withheld if they did not consent to interview. In most cases the funds were sent to the participants before they booked their travel since many did not have the ability to pre-pay the travel. This also tended to address possible concerns that participants might not receive reimbursement upon arrival in Honolulu.

As described above, I undertook multiple efforts to inform and remind participants that they could withdraw consent at any time before and during the

interviews. I also took pains to point out that while they might feel that the trip to Honolulu was of benefit to them, that through their willingness to come to me I was receiving a definite benefit by being able to avoid two trans-Pacific flights, possibly followed by two trans-continental flights. I reminded them that their withdrawal upon initially meeting me would put me no worse off than if they changed their mind if I had travelled to meet with them. In these ways I tried to reduce any sense of obligation to proceed. Their consent appeared genuine, and at the start of each first recorded session I reiterated the option to halt and obtained their verbal consent to begin.

With respect to participants possibly shaping accounts to meet perceived researcher expectations I can provide the following perspectives. While it would be inaccurate to state that participants were completely unaware of my interest in studying the phenomenon of abusive violence from the standpoint of perpetrators, much of my pre-interview interaction with participants and their supporters was spent making clear that the study would benefit from the accounts of those who were simply present during abusive violence or who actively objected to such goings on. I was also very explicit in telling each participant and supporter that the study was intended to understand the experiences of each individual and that their accounts were not expected to match anyone else's story. In some cases the amount and character of personal exposure to abusive violence related by participants was relatively mild compared to other collected accounts, and some of those participants apologized for their self-perceived lack of valuable egregious anecdotes. This indicates that those participants both acknowledged my interest in understanding the worst-case abuse situations, but were not compelled to embellish. I was also allowed in those interviews that were not crowded with stories of routine abusive violence, to explore issues that proved to be quite valuable to the study. An example is the role of harsh military hazing in one unit. This was mentioned by a participant with little direct experience with abusive violence, yet it offered a guide to a topic I was able to bring up with later participants. Some more serious abusers had not previously thought about how hazing seemed to make invisible the abuse of detainees subjected to treatment that outwardly mimicked their own military training experiences.

In initial emails and conversations with potential participants I did try to pre-qualify their experiences to ensure that they did include observations of or participation in abusive violence. In at least one situation my understanding was imperfect, as subsequent interview tended to show. This interview was useful not simply because of the introduction of topics which had not been obviously important at the start of the study, such as hazing, but also because the participant was able to refer other individuals whose direct abusive history was more significant. Those

follow-on participants ended up being the pathways to third and fourth level referrals that eventually represented the majority of recruited participants.

The planning for recruitment, researcher safety, and rapport-building, followed by the actual recruitment and subsequent interviews spanned more than two years. This resulted in fourteen two-session interviews. The elapsed interview durations ranged from three hours to more than five hours, with an average time of four hours and twenty-five minutes per participant. The sixty-one plus hours of recordings resulted in the preparation of nearly sixteen-hundred pages of interview transcripts, which represented the mass to be passed through the refining screen of Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis.

The Participants

Information was collected from the participants regarding their age and education level at the time of enlistment. They also provided information relating to their age, rank, and general duties at the time of detainee interaction, as well as their total time in government service. For all but one participant, Iraq was the country where detainee interactions took place. Some of this information is summarized in the tables below. The participants were prompted during the interviews to describe why they enlisted. The information provided in this chapter is intended to provide the final backdrop information to allow the deeper entry into the lived experiences of the participants as individuals in the next chapters.

Eight of the participants entered government service between the ages of seventeen and nineteen. Two were aged 22-23 years, two were aged 24-25 years, and one was aged 26-27 years at enlistment. At the time of interaction with detainees, eight of the participants had only high-school educations, two had college degrees (one of whom had a master's degree), and four had some college, but no degree. Several of the participants have continued their education since leaving military service.

With the exception of the civilian intelligence officer, the participants were mostly lower-ranking enlisted personnel at the time of the deployments that put them in contact with detainees and the Iraqi populace. The military ranks ranged from E-1, private, to E-6, a staff Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO). The number of reported ranks reflect individual participants whose multiple deployments spanned their rise in the ranks. The majority of reported ranks are E-4 or higher, which represent the

positions occupied by soldiers¹⁴ who have supervisory duties over others, usually at the lower organizational levels such as within a single vehicle or squad.

Table 3. Ranks during Interactions

Rank at time of interactions	No.
E-1	1
E-2	1
E-3	1
E-4	8
E-5	3
E-6	1

The participants also responded to questionnaire inquiry regarding their detainee-related duties. Their answers regarding the pre-defined categories are compiled in the following table.

Table 4. Detainee-related Tasks

Detainee-related tasks	No.
capture	9
transport from point of capture	10
guard in field	7
question in field	9
guard in holding facility	6
question in holding facility	6
in-process at holding facility	8
provide medical services	3
language translation	6
out-process from holding facility	3

¹⁴ Throughout this work I use the term “soldier” to mean all uniformed members of the US armed forces. I do so in order to further preserve the confidentiality and anonymity of all participants. This would otherwise potentially offend participants who have earned the right to be called by more exalted or elite titles such as Marine, Paratrooper, Ranger, Recon Marine, HUMINTer, etc.; however, the participants certainly understand that this is not my intent.

The variety of tasks reflect the diversity of general position types held by the participants. Some were assigned to units such as infantry, mechanized infantry, special operations, paratroopers, and rangers. Their units would have been engaged in direct combat, raids, patrolling, checkpoints, and guard duty where the interactions with detainees and the general population would have afforded exposure to abusive violence. Others were involved in intelligence gathering, including interrogation of detainees in the field and at holding facilities of varying permanence, which afforded other kinds of situations with potential for abusive violence. Again, the total number of responses reflects the the multiple duties carried out by the participants at different times and places.

The age at which participants had direct interactions with detainees was also reported. Most of the participants were younger than twenty-five at the time of their first detainee interactions.

Table 5. Age during Interactions

Age during detainee Interaction	No.
18-19	4
20-21	6
22-23	2
24-25	1
26-27	3
28-29	2
30-31	1
32-33	0
34-35	1
36-37	0
38-39	0
40+	1

The seeming excess number of reported ages is a function of participants whose individual deployments may have occurred during a time period in which the participants' ages fell into two of the pre-defined age ranges on the questionnaires. For example, a single soldier may have been in Iraq on a single deployment during which he turned twenty; he would have reported interactions in both the 18-19 and 20-21 age brackets.

Why Participants Joined Up

The participants were asked to describe why they enlisted in government service. This was used as a means of opening them up to discussing the overall context which resulted in their deployments and exposure to abusive violence, and was expected to be an easy subject with which to start them talking. Their replies ranged from a need to earn money, to a desire to do something other than simply continue with more education after high-school graduation, to a yearning for adventure, and a desire to be of service. Charles Wilson described a combination of motives for enlisting:

Um...ah, so yeah, and I was just not wanting to do anymore school at that point, so the [military] was kind of the complete opposite of that and I suppose being a Boy Scout, I was an Eagle Scout, and so there was that—I remember telling my dad that I felt like I needed to give something back to the United States for what it had provided for me. I guess that was one of the bigger things was the like kind of “called to service” attitude, I had at the time.

Some viewed military service as a means of personal growth. Aaron Bennet saw the possibilities:

It was, you know, so—a lot of it was, you know, so a lot of it was, mostly it was economic incentive, but some of it too was, you know, these feelings of, you know, help me mature and become more of, more of a man, so to speak. I mean, and I really wanted to get out of where I was from. So it was the quickest, easiest way to get out.

Other participants had been fascinated by the subject of war as youngsters, and definitely saw military service, and especially combat, as a highly-desired pinnacle experience. Frank Wright described his motivations:

You join the military and a lot of it had to do with the fact that I read a lot of books as a child, and I was really into war books and history books, and ah...I’ve always considered war to be the ultimate human experience, you know, good, bad or otherwise. I had a saying, ‘There’s only like three things in life that are all they’re cracked up to be. It’s women, drugs and war.’

The September 11, 2001 attacks figured large for some participants. For Richard Miller there was a direct connection:

I joined the military because of September 11. I thought that it was my job, my...my duty to serve, uh once we were attacked, that I could no longer enjoy

the freedoms that were offered in this country without fighting for them or myself.

Louis Sanders' reaction was simple and direct:

Q: When September 11 happened, how did you feel?

A: I felt that my country was attacked and I needed to go eliminate the threat.

Stephen Scott, who had previously done a stint in the military, receiving a discharge shortly after 9/11, described his feeling of having unfinished business that prompted his re-enlistment:

When I got out, okay 9/11 had happened and I was kind of always on the fence about whether I should get out or not, because the country was going to war, of—I asked my family what I should do. Of course, they all said, “Get out, you did your time...’ whatever. “It’s somebody else’s problem now...” and ... you know, I thought, ‘Yeah, I’ll just get out...’ but I always kind of felt like I ran when the country needed me, so when they decided to go into Iraq, that was it, I was like, ‘Okay, my country’s at war, you know, with two countries now... like it needs me, I need to go back in.’

Antonio Hayes joined before leaving high-school with a sense of patriotism, fascination with war, and a general idealism. When asked why he joined up he replied:

Um, I was one of those “true believers.” Um, I, you know, had thought about joining the military since I was a young kid. Um, you know, I liked GI Joe, I liked war movies and books and things like that, um and I think as a consequence of that of being interested in those things, I, you know, developed a really strong sense of patriotism, and so, you know, when I got a little older and when I was in high school, um I felt that, you know, I saw my peers just aspiring to just go to college and party and um do whatever, but I felt that I really wanted to be a part of something bigger than myself. I wanted to, you know, commit myself, donate my life um to serving some greater cause, ah and at—at that time, I believed very strongly that the most noble cause was serving in the U. S. military. I believed, you know, that as a soldier, my job would be to ah free the oppressed, to help people who were in need, bring people a better life, ah you know, bring freedom and democracy to people who didn’t have it, um and so like it was a very idealistic decision um which is why I joined as soon as I could.

The participants, from a wide variety of backgrounds, and with many different motives for enlisting, all found themselves in situations where abusive violence was a frequent possibility. Many of them saw and did things which they never imagined when they joined up.

A Tally of Abusive Violence

The participants reported first-hand experience with much abusive violence. In this section I report a summary of the abusive violence they described. While it is a summary of facts, it does not provide insight into what these events meant to the participants at the time, why they happened, or what meaning those atrocious actions have for them now. Those understandings will be revealed in the next chapters as the approaches of IPA are used to tease out the important nuances of meaning.

Prior to the start of the interviews, participants were asked to mark questionnaires to indicate the number of times they had personally observed or participated in any of thirty-five pre-defined types of abuse. Among the fourteen participants, all reported observing abusive violence, while nine reported committing such violence.

Table 6. Frequency of Abuse

Number of times	Abuse Observed	Abuse Committed
Zero	0	5
One	2	2
Two	0	0
Three to Five	3	1
More than five	9	6

Abuse Types

The types of abuse reported varied widely. The participant questionnaires listed some thirty-five kinds of abuse and allowed for participants to describe other types of abuse. Of the pre-listed abuse categories, all were observed by one or more participants. The participants' responses regarding their own conduct conflicted with their interview contents with respect to finger-twisting; while not marked on any questionnaires, more than one participant did report during interview that they used fingertwisting to unnecessarily cause pain. Participants did not report personally abusing persons through the use of knee-strikes, forced sexual contact, whipping, or squeezing the body with bindings or heavy objects. The following table includes the number of participants reporting having observed or participating in the respective kinds of abuse. The types are listed below in the same order as presented to the participants.

Table 7. Participants Observing, Committing Abuse

Listed Type of Abuse	Observed	Committed
Threat Detainee-verbal only	11	8
Threat Others-verbal only	9	4
Use Weapon to threaten detainee	11	4
Use Weapon to threaten others	5	2
Slapping	10	4
Punching	9	4
Elbow Strikes	2	2
Kicking	7	2
Knee Strikes	1	0
Stomping	4	2
Choking	3	1
Strike w/ Weapon	5	4
Strike w/ object	4	2
Finger-twisting	6	0
Arm/wrist twisting	6	1
Burning	2	1
Stabbing/Cutting	3	2
Whipping	1	0
Electric Shock	2	1
Pinching/squeezing w/ tool	2	1
Poking/probing/pressing existing injury	3	2
Withholding Medical Care/Medicine	7	5
Withholding Food	8	3
Forced Exercise	5	3
Withholding Water	8	3
Forced Sexual Contact	1	0
Forced Kneeling/Standing	5	5
Binding/Shackling in painful positions	7	4
Hanging from wrists/arms/legs	1	1
Covering mouth/nose to prevent breathing	2	2
Squeezing body with bindings or heavy objects	1	0
Pouring liquid over/into mouth and nose	1	1
Prolonged exposure: cold or heat	8	5
Prolonged exposure: loud noise	5	4
Shooting	3	2
Killing	3	2

The worst forms of abuse included reports of study participants observing or being responsible for the mutilation of detainees with knives, the killing of detainees during simulated drowning, the killing of battlefield captures in lieu of transport to detainee collection points, the use of detainees as human shields during withdrawal under fire, the killing of human shields once extraction vehicles were full, stomping a prisoner to death after an ambush killed a comrade, and two killings of family members of persons during field interrogation (in one case a detainee's younger brother, in the other a detainee's pre-adolescent son). Interrogation techniques included cutting, finger-lobbing, beating, electrocution, threats leveled against household members present, and threats to find absent family members and subject them to torture, pointing loaded weapons at detainees, and explicit promises to kill the detainee. One unit routinely allowed an Iraqi national who was a contract translator to threaten to torture and sodomize detainees in order to obtain information. In one case, a participant recounted a situation where an insurgent was caught red-handed attempting to emplace an IED. The participant's squad debated the relative merits of killing the detainee on the spot or taking him back to a detention center where he would likely be tortured. In the end the squad members decided to shoot the detainee and if necessary claim he had shot at them.

The most egregious abuse was committed by combat arms service members including soldiers and marines in infantry, airborne, mounted and special operations units. The participants who were in actual military or civilian intelligence positions did not report directly observing or participating in beating, cutting, shooting, electrocution, or killing.

To this point I have described the methods employed in this study, the theoretical underpinnings and goals of the IPA approach, the limits on generalizing from this kind of study, and the software tool used to facilitate the data analysis. I have also provided some background information regarding the study participants and the kinds of abusive violence they observed and perpetrated. Although I have introduced some of their voices while describing the variety of motives they had for enlisting, I have not thus far provided much information about the meaning of the experiences to the participants themselves.

This research, committed to the principles of IPA, presents my interpretation of the sense-making of these fourteen participants. The evidence underpinning my analysis is constituted by the words they spoke. For that reason alone Smith, Flowers and Larkin recommend that "a large proportion [of an IPA write-up] is constituted by transcripts extracts (2009, 109)." That is not the only, or even the best, reason why the following pages are full of many quoted passages from interviews. The raw words from the participants provide the experienced-reality of events significant to them in a more immediate, manifestly authentic, and idiographic way than my paraphrasing.

The reader can evaluate my analysis and more fully enter the experiences we seek to understand through the testimony the participants themselves offer.

It should be made clear that the IPA is a research method and is not a psychological therapeutic approach. As such, in the interviews conducted with participants, there was no goal of providing any kind of therapy or treatment to the participants. This is especially so since I am not a qualified therapist and IPA is aimed at research, not healing. Indeed, psychology is not its only area of application. As Smith, Flowers and Larkin state at the very beginning of the first book-length treatment of IPA, “[it] is a recently developed and rapidly growing approach to qualitative inquiry. It originated and is best known in psychology but is increasingly being picked up by those working in cognate disciplines in the human, social and health sciences (2010).” A recent internet search for evidence of such method dispersion found masters and doctoral theses and dissertations reporting IPA as the primary method of research into such diverse subjects as education (Devries 2013), organization development (Fursman 2012), and the experiences of users of therapeutic footwear (Williams 2008).

In the next chapter I will present the information related by those participants whose duties were primarily centered on intelligence gathering. Following that, I will relate information from those who carried out the direct combat missions, patrolling, conducting raids, and transporting detainees. In the two further chapters I will consider the experiences and meanings of three participants whose involvement in abusive violence was personal, egregious, and to varying degrees, scarring to their victims and themselves. In this way I intend to move closer to the individual lived experience of this group of Americans whose motives for enlisting ranged from lofty ideals of service to revenge.

Chapter 3: The Intelligence Professionals

The interview of intelligence personnel who were confronted with the opportunity to commit abusive violence revealed several superordinate themes that describe the sense of their experiences. Those experiences included specific events of abusive violence and the larger context in which the experiences are situated by the participants. The themes are:

1. *We Just Came Up With That.* The participants who actually conducted interrogations describe the training they received. Two participants attended the full Army interrogation course at the Military Intelligence School at Fort Huachuca, Arizona. One other soldier, tasked to head an interrogation team, was not “schoolhouse” trained, but received some informal training from his unit. A fourth soldier was plucked from other intelligence duties to assist his unit’s professional intelligence officers in preparing detainees for interrogation by terrorizing them. The only civilian intelligence operative, the one with the most experience in intelligence field operations, had no formal training beyond the interrogation and torture resistance techniques he had learned decades earlier. All of them related that they were ill-prepared for the reality of interrogating. They were forced to experiment, improvise, and generally fail because of an over-reliance on power and force rather than rapport.
2. *The Interrogation Assembly Line.* The military interrogators lived in a world of detentions resulting from mass arrests, and sometimes from corrupt practices. In that world, trying to extract information of intelligence value became a mind-numbing exercise of interrogation that one participant equated to speed-dating. Eventually, for those who employed it, abusive violence became part of the routine, regardless of whether it aided intelligence gathering. The absurdity of interrogating what seemed like every military-aged male became apparent to the interrogators and one participant began modifying his approach during interrogations, or avoiding them altogether.
3. *A Tempting Mix: The Cool Factor plus Frustration, Power, Isolation and the Helpless Deserving Enemy.* The interrogators who turned to abuse described frustration, anger, and revenge as motivations for using enhanced interrogation. Fascination with the privileged access to the uncommon human experiences found in the interrogation rooms was also an admitted factor: doing interrogations and testing moral limits was alluring.

4. *Bursting the Moral Bubble*. Those interrogators who abused detainees described the process of thinking that eventually robbed the abuse of its attraction. Their judgment of their own actions, and considering their actions from the points of view of the people back home in America, and indeed even the people they were abusing, bled their enthusiasm for the abuse.
5. *Mottled Reflections*. Chagrin, denial, shame, and acceptance of responsibility characterized both of the abusive interrogators' reflections about their experiences. For those intelligence personnel who did not abuse, there is no sense of unadulterated satisfaction; there lingers the question of what they might have done better.

We Just Came Up With That

The various military intelligence participants whose duties included interrogations all describe being poorly prepared for the reality of the situations into which they were thrust. Two of the participants, Roy Howard and Stephen Scott, were graduates of the formal Army interrogation course at Fort Huachuca, Arizona. Wayne Watson, the civilian intelligence officer, had received briefings on interrogation methods during his initial agent training, but said that while his agency had relied on so-called experts, the training did not appear to be reliable. Antonio Hayes was a young intelligence specialist whose training was entirely divorced from questioning people. Anthony Rodriguez was a supervisory level soldier leading an interrogation team by virtue of possessing the rank required by the billet. He had never been trained to interrogate before receiving his assignment.

Although one would expect a wide variation in the levels of skill, expertise, and accomplishment from these five participants, there is a surprising similarity in some of their accounts. Their common experiences included a struggle to find methods that would actually work. Most of them also found that while their respective organizations acknowledged limits to what could legally be done, some of what they were taught was to exceed the legal limits. Once actually in the field, some received guidance, directives, and policies that were confusing and contradictory. Ultimately, each described situations in which a lack of training grounded in the reality of their circumstances left them mainly to their own devices to imagine and then try things that might work. In short, they made it up as they went along. Sam Bailey was an intelligence specialist who provided intelligence assessment briefings to a non-intelligence battalion. She did no interrogations.

Interrogation Training and Abusive Violence

Roy Howard and Stephen Scott received their interrogation training during different eras. Roy was trained before 9/11 when there was little expectation that he

would ever conduct live interrogations. Stephen was trained after the Abu Ghraib scandal had made headlines and thousands of detainees were already being held in Iraq. For Roy, the described limits on what he could do were mandated by the Geneva Conventions. For Stephen, Geneva was certainly part of the training, but for him, the main deterrent was different, and related specifically to Abu Ghraib. Asked about whether the trainees talked about Abu Ghraib while trying to figure out what might work within a real interrogation, he answered:

What we knew from Abu Ghraib was that real soldiers were going to real jail for stuff that they had done out there, and nobody enlists to go to jail, nobody enlists to make their life worse, so I mean...I don't recall having any sort of conversations where we even discussed stuff like that.

He had specific cause to contemplate what abuse might mean when he returned to Iraq:

Q: So as somebody going to interrogation school, um...do you remember the treatment of the subject of the Geneva Conventions and its protocols?

A: It figured, it ahhhh, it figured prominently, well maybe in the middle. We did get a talk on it, because the Geneva Conventions was all about how to handle prisoners of war and detainees, and then we were told that if—if there was like a Geneva Conventions violation and we were the human intelligence collector who was on site, that we would get in trouble before the commander or any of the soldiers, because we were the “subject knowledge experts,” so to speak, and that really played in to when I was deployed the second time.

Although both interrogators received training on the Geneva Conventions, and in Stephen's case that training included specific object lessons on punishment, they each talked about the informal learning about abusive violence they received at the interrogation school. Roy, asked about whether the cautionary lessons were undermined, answered:

Yeah. Um...I think—I think there was a kind of a wink and a nod as they were telling us these things, saying that “when you get out there, you know, it's going to be different...” and in particular, ah I remember one of our instructors telling us about techniques used in Viet Nam where, you know, you—you would be interrogating two people in the helicopter and you push one guy out and...the other guy would then—then talk and this wasn't said as a condemnation, it was said as, you know, kind of— “This is what actually works.”

Roy's training also included anecdotes delivered by instructors about prisoners in Viet Nam being electro-tortured by Americans using hand-cranked field telephones.

Comes Stephen's account from a decade later:

A: One of the instructors told us that you could use one of those, it's a hardwired telephone where you just connect it, it's just connected to another telephone with the wire, you crank it, it makes the other phone ring. [] When you crank it, it um...generates an electric charge and they're saying that if you use the connector, instead of connecting to the wire, you can actually like zap somebody with it. So, um, and they were talking about like you could use that to like zap a prisoner, or that they would do that in the Vietnam War, I guess, to zap a prisoner on the testicles. You know, that's exactly where they said, too, you know, not—not the tongue or anywhere like that, but, you know, on the—on the scrotum, um...he didn't say, instruct us to do that, it was just kind of like, it can be used for that.

Q: Do you remember the context in which that would even come up.

A: Yeah, this was not explained to the class, you know, in front of like females and males, but this particular instructor was—he was former Special Forces, and I guess that was probably something he just learned being a part of a SF group somewhere down the line. Um...but no, we were never instructed to. [] We were in the classroom, [] I guess maybe we were on break or something, [] he was former Special Forces, so he always had stories to tell us. Some of us would kind of be enamored with the stories he would tell.

Both future interrogators received the overt lesson of legal limits on the treatment of interrogation subjects, no doubt as written into the curriculum. The informal lore, a subversive co-message of "what works," was delivered *sotto voce* to students "enamored" by the hard-core warriors at the front of the class. The transmission of an abusive culture submerged beneath the surface of a professional army intelligence corps through its formal institution continued across the span of time in which the Army enjoyed the comparative peace of the late 1990's and the grueling two war marathon of the 2000's. Deployment to the battle zones of the Global War on Terror did little to suppress the abusive undertones.

"Theory" and Practice in the Absence of Expertise

Antonio Hayes was a young soldier whose intelligence specialty was entirely unsuited to the CT and COIN missions in Iraq. He was brought into the interrogation process when the warrant officers in his intelligence unit needed extra hands to keep the pressure on a pair of high-value detainees. Antonio, his section leader, and his

team-mate were assigned to assist in interrogations by keeping the detainees awake and under stress through the night, so that they would be ready to be interrogated in the morning.

Later, as the number of detentions skyrocketed in the area where Antonio's unit was stationed, Antonio, and his team-mates assisted in interrogation sessions. Antonio's training consisting of observing the warrant officers. Having already been used to terrify detainees before they were interrogated, Antonio expanded on the bullying techniques. Antonio describes a confused, chaotic, and menacing environment that he and his un-trained team created in the interrogation room:

A: When we started, I wasn't the one who was doing the bulk of the, [] questioning. I was just the one in the room that was helping be scary. []One of my main jobs was having a metal folding chair and hitting it against the wall as a person was in a stress position with their face against the wall or just standing against the wall like bound, um...my thing was, I just take this chair and slam it against the wall next to their head. Um...

Q: Were you—being cued to do that at specific times or was it just...?

A: It was just random; I mean and that's actually something I came up with myself...um, it was just something that I had developed as a tactic.

Q: What was the reaction that that garnered?

A: Um, like extreme fear, like extreme fear. I mean, you know, these people were usually, whenever I was doing it, they hand sandbags on them, so...it was like extremely jarring; it was extremely loud and it was right next to their ear. Um...so it was like every time, it was like an extremely jarring thing and not knowing if they're going to get, the next time they're actually going to get hit.

Q: And what were you trying to achieve?

A: Um, scaring the people. Ah, like...'cause we—we'd go through the—the shock, like scaring the hell out of 'em and then we'd start asking them questions, but sometimes it would just be to just be confusing. Like one of the things that we would do is ask them—so we'd, so like one of the things would be like in Arabic to say like, "What's your name?" It's like "Shishmuk" or something and I'm pronouncing it wrong and we would pronounce it wrong in the cell, like, you know, they probably didn't understand that we were saying, "What's your name?" but we would just scream this question over and over again. So the guy'd be against the wall, my partner would just scream

“Shishmuk” at this guy and as soon as he’d scream that question, I’d slam the chair against the wall and freak the guy out and then he’d scream the question again and we’d just be asking this question that wasn’t a question to this person, but he knew we were asking him something, he just didn’t know what, and then every time I’d just be smashing this chair, and so it was just like, I mean in a way, if there’s no information to get from this. It was just putting them in a psychological state that was just extremely disoriented and terrified.

Q: Now was that something that you were coached to do?

A: No, we just came up with that. Um, we just knew we’d have a caseload, we just had to see if we could get any information out of these people, and then report whether or not we got any information.

Antonio and his team, with their unschooled and inexperienced reasoning, felt that putting people into a “disoriented and terrified” state would produce useful revelations. He explained what he had been doing:

We were kind of thrown into it with no training and no guidance and so we were just trying to figure out, you know, what would—what would work, and so...and I think some of it too, it’s just out of the frustration of not knowing what we were doing and it wasn’t—in a way it wasn’t even a totally serious thing, you know, like when we were screaming a question over and over again. That was just like a stupid question that had no answer. It was just, I think it kind of spoke to like—the absurdity of what our, like what are we supposed to be doing anyway, like it was like a detail that...I don’t know, we ended up kind of figuring out, just was kind of...like pointless altogether.

Being a “schoolhouse trained” interrogator early in the Iraq war did not guarantee any greater expertise. Roy Howard described the results of bad training meeting the real world:

We were flying blind, to be honest with you. Yeah, we were not very good interrogators. Like we...you know, we didn’t learn these approaches in the schoolhouse. We spent one day on approaches in the schoolhouse. Out of the three months we were there, we spent one day on how to break a prisoner and they were all, I mean it—I’m sure they can be effective techniques, but you can’t learn them in one day, but so...I don’t know, we were just going on what we heard worked, what other people—any ideas, like...we had nothing, you know. Nobody was talking to us and we got, we had no intelligence in Iraq and a lot of that is because a lot of the people that they were bringing us

weren't involved in the insurgency and they didn't have intelligence to tell us, but a large part of it too was that we were just completely inept.

Roy explained the use of coercion during his interrogations, even though he learned that softer approaches were more productive. Roy explained why this was the common approach:

When I was using the, the hard power approach was, because I was inexperienced and...I was being told that this is what's effective. Um...and as I started to get a little bit better, I—I—I kind of was starting to use better methods, and I think that was true for others as well.

Causing pain, invoking terror, creating confusion and disorientation were all methods that study participants who were intelligence interrogators used when they first began to work with detainees in Iraq. They speak of lack of guidance or expertise and the frustration of blindly trying to develop effective approaches for the gathering of intelligence from detainees. In the absence of better advice, they elected to use raw power. None of them reported success with this approach.

The Interrogation Assembly Line

Several of the interrogators describe frustration over the mass arrests that produced large numbers of detainees to be questioned. They refer to the pressure they felt while they were at the front-end of the detention process, when they were responsible for designating who would be detained and moved along the detention assembly line to higher levels of detention. They also describe the absurdity they felt at being part of a machine responsible for obtaining information in the wake of such mass arrests. In some instances they concluded that the system and methods employed were creating more enemies and dangers for US forces. The various pressures and contradictions they dealt with created dilemmas that resulted in one team trying to ameliorate or at least lessen the resentment among detainees by abandoning interrogation altogether. In one case, the pressure to produce more detainees led to corruption, injustice, and questioning of the mission to which the interrogator was devoted.

Anthony Rodriguez supervised a mobile interrogation team. His team would often be assigned to line combat units to question persons detained at that level. This frequently entailed questioning large numbers of detainees with only a limited time to spend with each one. He discussed what it was like to work on the front end of the detainee interrogation process:

Having a short amount of time to be able to develop information that people wanted, it could be effective but you really had-like you had to be lucky to run upon somebody that was either really disorientated or really willing to give information. [] The circumstances that you had or worked with, [weren't] really conducive to what you were trying to do. I mean, I almost kind of look at it like it was speed dating; one minute you're talking to somebody, next minute you're talking to somebody, next minute you talk to somebody and you're trying to develop but a picture of, getting small snap shots and little things.... Just had to type up a report, information you knew, send it up, that guy's going to Abu Ghraib and they'll develop it further there.

Rodriquez never learned whether the interrogators at Abu Ghraib obtained anything of use from the detainees sent there.

The line combat units were often responsible for amassing large numbers of detainees. The reason for those detentions became apparent to the interrogators. Antonio Hayes described his observations:

When they would raid a house or they would raid houses, they'd get an intelligence where some guy would snitch, be like, you know, "There's people who are in the resistance who are living in this neighborhood..." [] They'd be cordoned off and everyone would be searched, whatever, and everyone would just be brought in for questioning. Because it was like, it was almost like a 'better safe than sorry' thing. It was like, these guys may be bad guys; we don't really know, but what's the harm in bringing them in to be interrogated to find out for sure?

At times the results were overwhelming to Hayes:

So there'd be times where we'd have to work all through the night because there was a raid and they wrapped up like 200 people and we have to put all these 200 people through this process.

Rodriquez described what it meant to his team when they realized the nature of the mass arrests:

A big sentiment that was agreed upon with some of us is that...if you're going on a mission to go collect people, I mean, go for a reason, don't just go because they fit within a particular range of an age. I mean, if that's the case, then...why don't we just round up all of Iraq and we just talk, talk to every person individually and see what we can do [] there was some disdain for

it....it's kind of hard because when you see people, rounds of people just being brought in, just being brought in and tons of them are just there for absolutely no reason other than being an Iraqi between a certain age, that wears on you.

[] The majority of the bag is like, you really arrested a lot of people for nothing, absolutely nothing.

The reasons for the detentions were not always so inept or benign. Stephen Scott described the corruption of a process that required more than one party to denounce someone in order to justify a detention. This method, known as "dual-source reporting" is a bona fide intelligence technique only if the multiple sources are independent of each other. There was pressure to increase the numbers of detentions arising from this supposedly reliable method. That pressure skewed the process. Scott described the aftermath of a successful raid that was the result of painstaking intelligence gathering:

A: It was, it was a-it was a success, it was just too slow for the battalion commander. So he's like, "We need to do this faster..." so instead of dual source reporting, well we still dual source reported, but whenever we had a source come in, we would say, "Hey bring a friend, that way we can dual source right then and there. [] And nobody ever asked who our sources were anyway. They just wanted to detain people, you know what I mean. If we can give them, like, like here's...one sworn statement, here's one-another sworn statement. Yeah, they were dated at the same exact time, but that didn't matter. You just had to have two people point out the same person. We would have them, we could triple or quadruple source one person in an afternoon doing it that way.

Scott's team grew even more creative:

We got even worse than that, you know. We started going on raids and bringing our sources with us so that we can just, you know, um, we would...we would stage it so we'd have like multiple rooms. We would take a picture of people in one room on a digital camera, go into the next room where like the three or four sources might be, and just start being like, just go through the digital camera, and if they were like, "Oh yeah, him, him, him..." and like, "Oh okay, we'll detain that one..." you know. "Oh yeah, him, him too..." so we would just do it that way. [] We didn't care who got detained, we just wanted numbers, we just wanted numbers.

Eventually, Scott found that the sources were making false allegations, and he found out that the pressure to produce detainees had led to transactional denunciations:

I found out that my team leader was actually paying them [sources] per person that they pointed out. We did have Intelligence Collection Funds, ICF, that we were able to use at our own discretion. He was like giving them, you know, ten bucks for every person they pointed out, something like that, you know so, I mean we were pretty much just buying detainees at that point. He found some wicked people that were willing to sell out anybody for like ten bucks a pop. You know, at that point, you-only way to make money is to point out every frickin' body, you know, and he got his friends involved, like "hey, they're paying us to detain people."

The realization that innocent Iraqis were being detained and interrogated led at least one interrogator team to alter its approach. Antonio Hayes, who had developed the techniques of bashing chairs against walls and shouting unanswerable questions during interrogations, described what happened:

So it was just me and my squad mate who was like my-my best friend while we were deployed. So it was just us doing them from then on and we started essentially just not doing it or faking it, where, um....you know, our normal routine would be get-have someone in, do the first part of freaking them out really bad and then getting into the actual questioning, but um...we just kind of stopped doing it, like...we'd-um, the person would come in, we wouldn't scare them, we wouldn't put 'em in a stress position, we'd just sit there and just ask the questions, like "Did you do this?" "Did you do that?" "Do you know where Saddam Hussein is?" "Okay, go..." and then we'd just, and it wasn't like him and-him and I talked about it, but I think we both just became fatigued with going through these motions and being this person that we weren't really-we weren't really that person, like we were like nice guys and then our job is to be just this complete, like belligerent ass hole. Um, and so we just kind of stopped and just not cared, just made like it's just another stupid assignment, like typical Army bullshit, and so we kind of stopped, stopped doing the interrogations.

Hayes described how his thinking evolved, and how he stopped his involvement:

I started not liking the interrogations.[] At the point that I had been doing them for a little while, so I had gotten some experience, like maybe...you know,

several weeks or a month or something, and I had done a high volume of people, and, um, you know, felt, started feeling uncomfortable doing them because, you know, I was realizing it was extremely traumatic for the people who it was being done to, um, that I was kind of-felt, in a way, kind of turning in to this-this monster in a way. Um...and also the main thing was, ah...that not one time, ever, did we ever get any information out of anyone. So there is no time where we did an interrogation and then someone was like, "Yes, I'm a part of this group; I gave money..." "Or I conducted an attack..." or whatever. So it was like, um, and then knowing why these people were being brought in for these random things, I began to realize that these people hadn't done anything; that they were just civilians who, some, like infantry dude just suspected and then was like, "Whatever, what's the harm?" in sending them in to get interrogated, and so I started feeling like, um...that these were just innocent people and they were being severely traumatized by their experience, and I was the person who was doing it, and I started not feeling good about that. So, I got myself tasked out to do other-other types of things.

The interrogators describe a system that swept up large numbers of Iraqis into detention and delivered them to the interrogators who admitted that they knew very little about how to be effective. What they did know was how to bully, intimidate, terrorize and abuse. They grew frustrated and began to think that the system was becoming pointless. They also thought about things far worse.

A Tempting Mix: Frustration, Power, Isolation and the Helpless Deserving Enemy

The interrogators related their frustration at being ineffective because of their own lack of skills, the pressure to get results, and the unworkable numbers of detainees to interrogate. Clearly, gathering intelligence was becoming nearly impossible. The interrogators describe the effects of frustration, power to inflict pain, and the urgent need to prevent the next insurgent or terrorist attack had when a helpless detainee was brought to them. The motive of gaining secrets was joined by other impulses in the interrogation space; if intelligence could not be gained, then satisfying anger would suffice.

The rising frustration and anger took two interrogators' thoughts into dark areas. Roy Howard described what he contemplated, but did not do.

I mean, as I said, you know, there were times when I was extremely angry and frustrated and um...you know, you have somebody in front of you who's helpless, and you're holding all the cards and it's the middle of the night in the

middle of nowhere and you can do whatever you want and...that seemed attractive at some time, at some points. [] Like cutting off fingers or just beating them or—and then, you know...there were plenty of guys, who, even if I didn't have the stomach for it would have been happy to go in there and do it for me. Um...so I could have just, you know, turned a blind eye to that, but ah...and so yeah, I thought of it, I thought of those things.

Stephen Scott wrestled with a rising hatred toward Iraqis during his deployment as an interrogator. While speaking of this he brought up the subject of waterboarding. He described the circumstances that constrained him from using the technique:

Q: When you said you wanted to water board somebody, was it an Iraqi detainee that you would hope to practice this on?

A: Not a detainee, somebody that we had, um...there was a—there was a couple of incidents where they would hold somebody [] in the neighborhood, like we had stopped them, and we weren't going to let them go home just, just quite yet, but they weren't—we didn't quite know what to do with them.

Q: Okay.

A: So they would sometimes drive one of us, ah...HUMINTERS [Human Intelligence specialists] out there to go talk to this person. Now when we would link up with them to go talk to them, the person, we were—we would be in a secluded empty field, and there were—and, you know, they would be like, nobody ever said, you know like, "Okay, go beat the truth out of this guy..." nobody ever said anything like that. But just the fact that we were in a secluded area, this is clearly not where he was picked up and where he was found; it was dark, um...and they would say like, "Okay, you know, talk to him..." I kind of got the impression that they wanted me to do more than just, you know, finger quotes, "talk to" the person.

Q: [] Did you find yourself in that situation considering how to and if to water board the person in front of you?

A: Um...not really, I—the problem with that, and I think I told you this yesterday, was that whenever we would talk to a detainee, we made sure that there was no eyes on us, and in this situation, all the eyes were on us. There was absolutely no way I was going to do something, because I—I didn't trust every single one of those soldiers, and I knew it would only take one soldier

writing an email home...and you know, that email getting forwarded around that, you know, again, real soldiers were going to real jail for stuff like this.

Q: But if those soldiers were absent?

A: I might have; I might have given it [waterboarding] my best shot, I mean, at that point. [] I would have done it just because I wanted to [do] it. Like I wouldn't even ask any questions, you know, I was just kind of curious.

As Roy Howard mentioned, and Stephen Scott certainly endorsed, isolation, power, and a need for answers, even to a matter of personal curiosity, could turn a professionally trained interrogator to thoughts of atrocious conduct. Both men refrained, but as more than one combat arms soldier related, not every American in Iraq did under the same circumstances.

Beyond frustration, a source of motivation for abusive violence was a sense that the detainees deserved the treatment because they were an enemy who caused harm to Americans. This sense, coupled with anger toward detainees, fueled some of the abuse. Roy Howard described why he allowed a mock execution:

A: I was convinced that this guy was involved in, and particularly he was involved in firing mortars on us and we-like, we had just been through [a mortar attack with casualties] I was pissed at him, and ah, I had interrogated him once before and he was really recalcitrant and kind of an asshole, and so, I didn't really care about how he was feeling, at that point.

Q: Was he somehow directly involved in that particular mortaring?

A: That's what I believe, yeah. []

Q: Do you think that you were present when the soldiers were injured enhanced your level of animus toward that particular detainee?

A: Yeah, and that happened all the time. I mean...I mean there were times when we were interrogating them, you know and rounds would start falling [] and like it ramps up your adrenalin and motivation to, to ah...get to this guy, and it-even if it's not to gain intelligence, you're just mad, you're just really mad, you know?

Roy also described the reasons why he felt that another interrogator threatening a detainee's family member was appropriate:

I think part of that is because like this guy [the detainee] was actually a very bad man, I mean, I-I think that he had killed and tortured a lot of people, and

so I had-I had no moral compunction about what was going on there, and as far as legal problems, I didn't think that we were um...crossing lines that anybody would ever have a problem with.

Roy Howard summed up the ties between frustration, anger, and blaming the victims:

I don't know, it's funny and I-you know what, honestly, like I think a lot of what we were doing over there, in terms of the enhanced interrogation or straight-up torture was not so much about gaining intelligence or mission specific, I think a lot of it was simply just frustration and anger and it was just violence for violence sake, you know, like you have a helpless person in front of you that, you know, you think is part of a force that's trying to kill you and your friends and...you know, just act out violently.

Distanced and Routinized Pain

For Roy, the ability to distance himself from the pain he was inflicting created a blind spot in his thinking at the time. Distancing was a matter he talked about more than once during his interviews. He explained the practice of stress positions and the distancing effect of using indirect methods to cause harm.

Q: Ah...did the use of the stress position, in order to create discomfort and um...did that somehow seem to attenuate you from the direct infliction of that pain?

A: Yeah, ah...yeah, it-it...for us, I think it, you know, it was psychologically really different than punching them or kicking them, ah...because, you know, you'd just tell them, "Okay, you kneel," and they would do it themselves, and it's gravity and the ground, that's really causing them pain, not us. Even though, I mean that's not quite accurate, but that uh, it seems like one level removed.

Q: Was that helpful [] in terms of you're being able to employ it?

A: Yeah, I think so, I-I-I think I really wouldn't have, okay...the-it was a clear line for me that I would never strike a detainee, and I...I...I don't even think I really even had the impulse or the-but um...it was easy, yeah, it was easy to-to do those, that kind of, that kind of stuff.

Q: Did you have a sense of the amount of pain that was being experienced was a lot by the detainee?

A: Oh, God yeah. I mean...I remember one guy like...we left him kneeling so long that he couldn't walk for day. . . .

Q: And how did you react to seeing that?

A: Um...well, I guess I felt some sympathy but um...it-really, depended on the detainee like...you know, I'd make distinctions on who I thought was a total jackoff and I decided to like, which, you know, I don't-I wouldn't stand by now...reflecting on it. I think that anybody who's a prisoner and who's in your control is under your care and you shouldn't harm them, but at the time I felt a little bit differently about it.

Roy, again on the distancing from the pain infliction:

Like if you strip somebody down and leave them in the freezing rain, you're not inflicting that pain on them yourself. You, I mean, obviously they're suffering and it's your fault, but it doesn't feel exactly that way or if you're keeping somebody awake for two days or three days. It doesn't feel like you're torturing them whereas if you're punching them, that seems to cross the line and I-I mean it's a nonsensical distinction, but I think that's what we were running off of.

This distancing was more than merely brought about by appearances. Roy spoke about the distancing afforded to him as an interrogator:

In fact, I mean it was really quite explicit like, you know, I was working with this Staff Sergeant on one base and he had been in Guantanamo and he's like, "Look, it's easy..." like "You guys don't do the torturing..." He didn't call it torturing, but, you know, "You guys have to be the nice guys, and let the MP's do all the dirty work. Let them hate the MP's and you set yourself as somebody who can protect them from the MP's." And so...you know, his idea was that you commission the MP's to do this stuff and you direct them to do it, and so that's-we would do that.

Roy explained how forced kneeling was routinely used, even when counterproductive from an intelligence perspective:

A: Oh yeah, I mean... you know that kneeling is not a comfortable position, ah, you know, like even for five minutes, it's painful, but you know try it for hours and hours and hours it was, it was clearly painful, but we were used to that because we, I mean stress positions, that was the most common thing we did, and we did it like really universally with tons and tons of prisoners.

Q: So at some point was that really just routine?

A: Absolutely, yeah. Ah, yeah, like, I knew one interrogator who like, that's how he'd start out his interrogations. [] That's just what he did and we all-we all did that. I-I would conduct entire interrogations sometimes for two hours with the-the guy, the guy just kneeling the whole time.

Q: Do you ever get the sense that the discomfort was overriding their ability to grasp what you were trying to tell 'em?

A: I-I...that, yeah, I did come to that realization, yeah. Um...but yeah, it-it took me a little, a little longer, but...you know, I think I told you, I think that a lot of what we were doing wasn't really about gathering intelligence, it was about anger and revenge...so...I don't think it mattered.

For Roy, at times the experience of conducting interrogation was a mix of information seeking, enacting cruelty on those he disliked, and frustration. Abusive methods happened to well suit his motives and eventually became routine.

The Uncommon Experience

The idea of partaking in a rare experience, of a privileged opportunity, was how two of the interrogators viewed the allure of the task they were given. The use of abusive violence only sharpened this sense. Roy Howard described his perspective regarding going to war and being an interrogator:

Q: What were you hoping to get out of the experience [of going to war]?

A: Um...well, I wanted to be good at my job and I...another thing I also, I was kind of drawn to the idea of combat, I mean it's...um...I can't really even put my finger on what that is but I still am, like...I want to go to Afghanistan right now, like, um...yeah, I don't know what, and as soon as I got back from Iraq, I wanted to go back. I wanted to return to Iraq. Um...and I—I don't know, I don't know why that is.

Q: What did you think that going to war was going to provide you that peace would—would not? [] Was it seeking the uncommon experience?

A: Yeah, I think, I think that's it, yeah, I just wanted to see what—what the limits were. And I think that—that might have been part of um...my willingness to participate in the enhanced interrogations also, like to see, this is a like part of human experience that, yeah, nobody...experiences, you know, in—in peacetime or...normal life.

Q: Did you sometimes feel a little bit privileged to be allowed the opportunity to participate in those things?

A: Yeah, sure, I mean...um...yeah, I mean I...I was interrogating some really important people in the Iraqi government. I was in places that everyone in the United States was talking about, you know. Yeah, like, you know, I mean there's something about being in the hottest war zone in the world at that moment. We're like right in the middle of it, you know. Yeah, I really did feel a bit privileged.

Q: It's attractive?

A: Right. Like, I—I think my favorite heroes growing up were like the old gunfighter who has a thousand stories to tell or...you know, the Woody Guthrie

character who's rambled around and done all these things that no one else has been able to do and so...I think I was trying to accomplish that. Um...you know, kind of looking back, I don't really think that's a great thing to aspire to, but I think that that was part of the motivation without actually really articulating it to myself at the time.

Antonio Hayes talked also about his feelings during his early interrogation experiences:

Q: Did it seem like fun?

A: Yeah. I mean, yeah, it was like, you know, me and two people that I was good friends with, um, you know, getting this assignment that was a very unique type of assignment, um, to scare someone who, you know, we were told was this high-value target, so someone in my mind was like, you know, one of Saddam's henchmen or something of that, somebody who's guilty of really bad things, um...so, yeah, I mean it-I did, you know, I saw it as, as fun for a moment, because it was, and in a way too, it was like I joined the Army to be, to do things, um and I felt like I hadn't really done a lot up until that point, um...

Antonio Hayes' captivation with being allowed to assist with interrogation at first masked what would later become deep misgivings about his participation. He described his reactions to a mock execution he witnessed:

Q: When you heard him crying, what were you feeling?

A: I mean, I guess, I guess I kind of felt bad for him because he was, you know, very scared, but I felt like, and this is like how I felt about other things. I felt that it wasn't, it wasn't really that serious of a thing that was being done; not like, you know, we're not going to really kill this guy, so whatever, if we make him think we're going to. I didn't see it as torture, abuse or anything like that, and so doing that, I mean that particular thing, I actually felt, it felt cool doing it, because, you know, it was like this...you know, it was with the Warrants [officers] that I respected and, you know, thought were, you know these like bad ass secret agents, and so it was a very, you know, some 19-year-old kid like doing this intense interrogation tactic, was, you know, it seemed very cool to me that I was a part of it. So I remember feeling like, you know, when the guy was crying, like feeling, you know, really, you know, bad for this guy that he's going through that, but, it was really kind of superseded by me feeling really good and cool that I was a part of this...this really interesting like thing that I was doing.

Q: Did you feel privileged?

A: Yeah, I did. You know, because I-and-and especially because I never thought I would be doing anything like that. I thought I was, I thought I had some stupid computer job that I hated. I really did hate my MOS [Military Occupational Specialty] because I didn't realize what it was until I got to AIT [Advanced Individual Training], but yeah, I felt privileged, because I wanted-I wanted to do cool stuff, and to me that was something cool.

Roy Howard related his thoughts as enhanced interrogation techniques were being planned:

Q: Was there a point where you embraced the escalation of harshness?

A: Yeah, like...you know when... with the strobe lights and the loud music and the 24-hour interrogation shifts on these guys, um...I was kind of interested to see if we can make that work and see if this would be effective. And like I said, you know, I was kind of, sort of...testing limits, you know, to see what was...what I was capable of and what that human interaction would be like. Um...but I-you know I...I certainly was still capable of putting the brakes on like...you know, I-I didn't want to seriously harm somebody. Um...yeah.

For Roy and Antonio, the uniqueness of the situation they were in was something that provided fascination for both conducting interrogations and exploring limits. Both men were tested and the abusive violence ended when they found their respective internal boundaries.

Bursting the Moral Bubble

Roy Howard and Antonio Hayes, the two participant interrogators who witnessed the most abuse, related the misgivings they experienced in Iraq. These misgivings were not centered solely upon the victims of the abuse, but were intertwined with their self-images. The ability to see themselves clearly was found in realizing how others, including their victims and their friends, might view them. Their accounts relate how they found pathways out of the abusive thicket and what that experience was like.

The road back to humane treatment did not turn abruptly and unwaveringly in a humane direction. Roy described the forces that made his willingness to be abusive wax and wane.

Q: At some point, did you just flat out become reluctant to do things?

A: Well it's kind of funny...like we would use these enhanced techniques on somebody and there were times when I would become really remorseful about that and just feel horrible about it and-but then, you know, the next day with somebody else, I would do the same thing. So I was going back and forth with this and as I said, you know, with the small unit we were with, we were constantly talking about this and we were half reluctant and half kind of...enthusiastic about trying to use any techniques we could to get intelligence. We wanted to do a good job, you know, like... we wanted to be good at our jobs and we wanted to complete this mission of, you know, shutting down the insurgency and preventing any deaths. You know, we were getting shot at and bombed all the time, you know, and people were dying and so we wanted intelligence. So it was kind of a back and forth and it...it took a while for me to realize that it-these techniques were ineffective and that I was doing things that were really compromising my moral standing in what-the kind of person I wanted to be.

Roy's reluctance to carry on being abusive was undermined by distancing and receiving messages from superiors that abuse was permissible. Acquiring a sense of how outsiders viewed such matters was a strong counter-message which forced him to reconsider:

Well...like a lot of the enhanced techniques, as I said, they don't involve like physical contact with the detainee. They seem much more benign so you can sort of convince yourself that you're not doing something horrible but it slowly became clear to me that what we were doing is really actually pretty awful [] At that point, they were helpless and they were in our care and just seeing the

way they deteriorated and just watching people suffer that it just-it got to be too much. I couldn't do it. You know you're over there and, okay so you're told these things are legal, you're being told by your leaders to do these things and everybody thinks it's okay. Like-and so you're kind of in this moral bubble, like you don't-you don't see what's happening but when the [Abu Ghraib] scandal broke and you could see that-the outrage that people were having in the states about this and around the world, you kind of realize "fuck, that's what we're doing," you know.

Antonio Hayes remembers the event that marked the start of his doubt. He described keeping an injured detainee awake through the night. A supervising sergeant was dissatisfied with Hayes' ability to force compliance and proceeded to beat the detainee bloody. Hayes described his thinking after the incident:

Um, I mean I felt really bad, I mean I felt really bad for that person. You know, ah...I mean I felt it was totally unnecessary, the way he was dealt with. Ah, you know, it was hard to like just see someone in pain like that and not just in pain, but extremely terrified and in pain, um, and I felt he was abused, like it was abuse, what was happening. And then it was that coupled with my thinking at the time being like, you know, who are, like who are these people, anyway. Like what did these people do to deserve this? Um, so that's when I had started kind of...just not really understanding the point of any of it.

Hayes describes travelling a path from being an excited abuse enthusiast enjoying privileged access into the world of intelligence work to arriving at a state of being a remorseful participant in a process that had lost any feeling of accomplishment, glamour, or worthiness:

Q: How did you view yourself?

A: (Sigh) Um...you know, like I-at first, you know at first I like felt, I felt proud of myself, very good of myself, like I was...you know, I was at, I thought about my friends from high school and how I knew what all of them were doing. They were all at the local university, all just getting shit-faced every day, going to stupid, at college parties, and doing nothing, and I was like, I'm 19 and I'm doing this like CIA-type stuff. And so I felt very good, feeling very good about myself and do what I was doing. Um...and that evolved, the more I did it, and then I remembered kind of being, [] I'm this 19-year-old kid, like doing all this-this cool stuff, and then it became like...I'm just some 19-year-old punk kid who's like shitting all over these people ah, because like, I can, because I have this power, like for no other reason except like...I have a gun. That's when

I stopped seeing myself, in the light that I had before, and I felt like...and a lot of it changed with [] experiences with-with the detainees where I swear I was feeling like, "Okay this is, this is kind of fucked up..." um...you know, it was like, I'm just some kid just out of high school who now has the authority to, you know, traumatize these people.

The view of the war held by people back home was significant to both Roy and Antonio. For Roy, seeing the war and his actions from the vantage of an America largely unaffected by war led to a tarnished self-image:

Q: So what do you think it was about being on leave that-or was there something about being on leave that may have prompted your crisis?

A: Well, it's like I said, you know, if you're surrounded by military people, and you're kind of...in this moral isolation, um, it's-it's easy to justify what you're doing, but, you know, you get back into the real world and you feel more like yourself rather than just a soldier. I think it sort of opens up the-your moral context, so I think that's what it was.

Q: So...while you were back in the context of really, "peace" at home, how did you view the guy who's in Iraq when you was in Iraq?

A: I don't think I liked myself very much at that point, actually.

For Antonio Hayes, the act of communicating to friends was an opportunity to project a burnished image. He describes the motives behind a careful grooming of his homeward accounts:

Q: When you're writing letters to friends, um...were you talking about your experiences as an interrogator at all?

A: (Heavy sigh) Um...not in detail, just that I was doing it, because I didn't want, I didn't want my friends to know that side of me. You know, I wanted them, I wanted them to know, you know, like I felt very proud of going to Iraq, like I didn't have to go, I like begged to get on the team that was going. . . . So um...you know I-I was very proud of going and so the things I wrote home about...um, were the things I felt people would-would see, you know, was what I-the impression I wanted to give that things I was doing that, you know, dangerous and heroic, and whatever, so...I specifically didn't-didn't write about what I did in interrogation, because it didn't-it wasn't in line with the image I wanted to give off to people; it wasn't that person I wanted people to think I was.

Hayes described the thoughts he harbored during the time he was an interrogator:

Um, I was feeling, I mean I was feeling confused. You know, like I had this idea, in my head of what-what the war was about, what the U.S. military was all about, and it was like, you know, just this is perfect picture, and then...I started being involved in things that contradicted [] what I thought it should be. Um...and so the, you know, it was contradicting what, what I was being told we were supposed to be doing. Um...so I started feeling, you know, I started feeling very guilty about being someone who is inflicting, you know, terror and pain against these people.

Antonio's moral dilemma came to a crisis when he was forced to question a critically wounded detainee, whom he realized was guilty of nothing more than trying to get home in the presence of a trigger-happy American officer. He was worried that the man's serious wounds were not being treated at a hospital, and that instead an interrogation was ordered. Antonio, bending over the bleeding middle-aged man, was sickened by the over-riding concern that the unit had for justifying the shooting. He terminated the interrogation and returned to his quarters. He recounted at length the flood of thoughts that the incident unleashed:

I went back to bed and I was feeling like very like, you know, I wasn't—I didn't sleep, I didn't fall back to sleep; I was just thinking about this guy who was maybe dead by that point, um...you know and it was like, at that point, I was starting to, like, like thinking about my own father. I was like, 'What if that was my dad...' like what if, you know, he was trying to come home and see us and he just got shot by some random dude. So I started like feeling just, I just kept—couldn't stop thinking about what I had just seen, this guy on this table. Um...ah, you know, being denied medical attention, like no one is trying to save his life or whatever, and that his, you know, that he was seeing my face as like just coming in with a flashlight in his eyes like asking him what he did, I mean his position or whatever. Um, so I was just awake, laying awake and ah, then we start getting rocket fire or mortars, um both, I don't know. Um...and so we started taking fire and I like didn't move, I didn't do anything, I didn't, you know, grab my helmet, body armor, ah...I just laid there and I was just like...and at that, like at that point, I was just like, 'I totally get it, like I understand why these mother fuckers are shooting at us...' and I was just like, 'I don't fuckin' care if I get hit and get killed right now...' because I was just like, it was a moment where I was like, felt like I was the bad guy that like, you know, the—the...people who were setting off the mortars like could be a guy just like this guy I just saw in the cell, and I was like, if that guy survived that

and then went and shot some mortars off at us, I would not blame him for doing that, and so I just remembered just, just not moving, just being like...like I—almost like I deserved it, like I deserve for this to be coming in. If it hits me, then whatever. Ah, so that's when I—that's when it was like a big change 'cause it was, in a sense, identifying with the people that we were supposed to be fighting and feeling bad about what I was doing to the point where I was putting myself in great danger because of how bad I felt about it, by not, you know, getting cover or whatever, just basically being like...you know, if I—if it happens, it happens.

Eventually Antonio saw the power he did have was not his ability to terrify and threaten, but instead was his agency to choose another course:

Q: Early on in the deployment you were, you were...scaring folks in the cells and then in the interrogations, would you say you, that, as a young guy, you were reveling in the experience?

A: Absolutely, yeah, for sure.

Q: [] You were powerful?

A: Uh-huh, yeah.

Q: At some point did the...doing of those things, still feel like you were powerful or not?

A: Yeah, no I still felt powerful, but like, but I had the power to not do it too. . . . You know, I understood I had the power to do whatever I wanted to this guy...but I also had the power to like help him too. Um...and like when we stopped, when we stopped doing interrogations as we were supposed to [i.e., being abusive and terrifying], you know, I felt...I didn't feel like I was being a rogue soldier, but I felt like I was the person in the position of authority and this was my-my decision to what was the best, the best way to approach this, this mission was to do it in such a such a way.

Roy and Antonio had shared a common fascination with the uncommon experience of being powerful while confronting the dangerous enemy. Over time they both realized that the detainees they faced were not deserving of abuse, and that the abuse was pointless. It took looking at themselves through the eyes of others for them to forswear abuse and embrace different approaches. As Antonio viewed it, he still possessed a great power: the choice to be humane. The choices intelligence operatives made while deployed, whether they were to abuse or shield detainees, left them years later with clashing reflections of their actions.

Mottled Reflections

Going home took each of the participants far from the scenes of the abusive choices they had faced. They generously shared with me their thoughts about that abusive violence with the further distance of years. Their reflections are the results of the events they experienced overseas and the lives they have led since coming home. Those reflections are part of their present-day experience of having been exposed to abusive violence. For some, the sense-making is still difficult.

When Antonio Hayes returned home his recollections of Iraq centered on his combat experiences. His suppressed memories of abusive violence made themselves known to him through the eyes of another:

Q: Specifically with respect to your interactions with detainees, when you first got back, how did you view those?

A: I would just immediately go to the times where, you know. . . . you know when we're getting fired at, and so []that's what I was thinking about, and so it was kind of like I even completely overlooked the fact that I was an interrogator. Ah...and...I think I—what triggered me even thinking about it, um was my girlfriend who [] said something about how I, um...would act, where I would act asha-- different or like um, you know, I'd get very, she used the word "ashamed" if we were walking by someone or around people who looked Arab. She said I would like completely withdraw and just become like, I don't know, I don't know, like very weird, and so I realized that it was, that's what made me, you know, and so I was like, you know, why, I'd begin to think like "why would I—why would I react that way?" Because...you know and that's when it—that's when it clicked with me that it was...because of the guilt that I felt for being involved in interrogations.

Antonio remembered his reactions when he identified the source of his odd behavior:

And what—what I—my thought, what the realization I had at that time, that was very difficult for me was that...you know, because I...um...you know like I remembered people, [] I remember, you know, certain individuals that we interrogated that had, you know, memorable reactions. Um...so I remembered all of them...ah, but then it clicked in my head that all those people would remember me also and that um, for the rest of their lives, they would always, always remember my face and always remember me...being that person. [] You know that the guy that was shot will always remember me looking down at him with a flashlight, and so I couldn't um, you know, being someone who

wanted to go into the military for serving some greater good and for helping people, and who made myself go to, you know, made them send me to Iraq so I could go help people, and I realized that there is this hundreds of people who would always remember me as like the, you know, a horrible person, um...you know, whether or not that in my mind, I was trying to be this horrible person, like it didn't matter to them because that was the perspective they had of me, and so knowing that...just this, all of these people would never forget who I was was just—I didn't feel like the hero that I wanted to be.

Antonio shared his current thoughts about his conduct:

I mean...it's the...least proud moments of my life really. Um...you know, I didn't...I mean I regret, I regret it. I don't...I don't think that there is points where I could have...done anything different um where I was faced with a decision and I made the wrong decision, I think I did...everything that I could have and did everything I thought I was supposed to do, you know, but...that doesn't, you know, take away from the fact that, you know, that was the, um, you know, like I-I am ashamed of that, of that period of my life and of that...that role that I had; those, those interactions. So...you know, yeah, I mean I hate, you know, I hate that I did that.

While Antonio expresses remorse, it is evident that he still sees his abusive actions as unavoidable when he claims that he did “everything I could have and did everything I was supposed to do.” This sense seems to be inconsistent with the fact that he later did make the choice to avoid further abuse.

Ultimately, Antonio's sense-making of his actions are split between a relief that he had not done the worst and shame for what he did do:

I was never someone who'd let myself get carried away with emotions, and there was never moments that I regretted where I like just flipped out on someone or did something fucked up to someone. You know, I always felt in control of it, but...so I felt like I did what—you know the things that I had to do and I was tasked to do, but um, I mean I felt, I felt ashamed of who that was, and I did, and I still do, um, you know that was a—I didn't, that's not who I joined the Army to be.

Antonio expresses that he retained control, but that control fell short of what would have saved him from being ashamed, which is the antithesis of his desire to become a hero soldier.

Roy Howard, who eventually abandoned the use of abusive interrogation techniques, shared his thoughts when asked about whether his actions had been affected by external curbs:

A: Uh-huh. Well, there was certainly that too, I mean, you know, obviously, you know, if you're in the military, you're constantly worried about the repercussions of your actions, you know, um, externally, but I think all that stuff is going on and it's—yeah, would be hard to really pinpoint or articulate years later why...but...I really, I mean, when it comes down to it, I honestly don't think that I—I...could have the stomach, even if I were completely free to do it, to cause that much suffering to another person, I really don't think I can do that...to, yeah, to somebody who's helpless; I couldn't. I mean, I—I think I could have shot somebody in combat, but I couldn't...I couldn't do something like that to a—a helpless person. In the end I don't, I don't think I could have gone that far.

Q: How does realizing that...affect your general reflections on your overall conduct and experiences there?

A: Well, I mean it's nice to know I had some limits, you know? Um...but...yeah, I—you know, the person I would have liked to have been over there would have been, like, somebody who could just say, "Fuck you!" to the leadership and do the right thing all the time. That would—that would have been nice if I could reflect on that, but um...you know, but it's nice to know I had, you know, at least some limits.

Although Roy described an aspiration to have stood up for his convictions, he admitted that his convictions had not always been foremost in his thoughts:

No, I-actually I think-I think back on it, and I could have said, "Fuck you!" from the beginning and not done any of that stuff. I could have...but there was a willingness on my part that I-I recognize.

Roy summed up the effects of abusive violence on the abusers:

Um...I think it's-I think it's really harmful, I-you know, like I-I think that that's a tough thing for people to come home with, you know. Ah...yeah, I mean we-like we all share a set of moral values and if you violated them egregiously whether it's in combat or not, um...I think it's-it's tough to reintegrate into society.

Sam Bailey, an intelligence specialist attached to a non-intelligence battalion, reflected upon her inability to check the abuse directed at the civilian population by soldiers and officers in the unit. She had tried to change the conduct by briefing the battalion staff that the population needed to be treated with dignity. In her view, the soldiers' actions were fueling rising hostility toward the Americans. Her less-than-direct efforts failed to have the desired effect. She reflected on this:

A: Um...so yeah, oftentimes I wish like maybe I would have like done something more, you know, or gotten more extreme about it but...um...you know, stuff like that is hard to deal with, like...ah, because the-the actions had, the actions they were taking had repercussions, you know, and the whole situation was unnecessary and um, so, you know...

Q: Well, what-what do you think you could have done different?

A: [] Maybe if I went like directly to the battalion commander and was like...you know, there's some crazy stuff going on and you need to like do something about it, you know, then he probably would have done something about it, but I'm not sure, you know, I'm not sure what kind of effect that that would have had or whether it would have made the problem worse, you know what I mean.

During her interview, Bailey expressed regret that the battalion began to suffer attacks after she rotated home. She believed that the abuse by the Americans was a cause of the attacks.

Wayne Watson, the civilian intelligence officer, resisted pressure from Washington to go beyond his personal limits of behavior when dealing with a high-value terrorism detainee. His reflections seem worlds apart from those of the soldiers. His refusal to even consider abusive violence from the moment he received his assignment may have a bearing on his experience. Nonetheless, his words carry a note of regret, if not perhaps guilt:

You know, I thought-it's a-what I was involved in was...profoundly disturbing and really important and shocking for what it says about our institutions and our laws, and our checks and balances, the practices we engaged in, all of that, it's really, really... We've done things that betray ourselves. Of course, I could have done more, one always thinks one could do more, but I think I...did about as well as one can in the circumstances I, I confronted. And I was not duped to- I didn't unthinkingly accept the orders and engage in practices that I think are wrong. So I-I'm patting myself on the back, I suppose, but I think that I did about as well as one can in those circumstances. Ultimately, I, you know, and I

couldn't change the larger approach, but to the extent I had influence, I feel okay about what I did. I don't mind...having to deal with hard choices professionally. I sought to. Some of them don't have right answers, some of the answers I made, I'm sure are wrong, but overall I actually think that I was a distinct outlier in the whole process and got it right. So I don't feel-it's a terrible, it's a bad thing and that happens, and...it was all unnecessary, it was all insane, but I attempted to inject sanity and failed and so I feel okay actually.

The contrast between Wayne's self-evaluation and Roy Howard's guilt could not be more pronounced:

Q: Did you at some point have any difficulties coming to terms with what you had done?

A: Yeah, I mean...yeah, I think like a huge part of my identity was changed for me, you know. (softly)

Q: What was it that was changed do you think?

A: Well...(long pause)...you know, like when you're a kid you read, "The Diary of Anne Frank" or something, like you expect that you would be the person who would protect that family and hide them in the attic and then you kind of realize maybe that's not who you are, you know.

Roy talked about the balm of time:

Um...well as I said it took a little while for me to actually take some responsibility for what happened over there. But other than that, I think as time passes, I just—I become a little bit more distant from it, and I don't have to think about it so much. It's not so much of a, so much of who I am anymore.

The experiences related by the intelligence personnel reveal that the CT and COIN campaigns they were involved in were far from being carefully planned exacting exercises in intelligence gathering or surgical attacks on terrorist and insurgent networks. Instead, their lived experiences were marked by frustration and anger brought on by the combined pressure of enemy attacks, impossible numbers of detainees to process, and their self-recognized ineptitude. Responding to those pressures sometimes meant feeding the interrogation assembly line with bodies because of corruption or simply not knowing what else to do. Working on the interrogation assembly line sometimes called forth an abusive routine that had no relation to advancing the war effort by gathering intelligence. The dynamics of

isolation, helplessness in the face of power, and anger made interrogators contemplate torture. The road back from abuse was found gradually and while employing a viewpoint of the “other.” Even having once found the path, reverting to abuse was possible.

The self-reflections on abusive violence from the intelligence operatives are not simple and do not reflect closure. To varying degrees, shame, regret and a nagging sense that they could have done more, been better, and acted more like their heroes, colors their sense-making today. Some of these same emotions tint the experiences as recounted by the combat arms veterans. The focus of the next four chapters turns to the lived-experiences of abusive violence recounted by those soldiers.

Chapter 4: The Combat Arms Soldiers

In this chapter I will examine the lived experience of abusive violence as expressed by soldiers whose main jobs were not intelligence gathering and interrogation. These participants fought their wars in Iraq “outside the wire,” while running convoys or patrols past roadside bombs, conducting raids for suspected insurgents, and manning checkpoints where suicide bombers were definite threats. They experienced fear, frustration, fatigue and hate like the intelligence personnel, but their responses included wholesale and brutal violence directed at communities, not just individuals. Their stories introduce three superordinate themes.

In “The Invisible Haze,” the participants describe the practice of hazing as inflicted upon them in their own training and even while on combat deployment. The routinized use of hazing against their own soldiers made the practice virtually unrecognizable as torture. As one soldier put it, “if you’re doing it to the soldiers, then why would you not do it to your enemy?” As one might expect, the transfer of this practice to detainee treatment became commonplace. Eventually, the hazing of detainees, as being no more remarkable than hazing of soldiers, makes the practice in detainee holding facilities lose any salience, and disappears into the mental blind spot of habituation.

In “Mission Shift and One Long Drive-by” the soldiers give accounts of their original view of the mission of US forces in Iraq. Those views are tinted by noble sentiments of nation-building, liberation from tyranny, and helping a broken country.

Over time, the participants experience a re-calibration from the concerns of the State to the straightforward and visceral super-priority of staying alive long enough to get out of Iraq in one piece. Accompanying this shift in focus is the adoption of tactics of communal punishment and intimidation, even as the justness of retaliatory attacks by insurgents is acknowledged.

In “The Experience of Objecting” the attempts made by soldiers to stop abusive violence by their own friends and other forces are related. The experiences are sometimes from those who never participated in abusive violence and always worked to prevent it. In other cases, enthusiastic practitioners of the “360-degree fire,” display a sense of outrage over abuse of individuals at the hands of other soldiers. The experiences related by the soldiers show that at times standing against abuse is dependent upon situation and can be as influenced by emotion as is the abuse itself.

The Invisible Haze

I was basically instructed to haze.¹⁵

Several of the soldiers discussed hazing as initiation they experienced in their first military training and as punishment after being assigned to military units. In the context of active line units, hazing would take the form of either physical exercise or the completion of unnecessary work assignments in order to make life generally miserable. Harold Turner described the culture of hazing in his unit:

¹⁵ The OED Online variously defines “haze” as “ 1. *Trans.* To affright, scare; to scold; also, to punish by blows. 2. *Naut.* To punish by keeping at disagreeable and unnecessary hard work; to harass with overwork. 3. To subject to cruel horseplay (as practiced by American students); to bully.” <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/84867?result=2&rskey=mfdwqE&>

A: No we had, they had hazing. Our unit is under investigation for hazing mostly the entire time I was in. It was pretty continuous and in Afghanistan that was my first. I was a team leader while I was there and I was basically instructed to haze.

Q: What form of hazing was expected?

A: What was expected? I don't know if it was anything specific, but I would dare to say punishment that would not be in any manual, so [] for example, the hazing that um, I mean, the most common form of hazing is assigning the worst jobs and messing with somebody's sleep. That was the most common that pretty much everybody had to deal with.

Turner described a nightmarish situation in which an under-strength unit fell under the control of a Non-Commissioned Officer who had reportedly been rejected by the service drill instructor course. The methods he mandated seemed more akin to those used in initial training than with a unit operating in a combat theater.

Sleep deprivation, [] assigning jobs that specifically messed with someone's sleep patterns.[] We're already working like 100-hour weeks at this point just in general, but you have a, I think it's like an eight-hour, six- or eight-hour post, "Well, let's punish the whole platoon by having two to three hours preparation for going on post..." "Two to three hours preparation for going off post..." "Then let's have duties and mandatory PT [Physical Training] in between that..." so literally you're living on post, basically. There's almost no down time

except for minimal sleep and then that's the standard, and then when you want to punish somebody it's very easy because now you assign them hour on, hour off duties, so you have-they have six hours of sleep because they've been up for the last 18 hours and three of those hours every other hour, they're going to be assigned to clean the shower at 2 a.m. in the morning. So that was very easy; that was common. The other hazings are more direct, so...the hazing we did was putting people into, first off, trashing, trashing their living space and taking them into the bathrooms, putting them in a gas mask which add a lot of heat, a lot of moisture, very unbearable, turning on all the hot showers, squirting soap across the floor and having them do exercise on a slick environment and hot, wet environment in a gas mask, pouring crap on top of them, um...so it's one form of hazing.

Turner described the natural consequence of this treatment:

Ultimately, the sleep deprivation catches onto people and people start falling asleep on post, so I mean those are, those are serious problems and I'm victim to it as well. I fell asleep on post plenty of times. Luckily there's two people on my post and we took turns because we could not stay awake, but some of my men were by themselves in an empty post after doing all this for eight hours and being caught sleeping on post because they don't respond to a radio call and then again more, more collective punishment, more hell to be paid for what's a product of collective punishment and hell that's being paid.

While this level of hazing and harassment of the soldiers was considered excessive, the individual actions ordered by the platoon sergeant would not have been deemed remarkable in other contexts. All of the soldiers would have undergone similar punishments during their basic training and perhaps even in garrison.

Why would you not do it to your enemy?

The use of various techniques experienced by soldiers themselves migrated to detainee treatment. Brandon Peterson recalled that:

I do-I do remember we captured, ah, we captured some people and they-the squad leaders were, were making them like do some stupid push-ups or something like that. Ah...in the...but I...I don't really remember the details of that.

Several soldiers were familiar with a particular form of forced exercise punishment that Chris Alexander mentioned while recounting what some interrogators on his base did to prisoners:

A: I remember one was called "the electric chair" and that was where you were in a squat position with your back up against the wall with your arms out and they'd just start putting heavy objects on the arms and after a while it does hurt.

Q: Is that something that you tried?

A: No. Ah...I've seen it done but that was back when I was in [deleted name of training school]. [] It was kind of...hazing rituals.

Q: By school staff?

A: Correct.

Q: And were they just done to everybody or as punishment?

A: As punishment...mostly.

Richard Miller described an instance in which he directed a detainee to be forced into the same position, which in his unit was called the “iron chair:”

He is placed in the chair, not sitting in the chair, but in a chair...ah...so it's a stressful position and is where he's leaned up against the wall with the knees bent and your arms forward and the entire time I told my SAW [Squad Automatic Weapon] gunner to ensure that he stays in that position...don't let him do anything but that position. You know, down in the dungeon it's a good 150 degrees down there; it's hot.

Aaron Bennett was asked about stress positions used against detainees:

A: Yeah, it was, yeah, yeah and we did them to our own soldiers. I mean that's like—that's part of like the tor—like having someone stand like this up against the wall, like this and not letting them, you know, down, was, was common practice when you, you know your soldier did something wrong, so obviously, people do it to detainees too. That was probably the most common

thing is [] having 'em stand like that, I think that was one of the most common forms of abuse, really.

Bennett was describing the everyday use of the chairing position and its pain, when he suddenly came to a realization about the practice:

Q: Did you-did you ever have that happen to you while you were a soldier?

A: Yeah, oh yeah. [] Ah, it's horrible, and it makes you think if you did something wrong about doing it again, like...

Q: How long does it take for it to get...not fun at all?

A: Well I haven't done it in a few years, but I remember it picks up pretty quickly, and a lot of it was, you know, like, I never really thought about this comparison until right now, is a lot of stuff that we did to our own soldiers is probably torture, but when you make them do exercises 'til they throw up or you make them drink so much water that they throw up.

Interestingly, Bennett first introduces the technique when asked about stress positions, and equates it to torture against detainees, but does not at that point connect the same treatment of soldiers as torture. It appears that he has to pass the concept of the treatment through his own definition of torture against detainees before he sees it as analogous to mistreatment of soldiers. It is equally possible that Bennett employed the opposite filter in Iraq: the forced exercise that he observed, since done against soldiers, did not qualify as "torture" to which he might object when

used against detainees. For him, it is obvious that something done to soldiers would naturally be done to detainees. Bennett spoke about the habituating effect of seeing frequent abuse. He was asked about the chairing position used by his soldiers against detainees:

Q: What was the purpose of doing that?

A: It was just to make it uncomfortable I think,like I think I've done that too, is like have them sit like that, but not for like a long time, but that-I mean it would happen all, you would just go into the detainee area, you would see, like people take away their cots and not let them stay in their cots, and have them sit up against the wall like that. Like I said, that was the most common thing; it was just normal to walk in and see people like forcing some detainees to sit like that.

Bennett acknowledged that he had probably done the same, and explained why:

It was just so com-such common practice that you would see it all the time that it just was normal to look at like that. Like it happened so much that it-it doesn't, like when you're there in Iraq and you're going through all of this stuff, like having someone sitting in an uncomfortable position, it just doesn't seem like a big deal, you know, like at all.

Pressed to explain the objective of treating detainees in this fashion, Bennett replied:

There is none, it's just simply cruel; it's absolute cruelty and there is no, there is absolutely no purpose for it. I think a lot of it; like I said, I-I can't remember a specific time when I did that, I don't think, but I'm, I'm probably-I would not be shocked if I did do that or if I-and I think that by walking in it and seeing it all the time and not stopping it, is I'm also kind of doing it, like by-by not stopping it from happening. I might as well have told the person to sit like that.

Bennett provided his view of how hazing techniques come to be inflicted on detainees:

The mentality, like if you're doing it to the soldiers, then why would you not do it to your enemy? You know what I--like why would you not, if you're capable of, if you're using corrective training on a soldier than why people would not do that to you know, people that they perceive to be your enemy has a lot to do with the detainee abuse.

Brandon Peterson, described soldiers using forced exercise against detainees.

Q: Why, why were they doing it?

A: Just because they were cruel, stupid people who wanted to exercise some authority. I mean that's nothing that hadn't been done to them a million times, ah...you know, and ah...this was their one chance, I guess to...exercise some authority over someone else.

Cruelty and petty tyranny were the explanations accorded to the abusive behavior by the soldiers; they do not mention instrumental use, such as in interrogations.

For the soldiers the shared experience of being hazed by their own military made similar actions against detainees lose any improper dimension. Its frequent use made it virtually disappear from view, as described by Aaron Bennett, "it was just so com-such common practice that you would see it all the time that it just was normal to look at like that." The haze had become invisible.

Mission Shift and One Long Drive-by

The Mission

Just as study participants had very individualized reasons for enlisting, there was an array of views of the mission in Iraq. Over time, for several of the participants, the view of the mission changed, often contracting from large strategic goals to simple personal and small group survival. These shifts were sometimes directly tied to the abusive violence meted out to the Iraqi population by the soldiers.

Stephen Scott described his initial views:

Q: So in, when you were heading into Iraq, what did you think the...mission of American Forces was at that point?

A: Nation building; I mean I knew from history that whenever you dismantle a government, there's always like a...somebody's got to keep control until a new one can be installed, so I thought we were kind of more like a law enforcement type deal, making sure that the place didn't just descend into

chaos because they had a dictator, and we just removed him, ergo, they had no government to speak of. You know, I thought we were there to like make sure infrastructure kept happening. You know, I didn't know anything about Iraq, you know, I-making sure the plumbing still worked, make sure electricity still worked; I thought we were just trying to do that until um, a new government can be formed.

One of the events that happened when Scott was present in Iraq were the first elections. While this may have been directly related to forming a new government, Scott's views were more complex than before he arrived in-country:

Q: As an American soldier, how did you feel about facilitating the first elections?

A: I felt great about it; you know, I-I kept seeing, I kept seeing these things as victories, but it wasn't until a while that um these victories were what America was calling victories. Like these were all like PR stunts, you know, it was something that CNN can report to the American people to say how good a job that we were doing, but I don't really think it was necessarily what the Iraqis wanted. Um...I don't think the-the government really took care of the Iraqi people under Saddam. [] So since government wasn't really a big part of their everyday life, they didn't really care about government over there, you know. It's not like...it's not like, you know, here in America where government's everywhere. . . . They didn't have a whole lot of that, so what did they care about government? You know, it's just a word to them.

Aaron Bennett was an armored vehicle mechanic. Before leaving for Iraq, the unit mission was indistinct to him:

A: I don't-I don't, I don't think anyone understood it. You know, I don't think, I think it was just...and I think that's the way it is for lots of, you know, people was to, like the individual soldier doesn't really know what's going on.

Q: So, but as a-mechanic, did you really care?

A: Not really.

Upon arrival in Iraq, Bennett found himself repairing vehicles that had been part of the initial invasion, but were unlikely to be used again in Iraq. He hated the seemingly pointless job. He describes his shift from uninformed but enthusiastic soldier to a demoralized mechanic:

I mean, just like-can you imagine that, like I was sitting there like, "You know, I'm excited, um...I'm not really sure what we're doing..." but like I had a set unit, "we're going to go there and liberate these people and help them out..." and now I'm fixing a wiring harness for a vehicle that's never going to even participate in any way for helping liberate these people. So it's just like, "what am I doing?" I might as well throw stuff at the wall instead; [] I'm wasting tax payer money. I'm not even a good mechanic.

For Bennett, being a vehicle mechanic in a huge repair facility working on un-needed vehicles seemed far out of step with what he felt he should have been doing in Iraq. He described his feelings about seeing soldiers returning to the base:

I hate this. Like I would get so angry working...I would see-you know these people come back from patrol and it's-you know, at the time I still believed that the war in Iraq was good and, you know, we're helping the Iraqi people to liberate them from this brutal dictator and we're gonna deliver them democracy and we'll have all these great things and so...I still-I felt...like I wasn't being used properly, [] I joined the military before the war in Iraq, and now being in a culture of-of the U.S. Military, I was like, 'why would I...why am I going halfway with this; I should be out there in the front lines doing it too and helping where I can...' so I volunteered to Abu Ghraib after about a few months.

Bennett became part of the perimeter guard force at Abu Ghraib.

Staying Alive

The participants spoke often of the overriding priority of personal survival. Staying alive and keeping comrades alive was a theme shared by several soldiers.

Louis Sanders shared his perspective:

Q: What did you think the U.S. mission in Iraq was at the time you were crossing the border into Kuwait?

A: Taking out Saddam. You know, I really, and at the time, I did feel that there were weapons of mass destruction. I knew that we sold em to em to kill Iranians and-and all that, but I didn't really care...um. I was there to just do my job, make sure the brothers on my left and my right got back home safe.

To Harold Turner, the reason for his unit's presence was not precisely clear. For him, the personal was also paramount:

Q: When you were in [city name], what was the primary mission, you think, of your company?

A: To continue the occupation of [city name]. I remember there actually being some confusion about what the hell we were doing here. Um...because it didn't really seem, it was like a circle jerk, like the only reason for us to be there was that we were there. [] Generally, I would say like, "Win the hearts and minds..." and we would go throw some teddy bears and deflated soccer balls at some kids that have their homes busted out and you could say that, that's what they were trying to tell us our mission was, but we all knew that was a joke, like the only mission for us individually was to get back home. We didn't feel like there was anything for us to do there other than survive it and make it back home.

Turner worked in the headquarters section of his company and was responsible for delivering supplies and meals to the outlying checkpoints and the medical evacuation of injured troops. He described how this matched his personal priorities:

There's just like this realization that the only reason I'm there is because I've been deployed there and our mission is pretty much to just make it home alive, and so really earlier on that just became my mission, was like make sure

all the people I'm serving with make it home alive; if they're wounded, there's no way I can respond fast enough to them and get them the treatment that they need. But once I made that mental switch, it's just about survival []. Patrols, convoys didn't seem to serve a purpose to me anymore other than resupply so you should minimize them because putting ourselves at risk, putting the local Iraqis at risk.

Charles Wilson expressed his view of the mission as he prepared for a second deployment:

I was still definitely more concerned with my-my-my people than I was with them [the Iraqi people]. I didn't see myself as going over to protect them or to protect their country; I was just going over there to protect my troops and to make sure that everybody, you know, that they, um...weren't going to be harmed.

Chris Alexander reflecting on the mission he and his unit had served, commented:

I couldn't even tell you why I was in Iraq. I-I really don't know more than to protect the person on my left and my right. What was my mission in Iraq or what was our outcome? I-I don't know. It was above my pay grade.

There was certainly logic to it

When personal survival became the only mission, and every patrol through an Iraqi city became fraught with potential Improvised Explosive Device (IED) attack, certain modes of operating made sense. Brandon Peterson was an armored vehicle

commander, in a small unit assigned to a mid-sized Iraqi city. He described the way he directed the platoon's drivers to operate, and why:

They [insurgents] had been trying their best definitely to kill us all, but we, you know, whenever we moved through the city, um we moved as quickly as possible, um wherever we went. We drove really fast; if someone got in our way, we would drive over them, um...we just didn't, we didn't act like most soldiers in the area who had a tendency to drive slow, in-in slow convoys that were easy to hit, we were always super aggressive, we were always super aggressive driving, we never cared if we-if we ran-hit a car or anything like that. We just didn't give a fuck, and that, you know, that was definitely what was keeping us alive.

To Peterson, the entire city represented an extreme threat, one the Americans were forced to overcome through intimidation:

Q: In your questionnaire you noted that more than five times you witnessed but did not take part in abusive violence. Can you recall the first time you were present during any abusive violence for your detainee?

[]

A: No, I don't; I mean it was, there were so many at that, at that time, it was just daily, like...(sigh)...and, you know, I hate to kind of come off as—as being, as defending the practice, because it—it's atrocious, but, but I mean, we were maybe 175 fighting men with, you know, a compliment of probably, you

know, five, six hundred non-combat...soldiers on this base []. [The city] had, I think over a million people in it, and ah, you know, [deleted publication name] estimated that they had, you know, thousands of insurgents there and—there in [deleted city name] and, you know, um, we were pretty brutal...about dealing with them just on a daily basis, and it, you know, it got to the point where...

Q: When you say dealing with them, you're talking about, um...detainees or...?

A: No, when I say 'dealing with them' I mean the local population. We would just beat people up for no reason, and...you know, going—you know, bust into people's houses, you know, um, you know, of course, separate the men from the women, beat the hell out of the men, um...and...you know there's a—it's not good, but there was certainly a logic to it, I—we would have, we would have died. People did die, people were dying pretty—pretty regularly, ah, you know...

Peterson attributes his unit's survival to the brutalization of the population and he disdained the other troops who acted differently. He described his unit's response to any attack during patrols:

A: We would keep moving...you know, if that—if that vehicle, unless that vehicle was disabled, we would keep moving and we would shoot ah into the town, you know, in every, anyplace where we thought someone might be

hiding, we would shoot 'em, that was always our response, and ah, you know, again, you know, I don't want to seem like I'm defending the practice, but it— but I mean there is a—it was a very effective, people were terrified of us. Our vehicles specifically, because they looked so different, you know, the—the--...

Q: The [vehicles]?

A: The ah...ah...the cav scouts, their [vehicles]—they get hit all the time; they die all the time, you know, I mean it was...it got to a point where [] we would make fun of like pretty much everyone who wasn't infantry, because like, as they would leave the gate because we'd be like, "Have a good time fucking dying out there..." because they were, they didn't act the way we did, and so...they were more vulnerable, ah, you know, it sounds really sick, it was really sick.

One long drive-by

The risk of IED strikes against patrols and convoys led to a response, the so-called "360 degree rotational fire," which was embraced by many. The tactic included opening fire in all directions if an IED exploded as they passed.

For Stephen Scott, any response was preferable to simply driving past an unsuccessful attack. He described how he felt before his unit was instructed to fire if an IED went off targeting their patrol or convoy:

Well we were told to make a statement, [by] our platoon sergeant. Um, a lot of the soldiers, they didn't like the idea of, if we got fired [at] or if a bomb went off, of us not firing back because, I mean it...I guess it was kind of like a group-think, you know everybody kind of thought that if we just rolled through without doing anything that we were running away. Um...and I-I kind of thought that too. I was like, "Wow, we're just [not] going to attack, we're just going to drive through?" But you know, it wasn't until we were actually told, like 'make a statement' that...you know, the next time we got attacked, we just shot at everything.

Scott welcomed the command:

A: Our platoon sergeant[] would just be like, "Make a statement; next time we get shot, just make a statement..." shoot, you know, and I don't know if he said, "Shoot everything up or whatever..." but he said, "Make a statement", and that kind of-we knew what that meant. We knew what that meant and somewhere inside, that's what we wanted to hear. So it's not like he had to convince us, really, we're like, "Oh okay, good, now we can actually do what we feel like doing".

Q: So what was it that you "felt like doing"?

A: Well, the frustration was really kicking in. Um...because we were doing the same thing every other day with mind-numbing regularity. It felt like we were accomplishing nothing, and we didn't know why we were there,

and...even though we were trying to help, they were attacking us. So...I don't know when it started to happen, but my, my wanting to help turned into, real genuine hatred. It turned into a genuine hatred for the people, the Iraqi people. Like I wanted them all dead. I-I didn't care; I'm like, if that was, if that's what it was going to take for me to go home safe and sound and be alive, then so be it.

Scott described that the platoon would fire at animals and vehicles in the vicinity of the IED attacks, but that they did not kill any people because the inhabitants routinely disappeared before attacks.

A: I don't think we ever actually shot a human being just because they were, they—were—gone.

Q: Were you wanting to?

A: Yeah, yeah, I sure was. I...

Q: Was their absence making it even more frustrating?

A: Yeah, yeah, it really was, because we weren't a line company, so we never got out of our trucks and like went looking house to house or anything like that. We were only there to be targets, well not to be targets, we were there, we were doing a mission. . . .and because we were only a support platoon and not a line platoon, we were the last priority to get armored vehicles or armored anything so it's like, you know, all of us were thinking, we all just felt incredibly helpless, so if there's anything we can do to take a little

bit of that power back and get rid of little bit of the helpless feeling, we wanted to do it. Um, yeah, I mean...I don't know how else to put it, just frustration, just so much frustration.

As with the interrogators considered in the last chapter, the dynamics of frustration and power fed the violence. As Scott explained, there was also a sense of the entire community deserving punishment.

Q: Who did you want to shoot?

A: Um...at least the people who were involved, but then...I do, I'm starting to remember, like, whenever we would get attacked, the people, because like there was usually people everywhere. After a while, whenever we got attacked, all the people were gone. So then that made me think that they were all guilty by association. So then I just wanted to start shooting any of 'em.

Brandon Peterson's unit, which was heavily outnumbered by the insurgents, was not waiting for instructions:

We didn't have to be told to-to be brutal, we didn't have to be told to-to lay down fire or whatever, it's just something we started doing as we were, you know, and in response to, you know, just constantly seeing, you know, these people blown up and constantly, you know, having to deal with, um, you know, the aftermath of these IED's.

In Richard Miller's squad, the return-fire planning was much more deliberate:

Q: Within the squad, what was agreed would happen if you came under ambush?

A: That we would kill whoever was, kill whoever we could.

Q: Not just the opposition forces, just anybody available?

A: Anybody that was in the area. We were going to control our area of operations by out-terrorizing the terrorists. [] We were told that the only way that we were able to maintain control of our area of operations was to bring fear into the hearts of the people and...the only way to do that is to...to kill and maim and to out-terrorize the terrorists. Make the people more afraid of us than they are of the terrorists.

Miller surmised where the orders originated:

When it comes from every squad leader, after they talk to you know-the platoon sergeant, the platoon sergeant would talk to the company first sergeant. Then, it's pretty much known that it's coming down from there.

In Miller's unit, the campaign to terrorize the population was carried out as per plan:

Q: Um...you said the first killing by your squad was a response to an IED?

A: Uh-huh.

Q: How many people...do you think your squad hit that day or in that location?

A: Six or seven people.

Q: What was the location like?

A: It was a highway, [place name deleted], and ah...we were driving in a northbound lane there were vehicles coming down the south bound lane and a IED went off and we fired our weapons...we hit people in vehicles, people-I know the SAW gunner who was up in my truck um...shot two teenagers out in the field, and...with his SAW so...from everybody, you know, everybody's going to say they hit somebody, but...the truth of the matter is that not everybody hits somebody.

Stephen Scott summed up his unit's willingness to use indiscriminate violence and disputes the notion of heroic sacrifice:

Well, I know none of us wanted to die out there; that's the thing is-I learned about soldiers is, soldiers are more than willing to, you know, kill for their country, but do not want to die for it, so...we were going to do everything we could to make sure that we survive.

Scott described what this actually meant in practice:

So there was a lot of ham-fisted reactions to small attacks, you know. In-in fact, one of my buddies, he would start shooting and which usually, because we had no communications, as soon as somebody saw a gunner start shooting, everybody would start shooting, you know, just...at nothing in particular.

[]Then because we're on convoys and moving, it just turns to one long drive by [shooting], and so I remember...but this—this soldier, you know, he was an older soldier. If you were talking right next to him, he'd be like, "What? I can't hear you..." but then suddenly he was the one saying like, "Yeah, I heard a gunshot coming from over that way, so I started shooting." And I remember asking him. I'm like, "Did you—are you hearing anything out there?" He's like, "No, I'm not hearing anything; I'm just kind of..." so I mean, it was ridiculous...and not funny; I don't know why I'm laughing about it now.

You are by definition a terrorist

The brutality with which any possible threats were addressed, including the wholesale intimidation of the population, was considered necessary by some participants. Even so, the likely consequences were recognized. Brandon Peterson, talking about the routine beating of Iraqi's:

Yeah, absolutely, I consider that ah...to be torture. I mean you know, there's absolutely no reason for it. It instills terror, and if, you know, that's what you're doing, and you know, you are by definition a terrorist, and, you know,

and certainly we were, um...it, you know it served our purposes at a certain point, but I mean, you know, what we're doing wasn't benevolent, our purposes weren't benevolent, and the people there were more than justified to, you know, try and kill us and liberate their country from our occupation.

For Stephen Scott, the rising hostility between his men and the Iraqi population was contrary to what he had hoped to achieve when he arrived in country. By the time he left, he recognized why the Americans would be attacked:

My whole thing was, I was really confused; I mean, I wanted to help them, and I know that they weren't attacking me. I didn't really take it personally when they would attack, because I was kind of starting to think like, "Well, you know, if I had—if there was a foreign military going down my street, I'd probably want them out too..." and the guerilla tactics they used, although we view them as cowards, so they would just hide and detonate a bomb. That's worked, throughout history so I didn't even think that that was, you know, cowardly. I was like, "Well, that's—that's strategic..." Um, what they call it, "fourth-generation warfare." Yeah, the same thing that we used to kick the British out when, you know, the Revolutionary War was going on.

For the participants from the combat arms, feeling constantly threatened by an unseen enemy led to reactions and over-reactions that resulted in a wholly understandable hostility from the population and the likelihood of more attacks. Their original sense of mission to carry out the ideals of their country became

subordinated to a visceral desire to survive, even if that survival meant acting atrociously.

Stephen Scott, trying to make sense of the spiral of aggression, came to a perfectly elegant solution:

And that was another thing that kind of drove me crazy. It's like the only thing we were trying to accomplish there was just living for one more day, you know, which, if we just left and weren't there to begin with, both sides got what they wanted! The soldiers got to live and the Iraqis got us out of their country. That's all we had to do was just leave. But since we couldn't, you know, it wasn't my decision, just the-you know, they-they weren't going to stop attacking us, because they wanted us gone and we just wanted to keep living, you know, so...it-that kind of, ah, I don't know, I don't want to use the word like dichotomy or anything, but that kind of, um...those goals from each side . . . were mutually exclusive, there was no middle ground, you know.

The soldiers described the original mission views they held. When the missions slipped to simple personal survival, indiscriminate shooting and beatings made sense, even as the likely backlash was recognized. The ability to see the conflict from the eyes of the occupied population was a theme also described by several soldiers, even as the tit-for-tat violence continued.

The Experience of Objecting

What must it be like when one is in a unit that routinely fires on homes and shops and beats passersby? What if one thinks that what is happening is wrong? What is that experience like? The participants shared their recollections and reflections. Some had quite happily enacted vicious violence early during deployments. Some acknowledged their own frustration and hatred of the Iraqi people. One, a woman, tried to act sanely throughout her deployment.

In the face of commonplace violence against the population, there were some soldiers who objected to abuse. In some cases the rejection of abuse was clear from the first instance and continued until leaving the combat zone. However the dynamic of objecting to abuse in a war zone was more complex for some soldiers. As with interrogator Roy Howard in the last chapter, regretting abuse on one day did not mean that it would not be used with vigor the next.

This is kinda going over the line

All abuse is not equal. Soldiers who were brutal found circumstances where they intervened in abuse. Brandon Peterson, who swears by the abuse that he believes kept the insurgents in one city from wiping out his unit, remembers several instances when he prevented abuse, especially of detainees. He described a situation where he was informally participating in the questioning of a prisoner taken by Americans to an Iraqi police station when the Iraqi police brought in another prisoner and began to abuse him. He explained his subsequent actions:

Q: Why did you tell the Iraqis to do that, to stop?

A: Because it was—it was stupid. I mean, not—you know, I was, you know, I may sound like I'm defending a lot of these really awful practices, but at the time I was, I was, I was the biggest [] thorn in the side of, of everyone who was doing this sort of thing, [], I was very much against what we were, what we were doing to these people, even if they were bad, but like I said, I...I rarely dealt with anyone who was, you know, actively against us, [] I stayed in the room as they started to interrogate this prisoner...

Q: Do you know what they were trying to learn?

A: They weren't trying anything; the guy was a—it was a different ethnic persuasion than they were and they were. He was in the wrong part of town, and . . . they captured him. They were going to to beat the hell out of 'im, and my friend, he was a police officer, [] had this guy. [] He was, I think he may have been trying to impress me maybe by mistreating him. I don't know if [] he had been a special forces soldier in the war against Iran and [] he had some pretty serious mental problems, I guess. [] He starts questioning this guy, putting a gun to his head, and [] they just do things differently than we do, and then...ah, and then like, he you know, starts hitting him with a cleaning rod and I was like, "Well, you know, hey, this is, this is...this is kinda going over the line..." and then he like wanted me to help search this guy, and so I start searching this guy, you know, took off his shoes, and ah, then [name deleted]takes a power cord from a lamp, and he kind of mimes to me that like,

he if hooks the power cord up to his feet he'll feel it in his genitals, and you know at this point, I said, "Stop, stop..."

Peterson sought support for his intervention from his own lieutenant:

I went to go get um...the platoon leader who could [not] have cared less about what the fuck I had to say. He was just like, you know, "Get the fuck away from me, whatever..." I was like, "No, you know, they're really going to do this, you need, you need to step in here," he's like, you know, "whatever; just—just go away." And so I went back in there and when I got back in there there'd been a bunch of cops that had kind of joined in and ah, you know, they were, you know doing all sorts of really awful stuff. [] They were trying to shove a bottle up his ass, and ah...hitting him with a cleaner, well through is, through his robes, not ah—they hadn't like stripped him naked. They were beating him with cleaning rods, punching him, I mean it was...it was, you know, a bunch of dudes beating up a guy. [] He was just crying...he was, you know, he was crying and screaming.

Peterson described the scene further, saying that the detainee was, "on the ground, stomach down and they were all, they were all beating him and so I said, at that point, that they—I—I made them all stop and I got them all off of him and I started questioning him; I started questioning the police."

For Peterson, intervention became a frequent occurrence when his own platoon's soldiers began using drugs. Certain that the illicit use was widely known in

the unit, he blames the specific drug involved for aggression and describes the effect it had on one of his former friends:

A: They [assaults] were all happening in that incident, but I mean they happen just on a daily basis, um, you know, one of the—part of the problem was, we raided this pharmacy early on and ah, and...I had assumed that they were going to, you know, come out with some opiates or something, and were all kind of just like, you know, spend the rest of the year comatose with the stuff, but, but they—they come out with vials and vials of, of ah...of steroids, and so the whole platoon was on steroids, I wasn't and there were—some guys who weren't—a lot of them were on steroids.

Petersen cited problems he encountered with a friend who used steroids:

We went head-to-head quite often, ah, when we were outside the wire. I was an E4, you know, trying to tell an E6, you know, that he better knock it the fuck off...on, you know, you can imagine how effective my protests were, but ah...um, you know, he saw someone on the street, he would sometimes make up things, make up reasons to fuckin' grab someone off the street and beat the fuck, out of him. That's just, that's just what he did.

Peterson intervened personally with the squad leader, and then went to his own chain of command with a threat:

A: I would yell at him, you know, I'd yell like, "Stop! Knock it off!" It finally got to the point where I, um...myself and some of the other people in the

driver squad said, "We're going to write our Congressman if they, if they didn't back off with the beatings..." I mean, you know, and it made...

Q: Who did you...?

A: We went to the platoon sergeant, um...

Q: What was his attitude when you guys said that?

A: He certainly didn't want a congressional [investigation].

This eventually had an effect that was not completely along the lines desired; Petersen described what the platoon sergeant did:

He said, he said he'd have a conversation with people, and he did, he did, ah, you know, he went to the squad leaders and he said, "Look, you know, Peterson's going to fuckin'...fuck, um...you know," he said, "Look, you know, these guys are going to go to Congress and you know, if you keep on doing this..." "You've gotta, you've gotta tone it down." And so they'd do things like, they would look to see where I was and drag people behind walls to beat them or something like that, but it did-it did get toned down quite a bit.

Aaron Bennett described one instance where he objected to conduct in the field that was especially troubling to him:

A: We raided a house one day, um...and secured it; there was nothing in it. Um, and there was like this little kid and one of their soldiers which is an E-4, on numerous times. He's like, "Come here you little fuck..." to like the kid, and I

was like. . . . “What the fuck’s wrong with you; it’s like a six-year-old kid...” and I got into a huge argument with him. And he was like, “Whatever sergeant so and so...” and I was like, “Come here...” like I would get really—I took like the situation with children very seriously. Um, and I—you know, it was like, “You’re a fuckin’ grown man in body armor...punking like a six-year-old kid, that’s pathetic. What is wrong with you?”

Q: And...what...the E-4 that you chastised for um...berating the child, at the time you were doing it, at the time you were saying what you were saying, what did you want the outcome of your conversation to be?

A: I wanted him to understand that, you know, like, that—that’s [a] child and I wanted to get it through his head that, and it wasn’t the first time I’ve talked to him about it, before, I pulled him on the side, I’m like, “Dude, you can’t do that.” And so like, at that time, you know, we’re hot and angry, and like, I was just like frustrated and so he’s like, yelling at the kid, I wanted him to be, I wanted to shame him into not, to not doing that again. Like I wanted him to understand that what he was doing was wrong.

You can’t just do that

Sometimes the abuse directed at Iraqis happened suddenly and outside the context of combat patrols. The abuse was not solely committed by the lower ranked soldiers. Sam Bailey described what happened on the day before her departure from Iraq. Her account, and that of another incident involving Aaron Bennett, illustrates

reactions to incipient violence that were characterized by incredulity followed by intervention.

Bailey and a captain were each being rotated out to their respective next assignments. Their comrades took them to a farewell lunch in a town the battalion occupied. Bailey recounted that on the way back to the base they stopped and a teen-aged boy was abducted and loaded into her truck:

So, of course, I—this was not part of the plan so I didn't really understand what was going on, so I was like, you know, "What are you guys doing?" He said, "Well we're bringing this guy in the jail..." I don't know, it's like, "What?" Like I've never even heard of any of this, ah, you know, um, as long as—we hadn't brought anyone else to jail, and there was no real, doesn't seem to be any real reason for it, and so I kind of demanded an explanation, um, I was like, "Well, what are you talking about, bringing this guy to jail?" and he said, "Well when we first got here, he...came up and kissed your boss on both of his cheeks, so, you know, he's a homo and we're gonna go bring him to jail..." I'm like, "What? This doesn't make any sense..." I was like, "You know, he's not being gay by doing that, that's just what they do when they're happy..." you know, like Iraqi people, when they kiss another guy on the cheek and—and that's just what they do when they're happy and they're, you know, he was obviously just really happy that we were here, he wasn't trying to be gay on, you know, my boss. "Why are we doing this? This is stupid; we're supposed to be going back to the base..." and like, you know, against my objection that they like loaded

this guy into the back of the Humvee that I was in and I went along obviously with them objecting the whole way.

Bailey found that the vehicles did not go to either the jail or the base, but instead to a rock quarry where the abuse intensified to the point that the captain drew a knife and held it to the boy's throat. Bailey, worrying that matters could escalate further, tried to intervene:

And so I was yelling and, you know, at the top of my lungs and like, it was like I wasn't even there, like it didn't even matter whatever I was saying. I was like, you know, "This is completely illegal; this is silly, unauthorized. Why are you doing this? This is stupid." Um, like and the entire time I was like, you know, they were just ah...going about their business. Like one of the, one of the guys was like holding the kid and then my boss was like messing, they were like, you know, messing with him, like terrorizing him, trying to, I guess like scare him or freak him out or whatever, but I didn't know at that point, because there was nobody around...like, I was kind of starting to wonder if they were actually going to kill this kid and like do something, you know what I mean, like get rid of his body or something, because nobody would have really known.

Q: Right.

A: And so I was really kind of like...ah...like kicked into high gear like, "You need to stop what you're doing..." which went completely and totally ignored. And then ah...finally, they like cut the guy loose and he ran off, and then I went

and found out like, he was from a really big family because we had like known that family because they helped us out when we came in this town.

Bailey watched the incident end, but it is probably best for the Americans that some sanity prevailed, since moments later she noticed that the events had been observed:

Like, so, I saw him go run off, and then I saw there was like an entire car load of people like waiting over there because they had followed us to the rock pile and seen everything that had happened, and they were over there like ready to do something about it, but they let him go, he went running off and like he jumped in the car with all these guys that like came to pick him up, you know, because they followed us, because they were like, why is that—why are these people snatching up our—our son or whatever, and then like they took off.

Bailey was shocked that the captain who had held the knife to the boy's throat would have done this. He was a senior individual in the battalion, someone whose position made him second in importance only to the battalion commander. After the incident Bailey reported it to a lieutenant, but was certain that what the captain had seen as a lark was never investigated or punished. She and the captain flew out of Iraq without further incident.

This instance was not Bailey's only example of intervening during abusive violence while in Iraq. In the first situation, battalion officers and enlisted ranks were setting up unauthorized checkpoints in a major city and at gunpoint forcing persons

driving former Iraqi government vehicles to surrender them. It was called “Operation Carjack” and created a lot of resentment among the local populace. Bailey persuaded the commander that the queues of Iraqis at their small base demanding the return of the vehicles represented a security threat and the practice was stopped. Bailey tried to emphasize in her briefings to battalion staff that failing to treat the locals with dignity would result in resentment. While the battalion commander appeared to agree, she did not see the conduct of the rank and file or even some officers, become any less arrogant and harsh toward the Iraqi population.

Bailey gave her thoughts about why these incidents occurred among soldiers she had come to know very well over two combat deployments:

They just made some, I guess they didn’t—I don’t even think they even made bad choices; I think they were just like, you know, like the part of their...like the very, I guess, base of their brain stem kicked in, so to speak, and whatever else, like usually would override it, was not like doing its job at that time, and they just like kicked into kind of like aggression mode. []I think that when people, you know, kick into that mode, they...they are operating on like a level of just, you know, domination or regaining control of the situation and . . . they just kick straight in to like, “get out of my face” mode, you know, which is really no different for people than it is for animals.

Aaron Bennett related an incident in which a team had captured a detainee suspected of being the maker of a suicide vest which had killed one of their soldiers:

A: So when we raided the house, it was a family, a large family and they caught the guy and they...put his face up against the wall, and one of the other E-5's was like, "We should just shoot this guy..." and they have like a discussion whether they should just shoot him right there or not. [] We were just like standing there, I was like, "You're seriously talking about this?" like the guy is detained now, like it's beyond that like, "You can't just do that..." and the guys were like, "Yeah, we should..." and I was like, "You're out of your mind," and this guy's like standing and like shaking like a leaf on-on a tree...um, and so I was, we-I was, you know, people were having a discussion whether they should execute someone or not.

[]

Q: How many people were within that discussion?

A: Like four, four people I think, and it was, I-most people were against it, and the guy that was talking about doing it was just like the biggest, he's an E-5, but he was a fuck, he's a fucking coward like...oh that's-like the only people that I saw that did that, were all cowardice in-in action, anyway, like, and so we're like, "You're an idiot man, like this is ridiculous..." and then the platoon sergeant came out and nothing came of it

Bennett expressed the opinion that other abusers, including one whom on another occasion he stopped from continuing to kick a prostrate detainee, were cowards in battle who sought opportunities to be tough against helpless victims.

That's why I'm not going to do it

Objecting to abusive violence sometimes required soldiers to spell out their logic for refusing. Stephen Scott recounted a situation in which an Iraqi turned in to the Iraqi Police in sound condition was produced for him to interrogate hours later having been apparently beaten while in the police station. Seeing that the Iraqis had tried to conceal injuries sustained by the prisoner by placing a ski mask on him, Scott terminated the session and returned to his base. He explained to his unit leaders the situation from his point of view:

A: When I saw this detainee and the condition he was in, I said, I'm not going to talk to him because he was clearly tortured, and...

Q: Who'd you say that to?

A: Ah...it must have been the lieutenant or []whoever had the, the decision-making authority, and I remember it caused quite a stir when we got back, you know. The battalion commander's like, "What does he mean, he's not going to talk to 'em..." and I told him, like, "That's an unlawful order; you can't-you can't use torture as a means of...or like some sort of physical coercion as a means of getting information," and I told the junior soldiers, I was like, "We are not going to talk to any more detainees at the Iraqi police; we are not going to do it," and my team leader kind of caved. He kind of said, he kind of told the S-2 Captain that I was right, that it was an unlawful order, and so the S-2 captain's like, "Okay, then we won't do that anymore."

Scott had spent some time on his own learning about the tradition of US Army soldier resistance to participation in illegal actions. He formed firm beliefs of where he would take a stand.

A: I had filled my head with like a lot of stuff about Vietnam War and how soldiers kind of revolted in the Vietnam War, and one of the things they always said is, one of the things that were-was beat into our heads since basic training was, "Always turn down unlawful orders." I come to find out that in other armies, in other countries, they tell the officers don't issue unlawful orders, and it came down to the My Lai Massacre. They punished only the lowest ranking because it was on the lowest ranking, they're like, "Well that's an unlawful order, they should have, they should have disobeyed it..." you know, and then I was like, "Oh, so that's why they do that. That way the burden's always on the lowest ranking, you know, it's okay for the commander to get to issue an unlawful order. The problem is when the lower ranking follows that unlawful order..." So, you know, I told the junior soldiers that, and we actually had like a-you know, that-that higher ranking, that warrant officer came to talk to us []. So he wanted to talk to us, and we told him that, we're like, we're like, "We're just not going to do it sir; I mean we're just going to err on the side of caution, we're not going to do it..." It's like, the Iraqi police are torturing these detainees.[]

Scott's account demonstrated that he had influenced the other soldiers:

I remember one of the other soldiers said the same thing that I told him. I was kind of poi--, I uh...filling the soldiers' minds with stuff that they—points of view that they hadn't heard before. [] And so that was enough to scare them, you know, and they said that to the warrant officer. They're like, like, well the system is set up so that, you know, we don't follow unlaw—er, the system is set up so the lowest ranking is always the one who gets in trouble.

In some cases, objecting to abusive violence took place far from the combat theater. Aaron Bennett described an incident in which he spoke up when his platoon leader suggested the all-direction shooting response to ambushes or IEDs as the unit was training for Iraq. Bennett had already been to Iraq once on a combat deployment, and was a heavy machine gunner on an armored vehicle when the direction was given:

So I's like, "I won't do that sir..." and he's like, "Excuse me?" I was like, "That's just, it doesn't make sense..." He's like, "What are you talking about?" [] The PL was like, "Yeah, we're going to do this." And I was like, "No, say we do do that and say one of those rounds goes through, goes through a thin wall and clips a child in the head and kills that child, and now the father is angry that we just killed their child and rightfully so and decides to put a bomb in the road, and then we're on patrol the next day, and one of our soldiers steps on a bomb that was in the road and he blows his legs off, and now he has to be sent home and has no legs because you wanted to do 360-degree fire, and now he's put

out of the Army and completely depressed”, and like I went over like the whole thing, and I was like, “That’s why I’m not going to do it.”

But we never tortured people

Brandon Peterson’s stance was perhaps the most nuanced. While he defended the beatings and shootings of Iraqis in the first occupied city where his unit believed that intimidation was the only possible survival strategy, Peterson did draw a line at torture:

Q: You guys were beating people before, so...

A: Yeah, but we never tortured anyone, I-you know, and I-and I guess we did some really awful things to people, but we never fuckin’ tortured anyone; we never tortured anyone for confessions, like I’m sure that a lot of that went on. I’m sure that there were intelligence people who tortured people; but we handed people off. We...you know, when it came to like interrogating people, ah, I mean, even we knew that that was a horrible idea. Ah, I mean, when people were mistreated it was generally, it was not so that we could extract information from them for us. But I mean, I’m sure it happened all the time, yeah, obviously it was happening in [deleted]; I’m sure it happened in [deleted].

Objecting to abusive violence was not a simple and consistent matter for individuals. Peterson described a situation involving his unit and their dealings with a detention center which was known to send detainees to the Iraqi police to be tortured

before Americans questioned them. His platoon members were appalled and were discussing actively thwarting the practice. In his account, Peterson expresses his personal feelings of responsibility for what happened, the rationalizations he could have used when framing the decision he made, and the bottom line of just being too tired to take a stand:

A: I-if there's one thing I feel bad about, um, you know, we had had a long day, we had been out ah, and ah, they called, you know, as we were coming in, they called us in to go to the detention center and I was...one of the guys, ah...who was a vehicle commander, you know, kind of pulled us all in and said, "Hey look, you know obviously, we're taking a prisoner to go and be tortured by the Iraqi Police. They can't do this without us...if we walk away from our vehicles, they-they can't take this guy to be tortured..." you know, I ah-I ah...

Q: Was-was he pitching the idea of refusing?

A: He wanted us to refuse and I...you know, I really wish I had, um...but I, you know, I was like, "Well, we don't do it, someone else will..." so, um...so we did it, and, I mean, you know, and I-I was, I was kind of the person who made that decision. Ah...and like I said, I was an E-4, I probably shouldn't have been in a position to make, make any kind of decisions, I don't know...ah...but...

Q: Why was it that you...?

A: Because it was a long day; I really didn't want to get court martialed. I mean, because that-that-I mean, that would have been a big deal, like GI

resistance is ah-is a big deal for them. I mean, that's-that's border-lining on like a mutiny and I mean we would have gotten court martialed. Well, you know, maybe they-maybe not, they probably would have just told us that, you know, what assholes we were, and you know, just send us back to continue doing what we were doing, but...I mean they probably-you know, they could have, could have court martialed us, um...it would have made that really long...I mean that-the-the main reason, you know, I'm...I'm justifying that here, after the fact. The fact is, when we're doing that, it had been a long day and I really wanted to just go and lay down and I did not want to deal with a bunch of bullshit and because I was tired and I was, I was fatigued...yeah, you know, I decided that we should probably just make this one real quick run to the police station and then be done with the day as opposed to getting, you know, getting fuckin', you know, PT'd [punished by Physical Training] because we fuckin' ah...ah...you know, because we disobeyed a direct order, I don't know.

Petersen shared his single lingering regret:

A: That was the um, when we...had the opportunity to—to not, to not take this person to a—to the police station in [deleted] and ah...you know, I kind of made the decision that we should, we should just get it knocked out and be done with our work for the day.

Q: So it's—you described it that—that...you don't...you're not happy with that decision?

A: No, no, I really regret it. I can't imagine what that guy went through.

Q: While you were on the deployment, did you have that feeling about that decision?

A: Yes, I had that feeling about that decision immediately after I made that decision.

The participants who objected to abusive violence spoke of a number of reasons why they intervened to stop it. In the case of Stephen Scott, the prohibitions taught at interrogator school and his own later research made clear that he and his fellow soldiers could best protect themselves from a system of blame that had little downward loyalty by refusing illegal orders. Aaron Bennett refused to allow an extra-judicial killing, and was especially incensed by abuse of children. He saw abusive violence as likely to result in retaliatory harm to soldiers.

Sam Bailey simply acted in the presence of men whose conduct she put down to a kind of dementedness. Twice the immediacy of the possible harm called forth a direct intervention. As pointed out in the last chapter, she has lingering doubts about whether subsequent attacks on her comrades could have been avoided if she had been more explicit and adamant.

The lived experience of objecting to abusive violence seems surprisingly devoid of fear or hesitation. In most instances the objections seem to come forth as

spontaneous expressions of the ridiculousness and stupidity of the actions being observed. The objections were not framed in terms of being contrary to winning hearts of minds in a counter-insurgency campaign. If persuasive arguments were attempted, appealing to the self-interest of the abusers was used. While fatigue and frustration were enough to trigger the “long drive-by,” at least once those same factors led instead to a moment of unreflective complicity with torture and probably a lifetime of guilt.

In the next chapter I will look more closely at the experience of abusive violence as lived by two soldiers whose units took part in deliberate mistreatment. In one case, the soldier was junior to veteran soldiers whose atrocious approaches had developed in an earlier deployment. He was influenced in part by their examples, but after a particularly harrowing encounter became an enthusiastic killer and torturer. The other soldier was part of an elite unit that used abusive violence in nuanced and generally controlled ways. He exercised personal restraint and sought to influence his comrades toward self-restraint. Ultimately, the viewpoints of the two men about their abusive violence are worlds apart, and the effects on them of having participated also starkly differ.

Chapter 5. Chris and Frank: Testimonies of Abuse

This chapter and the next explore more deeply many of the themes already discussed and introduce others not yet covered. The two men whose experiences are the foci of these chapters come from backgrounds that are in some ways similar. Their Iraq experiences also share some features, but in terms of wartime missions and personal participation in abusive violence, their experiences diverge. The final reflections on each man's war and abusive violence underlie the superordinate themes that their accounts produce.

Unlike the last two chapters, individual themes will not be examined in detail apart from each man's overall story arc. Given the larger numbers of participants addressed in prior chapters, analysis of common elements and differences between accounts would have been excessively unwieldy and a theme specific ordering was therefore suitable. In this examination of two men, it is possible to shift between a close-in "zoom" on specific episodes for the men and a more opened-out perspective that allows us to see thematic threads that run throughout the individual men's narratives. In this way the themes for each man can be tied both to individual incidents and the meaning of the larger experience of going to war and being exposed to abusive violence.

The choice of these two particular men for this level of examination is based on the fact that they were each involved in routine abusive violence. This makes them similar and of interest for the purposes of seeing whether their personal themes have common features worth noticing. The men served in combat units that both saw heavy combat, but the nature of the engagements were quite different, and in many ways the nature of the resulting abusive violence were dissimilar. This dissimilarity is a reason to compare the two participants' experiences, it allows an examination of whether those differences created contrasting sense-making about those experiences.

One unit was responsible for maintaining general order in specific areas and therefore conducted patrols and other operations which made them susceptible to both being ambushed and becoming part of the general strategy of an infantry battalion to pacify the space within geographic boundaries. The abusive violence enacted by this unit often followed combat initiated by the enemy, although the rare capture and interrogate raid was also assigned. These aspects of the first unit's day to day entry into situations that presented opportunities for abuse appear to have

engendered anger-based abuse. The unit also participated in abuse for intelligence-gathering, amusement, and convenience.

The other participant's unit was a highly-trained special operations force that was allowed a great deal of independent initiative. The unit relied on routine death-threats and physical abuse in order to obtain quick information which could be instantly exploited. This unit's abuse was generally applied with adequate restraint and precision to elicit the desired information, and was paused when the instrumental purpose was fulfilled. This is not to say that the victims of this unit's abusive violence were less terrified than the first unit's; the second unit simply did not appear to engage in affective violence to the extent of the first unit.

Chris and Frank

Chris Alexander's introduction to abusive violence took place long before he enlisted in the military and continued into his assignment to a squad whose members would groom him to accept abusive violence as part of war. Chris first observed and participated in abusive violence enacted on detainees immediately in the wake of his unit being attacked. The initial angry beatings became more severe as further intense combat occurred, turning into nothing short of torture, mutilations and murder. Eventually, kidnapping, torture, and murder happened for motives as diverse as curiosity, intelligence gathering, amusement, and even the mere avoidance of paperwork. Chris was deeply affected by his wartime conduct and his memories are filled with regret. He views most of the abusive violence as having been needlessly brutal and ultimately pointless.

Frank Wright was part of an elite unit that was highly trained and supremely confident in its ability to complete its mission of dismantling the insurgent organization of the enemy. This was done through conducting precise raids based on sound intelligence, and immediately wringing information from anyone they captured. Frank and his cohorts were highly-skilled professional special operations soldiers who fully expected to prevail if they met with armed resistance. They used abusive violence very specifically to obtain quick information about the whereabouts of arms, materiel, and money used by insurgents. The unit generally engaged in physical torture and murder only to accomplish its mission; although, once in the wake of an incident where some of its number were killed or wounded, brutal detainee murder ensued. Frank's own conduct was restrained and he tried to warn his fellow soldiers about the self-harm they were committing as they brutalized detainees. His view of abusive violence, and especially its use in intelligence gathering, is wholly unrepentant and he feels no guilt for what his unit did, largely because he sees the unit as having been successful in its mission.

In this chapter I will explore the two soldiers' accounts from early interest in military service through the initiation into abusive violence and on to the experiences of abuse. In the next chapter I will present the two participants' recollections and reflections of issues collateral to abuse and of their post-deployment sense-making of the abusive violence.

War Fascination and Lessons in Abusive Violence

I was always in awe

Chris was enamored of military life in general and war in particular. He was fascinated by his family's history of combat service and could not wait to enlist. He described the reasons he wanted to join the military. He spoke of feeling obligated, a need, to enlist:

Q: When you say that you felt obligated, can you tell me more about that?

A: Ah, I had the personal belief that all people should serve some time in the military, kinda like how Israel does it where when they turn 18 they do two years in the military.

Q: Why did you think that?

A: You're given all these freedoms, and yet you don't know why you have them—you—you don't understand why other people sacrifice the way that they did to ensure that you still have them. That's why I did it.

Chris' reply voices his sense of seeking to understand the mystery of patriotism and willing self-sacrifice. He sees the sacrifice as being the vehicle by which the gifts of freedom are passed between generations, creating the obligation to serve in a like way for all citizens. It is a part of an American ethos that was more than merely symbolic to him.

Chris comes from family which on both sides demonstrated the willingness to sacrifice on behalf of the nation. His biological father, mother, grandfather and step-father were all military veterans. Chris grew up in and around military bases as the family often moved due to his parents' military assignments. He loved being around the military and fervently hoped to make the military his own career.

Chris saw himself possessing a different, privileged, view of the military and war from most kids. He described his childhood self:

A: I mean I—I grew up in the military so my understanding of war, death and all that was different than everybody else; I had more of a realistic view

about it. Um...whereas most kids around my age, when I was even in kindergarten, didn't understand it or didn't really know too much about it. I—I knew or seemed like, was more enlightened or more um...knowledgeable about the subject.

Q: You said also you felt it was a bit like a family business?

A: Uh-huh.

That perspective was nourished by more than simply living in military base communities. Chris found a powerful way to connect with his father's Viet Nam experiences when he was eight years old:

My dad was um...he served in the tail end of Viet Nam; he volunteered, he didn't get drafted. Um...he joined the Infantry, yeah, so he lied about his age in order to get in. Um...I—I remember...when I was a kid, I'd dress up in his old cammies [camouflage uniforms] and one time I found a—his old foot locker which had a lot of photos and little notebooks of...that he would detail events that happened to him while he was over there and I was always in awe.

Chris' account in this one passage displays several important things about his imagining of war. His father was a hero who did not evade the draft, but in fact broke the rules in order to join the war. Chris donned the garments worn by his father in combat while accessing his father's journals and mementos, giving him entrée to the thoughts and images of a young combat soldier. Chris idealized war and idolized his father because of what he read in the journals and saw in the photos: "and I was always in awe."

It is little wonder, then, that Chris would want to follow in his father's footsteps. He too enlisted at the earliest possible age, even though his parents were discouraging him from joining during wartime. He met with resistance from his grandfather, a revered family figure, and a veteran of not one, but two wars. Chris discussed the effects on his desire to enlist:

Q: So it's fair to say you were determined to do it?

A: Yeah, um my grandfather on my mom's side who served in the military in Korea and Vietnam really was my motivation to see it all the way through, 'cause he told me that I couldn't do it, that I wouldn't survive, I wouldn't last and I wanted to throw it in his face, 'cause every time he told me that I couldn't do something, I had to prove him wrong.

Chris' grandfather predicted that he would wash out of his initial military training because he was not good enough for military service. Chris had a strong and lasting reaction:

Q: How did you feel when he said that?

A: I hated him. I really didn't like him after that point and our relationship wasn't the best in the world after that. (Long pause) It still isn't.

No other way to learn things about yourself

Frank Wright spoke of combat as an "ultimate human experience," in much the same way that others described why they wanted to go to war. For Frank, joining offered a means of following the footsteps of his forebears into the opportunity to discover the true measure of himself and humanity.

To Frank, as with Chris, the military was a boyhood dream stemming from a family heritage steeped in military service. He describes his military connections when giving the reasons he joined the military:

That all started at a very young age; it's just kind of the way it was. Every member of my family joins the military; every male member of my family, literally, every single male member of my family joins the military. Actually, three weekends ago, I took my wife and family to a cemetery, our family cemetery that has some of the oldest graves in the area that I live, and took a picture with my great-great-great-grandfather's tombstone, and he served in the, in the Civil War, and we took a picture with him, and you know that's—so that—that—that is the culture in my family, you join the military and a lot of it had to do with the fact that I read a lot of books as a child, and I was really into war books and history books [] I know I read literally every book out there on military and operations and things like that, and when I say every book, I mean more like personal accounts, I don't mean like textbooks and...you know, I was a young man...I wasn't analytically looking at anything; I was looking for a cool story, and this story is true. And, you know, my—my grandfather was in World War II, Korea and Viet Nam. My uncles was in Korea and Viet Nam; my dad was in Viet Nam, my other uncle was in Viet Nam, um...I mean...that's just how it is.

For Frank it was more than a desire to be in the military that drove him to enlist. He had a desire to "see the elephant," as US Civil War recruits anticipating their first combat would have put it:

I've always considered war to be the ultimate human experience, you know, good, bad or otherwise. I had a saying, 'There's only like three things in life

that are all they're cracked up to be. It's women, drugs and war.' They're the only three things that you ever experience that really are everything that they say they are . . . seriously, they're all they're cracked up to be, and that—that's kind of the main reason I joined the military, not just because of family ties, but ah...just—there's no other way to learn things about yourself that you can learn in the military.

He was asked to elaborate and replied:

I just wanted to see how I would react to extreme stress and see if I had the ability to handle myself in situations, you know, that it's just a good way to really find out what kind of person you really are. See if you are the kind of person who may abuse someone or see if you are the kind of person who can place yourself in direct danger and still think intelligently, ah—I mean, I've read a lot of books, and I had attributes about people that I respected and regarded and now I wanted to find out if I had some of those same attributes myself. Um, I guess that's what I mean by that.

Here Frank makes clear that war was not only something to be experienced, it was to be a means by which he could measure himself as a person.

That's pretty brutal

Contrary to his grand-father's predictions, Chris did complete his military training and joined a unit that had fought its way into Iraq during an earlier deployment. In this unit, Chris was further groomed to become an abusive soldier. The unit was preparing to return to Iraq and Chris learned about abusive violence from the more experienced soldiers:

Q: Had they talked about detainees from their prior deployment before you went?

A: Every now and then, yeah.

Q: Do you remember what kinds of things you heard?

A: They um...(long pause)...they talked about things that they would do, water boarding 'em and putting cigarettes out on 'em, cutting off fingers and...strapping 'em to the side of Humvees...

Q: When they started describing doing those things what were you thinking?

A: Um...that's pretty brutal.

Q: At that time, before you deployed, how did you feel when you heard that that's how detainees had been treated by these guys?

A: Um...(pause)...I felt somewhat sorry for them; they shouldn't have been treated that way, but at the same time I had the feeling, "it's combat and you're gonna do what you gotta do."

Chris, the young inexperienced soldier, hearing about abusive violence, rationalized the conduct as justified by necessity:

Q: And what were your feelings about the folks who were telling you about these experiences?

A: That they'd been in the thick of it; that their actions in their minds were justifiable.

Q: How did they seem, when they were telling you about it, what was their demeanor like?

A: Cold...very somber, very ah—some of them were very ah...very—they tried to use their words as carefully as possible, and very calculated when they would speak, how they would say things—almost to the point where some of it seemed like they were forcing or sugar coating it.

What Chris describes is not the lighthearted boasting by soldiers trying to impress the neophyte. Instead, the experience he relates is that of being among cautious, dangerous and deliberate men. Their caution about the topic of abusive violence was underscored when the Abu Ghraib scandal erupted. Chris described the older soldiers' reaction to the photos and their confirmation of involvement in similar abuse:

A: Humorous reaction; they think it was funny, um comments of—"they were idiots to take photos, but that's shit that we would do."

Q: Not taking the photos, but the actions?

A: Yes.

Q: Were there any of the things that came up that, um the people you were with say, "That's just stupid or lame or..."

A: Ah, some people would have said, "Yeah, that's kinda childish," but the general consensus was, "They're fuckin' idiots for using cameras."

The publicity did give rise to an explicit pre-deployment arrangement in Chris' squad. Chris explained:

A: Um, shortly before, well actually the day before deploying, we were up at the tarmac waiting, you know, just kind of a last check, make sure we got everything, so our...trip out there would go as smoothly as possible. Um...our squad leader pulled us aside and said, and brought the subject back up with Abu Ghraib that um...if anything were to happen like that, that no photos should be taken.

Q: What comments were made when he said that?

A: Everybody pretty much was that was...common sense.

Q: Now when you heard that, what were you feeling?

A: Um...I was...just ready to get in the field and I—I really didn't...pay any attention. I just wished we were deploying that day instead of the next day.

For Chris, the prospect of the unit engaging in abusive violence was well established before he left for Iraq, and the agreement to do it smarter than the guards at Abu Ghraib was accepted out of hand by the young soldier anxious to go to war.

They keep it real

Frank introduced a view of humanity spanning a range of behavior that includes brutality and stark choices. He saw this before going to Iraq and his sense of his early experiences were developed more fully by what he later saw and did.

Frank joined the military and was accepted into an elite special operations group where he received far more training than did regular infantry soldiers. He deployed first to a non-Middle Eastern country as a trainer/advisor to a government that has been fighting an active organized insurgency for many years. His exposure to abusive violence began there:

And previous deployments I had seen it too. Literally, when I was in [deleted], those savages would like capture people and cut them up, and these weren't military, but these were [deleted]that I had trained with and they'd like cut 'em up, and like stick their head on a stake, I mean, they're old school man, they keep it real down there. They ah, they really do it; it's—you know, they hack 'em up with [deleted] and...feed 'em to pigs, and stick their head on a stake, and I saw that, "wow, like...a guy's head in the stake...and I knew him...yesterday."

Frank's view of a raw, elemental, and primal world that is more "real" than the normal experiences of Americans is something he brought up several times during the two interviews. For him, this reality is one to be regarded with due respect, as it reveals human nature as it truly exists.

In Iraq, Frank's unit was primarily used to target key insurgent personnel. He described the kinds of individuals he expected his team to capture:

Q: Who did you think was going to be getting themselves detained?

A: Ah, combatants, on the field; I knew exactly who they were. Um, even before I went over there, I knew who they were. Ah...I mean...there were the people that the government wanted to talk to, the main people who had, you know, they were the top of the cells. Instead of using the bottom-up strategy the cops like to do. In the military, we go from the top down strategy; we cut the head off the snake. We don't develop informants and process—at least...not my job. You know, we weren't into, you know, developing informants and following that trail; we didn't have that sort of time. We—we found out who was, I think, where we needed them to be, and then we went to where [they were] and got them, and that's exactly what happened. I was trained for it and we went over there, and that's what happened. . . .

Q: What would make them of interest?

A: Ah, they were actively engaged in the harmful operations toward U.S. military personnel, be it smuggling, money raising, ah, a lot of the people we went after were trainers, the main trainers and the main funders of these operations. So that's what made them of interest to us that, you know, we get rid of them and then there's no one to train people; there's no one to give them money; there's no one to give them cars; there's no one to supply them with the resources that they need to cause harm to, you know, U.S. military. That's what made them of interest.

This mission would afford Frank the opportunities he always hoped for when he dreamt of going to war.

Abuse in Iraq

Better him than me

Chris's first incident of abusive violence surprised him, but he was little affected by it. His attitude, and what he observed, made clear that Chris had been

prepared to witness routine beatings of captured fighters. At this point, however, he was not a participant.

Chris had never encountered a detainee before seeing his squad beat a captured fighter in the wake of an attack. He offered a succinct narrative of the incident from start to finish:

It was ah...my first interaction with a detainee. It was the first time um...we were in a town, we had dismounted from our Humvees and we started up our patrol and we took some small arms fire and we busted down the door and took the guy by surprise. They dragged him out and they beat him a little bit, yelled at 'im you know, and kicked 'im and then flexi-cuffed 'im and then threw him in the back of our high-back Humvee and we continued on our way and we took him with us and then after continuing our patrol route, we returned back to base. He was left face down in the back of the high-back, and people with their feet on 'im, which is considered disgraceful in Iraq to show the bottom of your foot or put the bottom of your foot on somebody. He was left back there for about an hour, maybe, hour and a half before he was finally pulled out and taken to the holding facility...and there he was beaten again and then thrown in-in a cell.

Chris was asked to describe the situation in more detail:

Q: What happened?

A: Um...punched, kicked...butt stroked¹⁶ a couple times, beaten with sticks...

Q: And how many members of the um squad took part in that?

A: About eight...roughly.

Q: And when you saw that happening how were you physically reacting to that?

A: I was in disbelief, but I was trying to also focus on what was going on around us...because they were all pretty distracted with this one guy. There could have been others out there that could have taken us all out.

Q: What sort of things did you hear?

¹⁶ "butt stroked" refers to striking a person with the end or edge of a rifle butt-stock.

A: "Fuckin' asshole," "sand nigger," um... "piece of shit," "fuckin' shootin' at us...," "I'm gonna fuckin' kill you...," things to that extent.

Chris' immediate thoughts after the incident were not fixated on what had happened. We talked about when he returned to his quarters:

Q: What—what was occupying your thoughts then?

A: At the time, I thought better him than me...um, but after we left and we got back to our huts, my thoughts were more on what I was gonna do until we had to go out again, whether go to the um...the communications center and get on-line or make a phone call back home or watch movies, or just go to sleep.

Chris related that the squad members and members of the detention facility guard force beat the detainee with nightsticks without much comment when he was turned over. The impression one receives is that of a routinized process of brutality that helped Chris move from initial "disbelief" to unconcern and an untroubled ability to concentrate on the mundane. It was not long before Chris began his own participation; before that happened, he experienced a harrowing encounter that changed his entire view of being in Iraq.

I wasn't there really to ensure their freedom

Chris was being asked about injuries suffered by his unit when he mentioned cuts he received about a week after the first detainee beating. In the space of a single intimate and lethal encounter, Chris switched from an idealistic young soldier to a pure survivor. He described the incident while showing me the scars on his forearms:

A: We had gotten hit pretty hard several times. I had been [by] myself---I had somebody...had the jump on me where I had sustained some scars from hand-to-hand combat.

Q: I'm sorry, say that again?

A: Um...it was about a week after the fir—after my first dealing with a detainee.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Um, we had been hit pretty hard on several occasions when we'd go out on patrols.

Q: Did you take casualties?

A: Um...minor injuries, um concussions, um...flesh wounds but nothing real serious where we had to just leave or call in evac. Um...on one occasion, um, as we were clearing a building [I] ended up going down a corridor or a hallway by myself, which wasn't very intelligent, and I missed a door as I was going down and I—I don't know where this guy was from. He could have been Iraqi, could've been Syrian. We dealt with a lot of mix whether they were Iraqis or Syrians or even from Iran and um, and we engaged in hand-to-hand combat where I defended myself with my arms and sustained a couple scars. Um...my will to live was stronger than his and ah...I killed him and after that point I was...not really caring anymore about them and about their well-being...kinda came to the realization that I wasn't there really to ensure their freedom but to help the person on my left and my right come home.

Q: By "they," you're talking about the Iraqi people?

A: No, well yeah. Well, I wasn't there fighting for their freedom. I was there to make sure that the guys that I was serving with would come home alive...and I stopped viewing the Iraqis as people in general and more or less animals or basically less than human.

Q: Were the other members of your squad feeling the same way?

A: Uh-huh. We all—we all felt the same way. We all just wanted to go home, and we were willing to do whatever it took to go home, to make sure that everybody went home.

Chris is able to identify a single point in time when his world view shrank from high ideals to personal survival. Alone in a corridor he is attacked, wounded and kills his assailant. He frames his new sense of resolve as ensuring the safety of his comrades and makes evident that he certainly intends to survive. It is as if he sees his survival as a matter of sheer will-power: "my will to live was stronger than his." He links the survival of himself and his comrades with the ability to see the Iraqis as animals. Those animals would not deserve the sacrifice from Chris that his forebears had made on behalf of him and his fellow Americans.

I wanted to kill 'im

Chris' further journey toward becoming a brutal abuser of detainees gained impetus as his frustration and rage erupted in the wake of an ambush. Chris was asked to recount the first instance in which he directly took part in abusive violence. This happened after his deadly hallway encounter:

Um...we were conducting um...what we jokingly refer to as humanitarian operations. It was more of a show force than it was taking care of the people out there, and we were patrolling through a village that was located along the Euphrates and ah...there was two guys that started shooting at us and we returned fire and we killed one; and the other one took off where we dismounted in pursuit after him on foot. He was running along the river bank and we caught up to him and I tackled 'im into the river where I proceeded to beat him and submerge his head underwater... and I beat 'im with my Kevlar helmet, with my fists. Then intermittently dunking him into the water before a couple of members in my squad dragged me off of him and dragged him onto the bank.

Chris was asked for more detail:

Q: When you were holding him down under the water, what did you want to do to him?

A: I wanted to kill 'im.

[]

Q: (Pause) Why did you want to capture him?

A: We had received reports of people in the area that may know more than we let on, and ah-if possible, bring 'em in.

Q: So while you were-while he was running you had that thought in your mind?

A: Yeah.

Q: But when you hit the water?

A: I was...upset, I was wet and miserable and it was hot and... I mean our body armor adds 10 degrees of heat and now adding water that's evaporating, that's basically having your own humidifier strapped to your body. It's hot and miserable and wet...just-just not...just not a fun...kind of time for me.

Chris described exercising restraint and trying to capture the shooter for intelligence purposes, but his self-control evaporated when they hit the water. He described what he was feeling at that moment:

A: Um...I was a little pissed off because it was just...supposed to be a drive. It wasn't really supposed to be anything; we were going through towns that we

never really had any issues with before. It was supposed to be a nice easy day and then ah...tackling him in the water wasn't the brightest because that's a nasty river. I smelled like crap for days.

Q: What were your emotions when you were striking him?

A: I was angry. I mean they wanted to shoot at us, but weren't willing enough to stay and fight. I was angry and just...I was just angry. I was just...my mind was blown because that's what all our engagements were like. They would just hit us and run. They never really give us a stand-up fight. That's what we wanted, that's (laugh) what we were hoping for.

Q: So how did you feel about the enemy who shot and ran?

A: That he was a coward, he was willing to take several shots at us but wasn't really willing to do anything after that.

Chris was able to assess the damage he had done and to reflect on the situation afterward:

A: Um...I fractured...his left orbital bone. Ah...I broke his jaw, I busted his ear and knocked out a couple teeth when I slammed my Kevlar helmet in his face.

Q: When you saw that damage, what do you think or feel?

A: It serves him right. He wanted to shoot at us and his buddy got killed and he gets to walk away with broken bones.

Q: After you had taken a shower, did you think about the encounter?

A: Yeah.

Q: What did you think?

A: That I should have killed him. That I shouldn't have even wasted my energy chasing him down, I should have just shot him.

Q: (Pause) Was that something that you arrived at on your own or in discussion with others?

A: On my own while showering.

Q: (Pause) At some point after that, did you remember what you had in your mind when you were chasing him about intelligence value of detainees?

A: No.

Q: (Pause) What comments did your squadmates make to you about what you had done?

A: "Good job", "wouldn't have done it any other way".

Q: And what'd you say?

A: "Doing what I was paid to do."

Q: Did you share with them the conclusion you had come to in the shower.

A: Um, to a couple. They said it sounded more like a reasonable choice than tackling him into a river. Less paper work.

For Chris, this encounter reveals his soldier-self's disdain for a base and cowardly enemy who deprived the Americans of the head-to-head battle they yearned for. He also described the unleashing of a pent-up frustration brought to a head by the dashed expectation of an easy day in the field. Chris reveals that his attitude about the use of abusive violence had moved from an initial "disbelief" at witnessing a beating to a callous indifference enabling him to conclude that he should have saved his breath and simply killed the fleeing insurgent. The brusque macho interchange with his squad mates endorsed his actions and also gave an entirely banal reason for killing instead of capture: "less paperwork." That this was absurd on multiple levels is appallingly evident, but fails even on the issue of relevance. Elsewhere in his account Chris described that a detainee had been simply dropped off by the patrol at the detention center, without any report being given, so there could not have been any less paperwork. What is eminently clear is that Chris' squad was talking itself into casual killing of detainees for simple convenience.

Why even bother taking him in?

It was not long before the squad put their attitudes into action. Chris found the next level of the squad's transformation into a torture and killing machine when the lethal logic behind a simple question went unchallenged in the face of revenge and callousness.

He described a situation where the squad came across a bomb-planting insurgent and the deliberations that preceded a murder. Chris was asked whether he had personally observed the event:

A: It was observed and we caught him one night, ambushed him, cuffed 'im, um instead of taking him back, we might as well just kill him. Either way, he's not going to be out there.

Q: What did he have with him? I mean, did you guys captured him?

A: Um...homemade explosives.

Q: Is he by himself?

A: Yes.

Q: (Pause) And...at the time he was shot, was there any sort of discussion, did somebody say something?

A: We were all discussing what we should do with him. And we all came up with a consensus, just to shoot him, not even worry about it and say that he shot at us and...that was it.

Q: At the time you guys were discussing it, what was his situation?

A: Um, he was bound, flexi-cuffed behind his back. He was on his knees, um...one member of my unit has his knee on the upper portion of his back, forcing him down.

Q: And um how was it decided who was gonna shoot him?

A: Ah...we drew straws.

Q: During the discussion, were there arguments made for taking him in?

A: Ah...couple people.

Q: Do you remember what their logic was?

A: Either way he wasn't going to be out on--burying IEDs on the side of the road.

Q: If he was detained?

A: Even if he was detained.

Q: And what was it--

A: He would be more likely tortured, so his punishment would be prolonged instead of quick.

Q: So these are the-that was the logic being offered for why you'd take him in?

A: Uh-huh.

Q: And then what was said in response to that logic?

A: "Why even bother taking him in?"

Q: So you drew straws and was it a single individual who pulled the straw to shoot or were there more than one?

A: There were um...there was 11 long straws and one short straw... (pause) and we all-we grabbed a straw.

Q: And your straw was long or short?

A: Long.

Q: How did you feel when you pulled a long straw?

A: I wanted to do it.

Q: You wanted to shoot him?

A: Uh-huh. Ah, he was responsible or at least in my mind he was responsible for the death of a buddy of mine that I went to [training] with. Who had died in the area...from an IED.

Q: Was that on your mind at the time?

A: Uh-huh.

Here Chris introduces the theme of revenge as being a motivator for killing. He also shows that the squad was operating entirely on an inward-focused logic devoid of outside considerations. They saw the goal as removing a dangerous enemy from the battlefield and accepted equal risk/opportunity to be the one to pull the trigger. They prioritized immediate convenience over any intelligence that could have been obtained from the bomber, any punishment that would have likely occurred at the detention center, and indeed any accolades they could have received for making the capture. In the end, one prosaic question settled the argument: "Why even bother taking him in?"

What could happen if they messed with us

The treatment of battlefield captures figures prominently in one incident recounted by Chris. Chris describes his adoption of murder and mutilation in response to surviving a ferocious battle, and the desire to permanently intimidate the captured enemy. Chris' squad was on a mounted patrol near a town where a squad from another platoon had been left to patrol on foot. The other squad came under fire and began to take casualties, eventually becoming pinned down, surrounded by insurgents. Chris' squad was sent to their aid, and drove as close as they could to the battle. Leaving some soldiers to guard the vehicles, the squad killed more than twenty fighters while fighting its way to relieve the trapped soldiers. On the way in, Chris' squad took several insurgents captive, and immobilized them before moving forward. During the retreat a number of acts of abusive violence occurred, started by the members of the other squad. Chris described what he saw and did:

Q: Going back to the engagement where you're extracting with the other squad, some of the people in the other squad began shooting people that your unit had had detained or had tied up. How did you react to that?

A: "That's a good idea."

Q: Were all of the um...individuals gathered up by that point or were you just moving back along your-your route?

A: We were moving back along the same route that we had.

Q: So...who's the first, describe the first of the detainees that you shot on the way out?

A: He was an older male...with some slight gray hair, sort of a little pepper.

Q: Had you been present during his capture?

A: No...

Q: Or his neutralizing?

A: No.

Q: Why did you decide to shoot him at that point?

A: (Pause) Because I didn't wanna waste my energy dragging him.

Chris and his partner shot the next bound insurgent they found, but they used others as human shields. This did not ensure the detainee's survival:

Q: And...the third person that you shot on the way out, can you describe that situation?

A: We were just pretty much at the Humvees. It was one of the people that we picked up and had 'em running in front of us. Just shot 'im and we got in the Humvees and waited for everybody else to mount up and go.

Q: Were any of the detainees taken back?

A: Um, we had five of 'em with us.

Q: So the one that you shot near the Humvees, why did you decide to shoot him?

A: We were pretty full...didn't have much space.

Again, the killing of detainees took place because of the practical considerations: Chris did not want to drag detainees during the retreat. The squad had no room for all of the human shields, and apparently did not think it was appropriate to abandon them unharmed. Given the fact that these detainees were taken under arms while fighting, there would have been no question of their "guilt" in the minds of the soldiers. As with the bomber shot after pulling straws, these victims would not be loose to pose future threats.

The drive back to the base lasted ninety minutes. Chris describes the mayhem that took place:

Q: Were any of them [detainees] subjected to any abuse on the way back?

A: Um some were urinated on, cigarettes put out on 'em, pretty much a lot of beating, lotta taking our knives and cutting them, not deeply but...enough to draw blood and hurt 'em.

Q: Between the two squads, yours and for lack of a better term, the first squad, um...did-one group or the other seem more into hurting the detainees at that point?

A: They were...the first squad. They were-they were pretty-pretty pissed and...they were...they were not happy (slight chuckle) at all for lack of any better phrase.

Q: Was that the first time you used your-your knife to um abuse a detainee?

A: Ah, yeah.

Q: Had you seen somebody else do that by that time?

A: Hmm...no, not that I can remember. I've used my knife before and it wasn't on somebody that was already bound.

Q: So what made you add that to what you were going to do?

A: (Pause) Um...I really...had no reason except for, give them a constant reminder of what could happen if they messed with us.

Q: When you say 'constant reminder' what-what did you mean?

A: Um...cut em deep enough that they'd have a scar, something that they would see for the rest of their life if they live long enough.

Q: And um where were you cutting on them?

A: The chest, cheeks, arms, legs.

Q: And...was there any...anything other than straight cuts?

A: Um...carved initials...carved symbols...

Q: Initials of individuals or organizations?

A: Both.

Q: Your own?

A: Yes.

Q: And your service?

A: Yes.

Q: And what sort of symbols?

A: Stars and smiley faces.

Q: Of these, how many detainees did you have access to?

A: Um...

Q: That you were doing this to?

A: We had um...about seven with us.

Q: And...where was this taking place?

- A: In the high-back [Humvee].
- Q: So all seven were in there?
- A: Uh-huh.
- Q: And were they on benches, standing, lying down?
- A: Sitting, standing, lying...on top of each other.
- Q: Did...how many of you were using your knives?
- A: Um...there was four of us.
- Q: From just your squad?
- A: Um, no, it was mixed, there was um...me and one other person from my squad and then two from the other squad.
- Q: Were all of the detainees in the vehicle...cut?
- A: Yeah, as far as I know, yes.
- Q: While you were doing it, who-well who was the first one--
- A: Um...
- Q: --to use a blade?
- A: I don't know; there was um, a lot of was going on, it was pretty chaotic; it was just...pretty...(pause)well...
- Q: What were you hearing at the time?
- A: Screams.
- Q: Just from detainees?
- A: No, screaming from other people...loud. You hear it over the engines, some from our wounded, some from the detainees...
- Q: What'd it smell like?
- A: (Pause) Smelled like shit...smelled bad. Um...smelled like diesel fumes and...body odor and...just...it didn't smell good.
- Q: What were you saying while you were doing this?

- A: I was laughing...and pointing out, "Hey look...look what I did..."
- Q: How long was the ride back to the base?
- A: It was about a-an hour and a half.
- Q: At some point did the abuse stop before you...?
- A: Um, about half an hour before we went back to the base.
- Q: Why did it stop?
- A: Lost its fun.
- Q: While you were-during the hour or so before you stopped, did um-was it constant?
- A: No, it wasn't constant, you know...get an idea and just do it and-and after you're done you kinda go off into...just space, and then you get another idea to do and do it again.

Chris describes a scene of depraved blood-letting by vengeful soldiers who turn the mutilations into marks of victory on the bodies of the captured insurgents. Chris' reasons for scarring the prisoners are both to humiliate and intimidate, he wanted to "give them a constant reminder of what could happen if they messed with us." There is also the dimension of cruel delight at the abuse they inflict. Chris mentions laughing and pointing to the clever works he created and only stopping when the activity "lost its fun." Whether this action and satisfaction is a response to surviving a deadly encounter with superior numbers of enemy is unclear; however, in later instances of abusive violence, the dimension of peril is sometimes absent.

It always seemed logical at the time

In the aftermath of the rescue/torture incident Chris and his squad were relieved that they had been able to rescue the other squad and make it out themselves without any soldiers dying. They also discussed the abusive violence; Chris and his squad mates found easy justification for killing people they captured and abused:

- Q: With respect to shooting the um enemy who were tied up? Did you or the squad mates discuss or talk about it?
- A: Um, what we did...(heavy sigh)...um...the only discussion was "winning hearts and minds."
- Q: Tell me about that.

A: Ah, it's...an old saying...um, "Let me win your hearts and minds or I'll burn your damn huts down".

Q: Was it from the Viet Nam era?

A: Right. (Faint)

Q: So how, how was that said in the context of what you guys are doing?

A: "Winnin' hearts and minds everywhere we go."

Chris' squad wryly turned the COIN objective of gaining the trust and confidence of the populace on its head and into a hyper-macho swagger.

I asked Chris about other incidents:

Q: Did um...you question other people under circumstances that at the end you thought it was logical to shoot them?

A: Uh-huh. (Long pause) It always seemed logical at the time, but afterwards it was like...could've just let him go, but then again the same people that were friendly with us during the day were shooting us at night, so it'd just be another one. I mean I remember one incident where I had gotten a shave and the guy had a straight razor. He could've easily slit my throat that day. That night we got into a fire fight with a small group and he was one of the dead. All I could think about was he was just holding a razor next to my throat that morning. (Faint)

Q: How did that thought make you feel?

A: Lucky.

Chris' words mark a conflict in his thoughts about the killing the squad did after torturing detainees. By his admitting the possibility of release, we see that something in him regrets the murders. In the next breath his war-zone logic asserts itself and the single instance of the barber/insurgent stands to justify the blanket reasoning for murder. He evidences a kind of logical "blind-spot" to the alternative of turning the prisoners in for detention. That he does this is in itself curious since he mentions the practice of having done so in reality. The kill-release-detention question seems to be settled in his mind as being weighted toward killing. It is unclear whether this is because his squad might have done this most often in practice or if having done the most serious action even once he is compelled to adopt the applied logic as necessarily and universally appropriate with other detainees. He was however able to

articulate a clear lethal logic while recounting the first time he directly tortured a detainee.

I'm not into that

Frank described a particularly brutal kind of violence leveled at detainees by a translator, and the Americans' unwillingness to be present during possible torture. While Frank described legal considerations, his personal distaste seems to have governed his actions.

A figure of particular prominence to Frank was the translator that his unit "inherited" from the unit previously operating in the area. According to Frank, the interpreter ("Ted") was a Kurd who hated the local population after his family had been killed. Frank was asked what the other unit said about Ted.

A: That he produces results immediately. Ah, because this unit lost a lot of people and my unit lost a lot of people, but....Ted was really good to have around. Ah, well basically [what] we wanted to know is like, "Where are you making the bombs at?" "Where's it at, where's all the materials at?" "Take us to where all these materials are right now..." and he told us, and we went there, and we blew the whole place up.

Q: How—what did you understand was the way Ted got people talking?

A: He would cut their fingers off or he would show them a pornographic magazine and let them decide how he was going to fuck them; that's literally what he would do to people, but he was a crazy person, and he was very mean and he did not like Insurgents, at all. Ah...yeah...and it usually, I don't know how often it came to that, um...but ah it was usually really quick. It never took very long at all.

Frank explained that he and the other Americans would deliberately absent themselves during some of Ted's interactions with the detainees.

Q: Was there—you mentioned that there were times when Ted would have you guys leave the room.

A: Uh-huh.

Q: And that signaled that he was going to be doing things that you didn't want to be present for?

A: Yes.

Q: In your mind, what was the line that existed that divided what was okay for you to see and what you really didn't want to see?

A: Well, it was more of a legal thing, and I personally wouldn't want to see that anyways. I'm not one of those people that like, watches "Faces of Death" or anything. I'm not—I'm not into that, I'm not into like...hurting people or like seeing people—it's just is not my thing, you know. So I didn't know that I had a line; I just had like a, but if I knew he was going to be ass raping somebody, I don't want any part of that or cuttin' someone's finger off. I don't wanna be in there watching someone's finger get cut off. I don't want to be a part, I mean, that's just not something I want to, you know...

Q: What was the legal thing?

A: You can't do that to people! It's wrong (laughs)...immorally and legally.

Q: Okay.

A: And you go to jail for shit like that. "Did you cut that guy's finger off?" "Yes I did." "Okay, you're going to Ft. Leavenworth [military prison]."

Q: Um...

A: And it's just sick, it's gross.

Frank was quite capable of accepting the fruits of Ted's atrocities as long as they advanced the mission. At the same time he was happy to be absent from the actual torture, both for legal reasons and a fastidiousness I was surprised to find in a special operations warrior. In this exchange his laughter evidences an amusement at the violence under discussion, something he did several times during the two interviews.

Interestingly, Frank introduced Ted into the narrative of his deployment by describing the abusive violence attributed to him, but when questioned closely, the reality was more elusive:

Q: Was it your belief that he was doing that [rape] to some of the detainees when you were operating with him?

A: I don't think so, because it was all over so quick. I don't know that he ever had time to really do anything like that, and like I said, I do believe that he did, ah but I don't, I don't even—like I said, we usually left and like literally before we could even like get all of our stuff unloaded. I mean we usually had

what we needed to—to know. So I don't know that he ever had time to actually do that.

Q: And...?

A: And I wouldn't have witnessed it if he did. And I think he might have told us. He was really—I mean he probably would have been like... “Oh, I just did this to this dude...” he never came out and said that.

Q: Did he ever, although he...invited you guys to absent yourselves from what he was about to do...?

A: Well, that was our policy; it wasn't really him, it was actually with us.

Q: Oh I see, okay.

A: Even our leadership; they're like, “Do not go in that room...” I mean we would have been in there for a little bit, but...then it was like, “Okay, time to leave...”

Q: Do they explain why they are giving that instruction?

A: Ah...it was just implied, understood.

Frank later admitted that he never saw evidence of Ted cutting prisoners, and said he definitely would have heard prisoners having fingers removed. While the level of Ted's actual viciousness may have been cloudy, his reputation was enough to prompt the Americans to withdraw and allow him to prise information from detainees in private.

Oh my God, these people really will kill me

A continual theme of Frank's narrative was the effectiveness of certain tactics for getting information from detainees. As long as the detainee was convinced that he was in mortal danger, according to Frank, human nature always produced the desired results.

Ted, the interpreter, was eventually killed by insurgents. Once Ted's services were no longer available, members of the unit took over field questioning. Frank was asked whether Ted's absence made the unit's work harder:

A: Ah, yes, yes...and no. Yes and no, because we—we ourselves got better, you know. I said yesterday, you know, the job will always get done, doesn't matter if you're there or not, and Ted was awesome to have around,

you know, but when he was gone, other people played to their strengths and developed the ability to, you know, be better interrogators.

Q: Okay.

A: More efficient interrogators.

Q: So...of the things that Ted did, what did his successors employ?

A: Nothing like what Ted did, just more ah bullish, American style, typical schoolyard bully tactics. Nothing, you know, not ah...not anything too sadistic, just more...common that you would think of.

Q: Okay, so...give me...

A: Like slappin' em around, throwin' 'em into stuff, telling 'em what's going to happen to them if they don't tell you what you want to know and what...what we always found is like once they understand how serious you really are, and I said this yesterday, they believed us. They really did believe us and we would tell em, and they would believe us and then they would tell us what we wanted to know because we would make it perfectly clear from the very, very beginning that, you know, we weren't...I mean they just understood how serious of a situation they were in, and even if they did comply with us, you know, they were under the belief that they may die anyways. So, I mean, they were—literally, people were afraid of us and they told us what we wanted to know.

Frank personally used force on prisoners during field questioning. He gave an example of a typical encounter:

A: Um, I was trying to get into this—this door, it was locked. Had like a big lock on it, like a big dead bolt, and I was like, “Hey man, open this up...” and so I don't know how serious you take that, but ah yeah, so I—I talked him into opening that door for me.

Q: And how did you talk him to him?

A: I grabbed him by his hair and smashed his face into the door and pointed at the lock, and then he looked at me funny and I did it again and then he opened the lock.

Q: He had a key where?

A: It was a combination lock.

Q: Oh, I see...I see. And were there other times that you were...?

A: Ah yeah, kind of—and it was always real similar that, there was always like, “Hey, do this...” and they’d say, “No!” and I would make them do it...just—just a little smack in the head or just whatever, you know, nothing too crazy, but just, you know... “do it.”

Q: Um...

A: And people are universal man, they...they will tell you; if they’re afraid of you, they will tell you or they will do what you want them to do if they don’t wanna die. I mean that’s how people are; they don’t wanna die.

Frank would sometimes use light strikes with a tomahawk to gain compliance from detainees. He explained why he would resort to this method:

A: Ah...really, I had a problem with people acting like kind of indignant and, you know, these are kind of like a proud people and things like that and a lot of times pointing a gun at them wouldn’t work and...I really didn’t just feel like sitting the person, sitting next to ‘em or whatever and, I mean, I really like my tomahawk, and they’re afraid of tomahawks, and it really cured their attitude really quick. I mean it’s a very intimate experience, ah...and by intimate, I mean very close. I mean there’s nothing, you know, it’s a lot more personal than pointing a gun at someone.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And so I think that was probably why it worked so well. I just really needed to be in control of the entire situation, and by the entire situation I mean, I need to be in control of their thought process. I need to be in control of every aspect of every single thing of this whole area, everything about it.

Here Frank discusses both the sheer menace he employed in the “intimate” use of the tomahawk, his intense need to exert control over situations, and his immediate reaction to defiance or indignation. There is no question in his mind that these measures are justified because they are necessary for mission completion.

Frank had definite thoughts about certain tactics used for information-seeking and his general evaluation of methods used by regular military interrogators:

A: Yeah, these tactics are extremely effective, and I know...or I don’t know, but I know some people think they’re not...they really work, it’s just like human nature and that’s why interrogators suck in interrogating people

because they don't use human nature against humans. All people speak fear. If you scare them and convince them that they will die, they will do what you want them to do, and these tactics work, and a lot of times you don't have to go all the—you just have to, you know, produce the illusion that they are under, you know, a life-threatening circumstance, and it works. Always. Every time. At least in my experience, and we were talking to some hard core dudes, like the main people that we wanted in Iraq. The main dudes, like the top 10 people that we wanted to find, and we found them. I mean...it's like the main dudes, you know, supposedly hard core, highly disciplined, intelligent; it didn't matter. If you scare someone, they'll do what you want, especially if they know, you know, ... "these people really will hurt me..."

Q: So the...

A: Very, very, very effective...and produced a lot of good, a lot of good results...that you can't do in a clinical environment and in clinical, I mean like an interrogation; that's a clinical environment, you know, it's like a sterile atmosphere, you can't, you can't, you know, your hands are tied and they know that, and they're not scared of you, and they're not going to tell you anything. That's why you got to get a hold of 'em before they get processed. I guess that's it.

Frank mentioned that on some missions the unit would move beyond threats to gain information. He described one such situation:

Q: Okay. Now, what can you tell me about one of those?

A: Um...well, we went to this guy's house and he was like trying to be a tough guy, so we shot his brother and then he told us everything we wanted to know.

Q: You mean, in that case, what were you after?

A: Ah, his network; he was another finance guy. He had a lot of money in his house; he was a trainer who was from another country. He...was like, I don't know what his deal was; he—like I don't know if it was IED's or maybe it was just-- maybe he was more like, more just like a money guy.

Q: And what was the brother like?

A: Well, a lot like him, I think. Skinnier.

Q: Was he involved?

A: Ah, no; he was there. No, we weren't talkin' to him.

Q: So how was it decided that the brother was going to be threatened?

A: Um, it wasn't really decided; it was just kinda understood. It was like, "Hey, tell us!" and he was like, oh, trying to be all tough, and we're like, "Okay...we're going to shoot your brother now" and then he tried to say something else and we shot his brother, and he was like, 'Oh my God, these people really will kill me if I don't tell them... (laughing) what they want to know.'

Q: And after...were you guys satisfied that he had given up everything?

A: Oh yeah, absolutely, because we took him with us. We're like, "Drive us to this house right now," and he was with us. So I mean, he knew we were very serious. . . .

Q: Okay. So when the brother was shot, did that surprise you?

A: Ahhhh, no.

Q: What was it about—the situation or the shooter that made it seem likely?

A: Oh, I mean, these people are killers, literally professional killers, like liter-al-ly, like trained to shoot guns very, very, very well and have the mentality to—to exercise these abilities and it's just a given. I mean...

Q: So you expected it was going to happen?

A: Oh yeah, especially when that guy was like acting, you know, indignant and, you know. It's like, "No, we are in charge, like you cannot act like that..." but he, you know, "Don't act like that, tell us, you know. Quit acting that way. You're not in charge of this situation." And I mean...

Q: After the brother was shot, did he immediately give it up or was there a threat to anybody else in the room?

A: No, he immediately gave it up. He ah...it took him a second to gather his senses, I mean like 20 seconds or so, he just kinda like paced back and forth and then like, "Oh my God," just couldn't you believe it. But then we got his attention and he's like, "Okay..." We walked right outside, like literally, right then walked outside, got in the trucks and left.

While Frank indicated that he had no interest in watching Ted torture anyone, he was quite willing to kill a detainee's family member to get the information that was desired. Here again, it was more than the mission-specific requirements that prompted the killing. It was the defiance and indignation from the target that made the brother's death seem acceptable and inevitable to Frank's team.

It was a unique and wonderful feeling

Acting under obvious command authority, Chris and his squad captured, tortured, and killed an Iraqi elder. Chris found the power in the situation fascinating, but the outcome dissatisfying.

Chris' initiation as a torturer took place in the context of a specific intelligence-gathering assignment that his squad received directly from the battalion's senior leadership, in the presence of the battalion commander. The mission was to capture suspected insurgent sympathizers and question them in the field. In the briefing a very senior NCO gave the men directions that spoke to the initiative they were expected to exercise:

Q: And what instructions did they give you about what to do?

A: Just gather as much information as possible. They kinda left a "gray" area as to how we...what would be done afterwards.

Q: How did they do that?

A: Just said, "Get us the information by any means necessary."

Q: Those words were used?

A: Yes.

Q: What was the rank of the individual who used those words?

A: He was a...[deleted].

Q: In the Intelligence section or?

A: No, as far as I know he was um...Headquarters.

Q: At the battalion level?

A: Yes.

Q: And how large a group was he saying this to?

A: Uh, both platoons.

Q: And were the officers present when he had said this?

A: Yes.

Q: And did any of them contradict him?

A: No.

Q: Did any of them endorse what he said?

A: No they didn't say anything; they were talking amongst themselves.

Q: So when you heard that, um...did you and your squad discuss anything?

A: No.

Q: Had you gotten that sort of instruction before?

A: Um, on a couple of occasions.

Chris explained that on other missions the same instruction had been previously issued by a senior NCO or his platoon leader within his company. The earlier missions had not resulted in captures. Before leaving for the present mission his squad and another squad being dispatched to the same location met.

Q: And ah...was there discussion about what necessary means might be required?

A: Hmm...um...no. For us it was, 'whatever we can do.'

Q: Was this before or after the...rescue of the other...?

A: It's afterwards.

Q: About how long after?

A: Um, a week or so.

Chris' squad, having recently killed and mutilated detainees after the rescue mission, casually regarded the prospect of questioning prisoners.

Q: So when you and your squad mates were discussing going into the town, again, what did "necessary means" or "means necessary" mean to you?

A: It meant, it was up to our own judgment as to what we could or could not do.

Q: And ah...did you and any of your squad mates discuss any plans for...?

A: No. No we...were going to... ah let it go the way it went.

Chris' team eventually located one of their targets and engaged in a fierce fire-fight with the man's household before battering their way into the family compound. Three of the seven defenders survived to be captured, including the man who was the primary target of the raid. Chris described him as an elder, "he was somebody that they would look up to in their culture, being old and wise and all that."

The man was bound to a chair and interrogated. During the course of the interrogation the team beat him, shocked him at various places on his body with the electrical cord torn from a lamp. That technique was suggested by a squad member who claimed to have seen it used in a movie.

Chris described his own participation and the source of his knowledge of the method he employed:

Q: Okay, so then...describe what happened from beginning to end here.

A: Um, we'd each take turns you know in doing something and ask him questions and if he wouldn't answer we would beat him, punch him, shocking him. Um...I, myself, um lopped off a couple fingers, starting from each joint working my way down...

Q: Starting with the small finger?

A: Starting with the small finger and cutting it at each knuckle down to the hand.

Q: What did you use?

A: Um...I used a pair of um side cutters or dikes...that I carried on me.

Q: These are normally used for cutting wire?

A: Correct.

Q: Now, why did you choose that particular method?

A: Um...it was something that I read in one of my dad's little journals and that stuck with me.

Q: How old were you when you read that passage?

A: About eight or nine.

Chris described the scene and revealed what the sense of supremacy felt like while he systematically removed three fingers:

Q: And what were you hearing at the time?

A: Screaming, "No, no, don't please, no..."

Q: And what were you hearing from the others?

A: "Do it."

Q: And...what were you hearing from yourself?

A: "Just answer the God damn question..."

Q: What were you feeling at that point?

A: Empowered...ah his fate pretty much rested in our hands. At any moment...it was ours for the choosing. (Long pause) It was a unique and wonderful feeling. (softly)

Years after the events, Chris was able to recall the darkly wondrous sense that wielding the power of pain, life, and death over a helpless person brought forth within him.

The mayhem continued. The victim began to suffer from the effects of blood loss. The team's medic cauterized the wounded fingers with a piece of metal superheated on a fire. When the victim passed out they also administered an injection of adrenalin directly into his heart, which had the effect of reviving him. The team continued the beatings, shocks, and humiliation. At times the gathering of intelligence was forgotten:

Q: What was said at the time it [the injection] was happening?

A: We're not getting anywhere with him; might as well just kill 'im and be gone.

Q: At that point were you still hoping to get information from him?

A: I think at that point we really were turning it into a game. We were just ah, having fun with it.

Eventually the victim offered up the demanded information:

Q: What happened just before he began to speak?

A: Somebody started talking about maybe we should go and find his family. Maybe, 'cause he's not talking, maybe if there's people that he cares about, he might.

Q: And he heard that?

A: Yes.

Q: What did he say?

A: He just started talking, just started telling us about buildings, answering some questions.

Q: And was he forthcoming from that point forward?

A: Pretty much, yeah.

Q: How long after he was bound to the chair...was it before he began providing information?

A: It was about an hour and a half.

Q: And...how long was he providing information?

A: Twenty minutes.

Chris shot the man and the other two men captured during the assault on the house. He explained:

Q: Did somebody say, "Shoot him"?

A: No.

Q: So then how did he end up shot?

A: I shot him. In my mind it seemed logical.

Q: What was the benefit of shooting him, logically?

A: Um...they weren't gonna talk about what happened...what we did to them. It's one thing seeing, it's another thing having the person talk about it. Kinda helps rally people to their cause.

Q: At some point was there a thought that...they should be brought back for further questioning?

A: No, no it wasn't part of our orders.

Q: Your orders were to question in the field and obtain the information yourself?

A: It's what they said was, "Go and question 'em..." They didn't give us any guidelines after that.

Chris was again applying a logic of brutal efficiency by killing the prisoners in order to limit the outrage that living victim/witnesses would have sparked, especially since one of the victims was a respected elder. In the immediate aftermath, this same desire for efficiency was evident in the conversation he had with squad mates:

Q: What um conversation did you have with anyone in your squad immediately after you left the house?

A: "Um, I shoulda used that ah threat on him from the beginning..."

Q: And who were you saying that to?

A: My other guys.

Q: Who were inside the house?

A: Yeah.

Q: Part of the questioning team?

A: Yes.

Q: And what was their response?

A: "Yeah, should've..."

In less than two months, Chris had moved from the young "new guy" shocked by seeing a beating, to an atrocity leader in his squad. He felt free to introduce novel torture techniques to the squad, killed prisoners on his own initiative, and delivered a terse "lessons learned" summary endorsed by the other torturers. Childhood rummaging, pre-deployment grooming to accept abusive violence, command authority and dreadful combat experiences had all combined within this young man to enable him to deliver the worst kind of abusive violence that day.

Although having ostensibly achieved the mission objectives, Chris' reflections on the events were mixed:

Q: On the ride back, did you think about what had happened?

A: Um...I replayed it in my head a few times.

Q: What were you feeling?

A: Just feeling...a sense of unaccomplishment; just didn't feel like we accomplished anything.

Q: Why?

A: We were there for a long time and just did not seem like we really got anywhere. You know, we got the—most of the information that we wanted but...it really didn't feel like we did anything.

Q: What else did you feel about it?

A: (Pause) Still had that power—that—the feeling of empowerment about me.

Casual Fun

Chris described learning torture techniques through casual contact with other troops. He also describes his squad torturing to satisfy curiosity, for fun, and simply because they had the power to do so. Whether or not battlefield intelligence was sought, torture was habitually used.

Chris disclosed that the methods of torture used against detainees by his squad were learned from a variety of sources. They learned over meals at the dining hall that the battalion intelligence staff was using a range of torture techniques including waterboarding, Tasers, cattle prods, Military Police dogs and the “electric chair” stress position. Chris also learned of a refined method of waterboarding from a soldier from another unit, again in the dining hall. Curious about how the technique worked, Chris and his squad mates tried it out:

Q: Tell me about that.

A: Uh-huh. We were staying in a, in a town overnight and smoking and joking and...I do not remember how it—it got to that topic, I...I just said it, and like yeah, some guy from you know that Special Ops group told me about water boarding and was telling me how to do it. A bunch of us went, “We should try that...” and so we said, “Let’s do it on the next person we see...” and it just happened to be...a guy about our age. He was walking out on the street and we stopped him and we gagged him and we flexi-cuffed him and dragged him into one of the buildings. We found a plastic bag that we used.

Q: In the building?

A: Yeah. (Pause) Then we proceeded to water board him, and after we had our fun, we let him go.

The young man had the misfortune to be in the decidedly wrong place at the wrong time, but he was lucky that the reasons he was taken were only for amusement and edification. Chris related that the squad used the technique on three insurgents captured after firefights. This was not during an attempt to secure information. They killed the first by mistake. The other two were deliberately slain.

During the interview Chris referred to the squad torturing other detainees.

Q: Were there other occasions in which you, you’d used the term “torture” to um--that you tortured detainees?

A: Um... well, everything that we did was torture to them. Whether we were questioning them or not, um...we would cause physical or mental harm, just because.

Q: And was it “just because”...?

A: Just because we could. There’s nothing that they could do about it.

Q: And these occasions occurred in the context of being out in the field?

A: Uh-huh. What command doesn’t know won’t hurt ‘em. It’s not like that they’d really are going to talk about it once we get ‘em back to base; because he was already scared shitless. (Pause) It’s not like we have a Complaint Department.

Chris describes preying on the helpless passerby and detained fighters almost as the prerogative of the ruthlessly powerful. He also alludes to two other features of their use of abusive violence. “What command doesn’t know won’t hurt ‘em” shows both an acknowledgment of the fact that his command should do something about their conduct if it becomes informed and a cynical view that the lower ranks have the right to keep inconvenient and unpleasant information from senior ranks. “It’s not like we have a Complaint Department,” seems also to point to the reality that detainees have no one to tell their stories to. Both quotes taken together indicate that the organization does not care to know.

This chapter has contained narratives by both Chris and Frank that communicate what the lived experiences of abusive violence were like at the time and why they chose the methods that they employed. Chris’ story has included an extended series of events, with each event chosen because they milestone the progression of his involvement in abusive violence. Frank’s account has fewer incidents detailed because his own abuse was generally non-escalating. This is probably because of his personal sensibilities and the overall operating methods of his unit. The next chapter provides their continuing stories, but concentrates on how the abuse as a phenomenon affected them as individuals, how they situate it in their life-stories and their current sense-making of war and abusive violence in particular.

Chapter 6. Chris and Frank: Themes and Reflections

The last chapter detailed some of the specific abusive violence that Frank or Chris were part of. This chapter explores their post-deployment thoughts. They each had strong senses of what the experiences meant to them, and what enabled the abuse. The end of this chapter lays out the superordinate themes that I interpreted from their stories.

Bureaucrats and Battalion Commanders

Chris had a sense that the leadership in his unit was inconsistent regarding prohibiting, ignoring, or allowing detainee abuse. He attributed approval for some of the abuse to the battalion's commanding officer, although other lower-ranked persons sought to prevent abuse. Chris' squad took matters into their own hands to evade attempts to prevent abuse. They also heard through channels, and from the top, that tales of abuse were not to be told back home.

Chris was asked about the differences in attitudes about abusive violence among the battalion's NCOs:

Q: Now, last time you spoke...you said a couple of things about the mission where. . . you said that at the briefing um...a staff NCO used the term "all necessary means" to get the information out in the field and to bring it back.

A: Uh-huh.

Q: And then you also mentioned that they never told you what you could or couldn't do.

A: Our senior staff NCO were kinda divided down the middle, some were cool, some weren't, the older staff NCO's, the ones that have been in for a long time... "Old School" guys, you know, they—they were in when hazing each other was just a normal everyday thing and beating the crap out of a POW was a way to pass the time. So they didn't really care; the younger staff NCO's, the ones that were more bureaucratic or the ones that we didn't like, which we had more of them than we did of the "Old School".

Chris and his squad made sure that they had the freedom to operate as they saw fit and were hidden from scrutiny:

Q: And um...in the field, at least, if...your squad was employing abusive violence against detainees, would there ever be people from outside of the squad present?

A: Um...we had a strict policy against that. We never allowed media to come with us, we never allowed even officers to come with us.

Q: Why was that?

A: (Sigh) Um...one incident, our squad leader—oh no, I should say my platoon leader, not my squad leader, our platoon leader came out with us on a patrol and he got us lost and we ended up two hours inside [deleted neighboring country name] so after that it was no officers, no senior staff NCOs. You know we did things our way and if they didn't like it, tough shit.

While the squad's "policy" might have excluded officers, some senior NCOs did manage to accompany it into the field. Creative distraction allowed abuse to go on unhindered:

A: Usually when they accompany us, we would go in [to suspect areas], we'd check and clear areas and then we'd allow them to move up with us once that's done.

Q: And did any interrogations occur with them?

A: Um...not with them present.

Q: Okay.

A: We'd kinda each take turns distracting them, taking them to other areas; that's going as far as planting stuff to make them feel like they're doing something.

Q: And was that something that you and your squad talked about doing?

A: Yeah.

Q: And what was the purpose of that?

A: Um...they always would get in the way and either...not allowing us to do what we needed to do...um; they were more bureaucrats than they were military.

Q: So when you say not allowing you to do what you needed to do, what sort of—can you think of a particular incident where that happened?

A: Um, we had one [deleted] who thought he was God's gift to us and would always boast that he would not have to lay a hand on somebody in order to get them to talk and felt that we should be the same way. And when he would accompany us out into the field...um...it was really him, it's because of him why we would distract them and be like... "Oh, we found some weapons..." or "You wanna, you want [to] help us collect 'em..." um, while another set of us would have the person we're after or somebody that we think has valuable Intel...some, in another location. Um...but ah, one specific occasion, we had found a person and he would not let us touch 'im, and he deemed the person not to know anything and that was that. And um...it turned out later that the guy was smuggling weapons in the trunk of his vehicle. We would have found that out sooner if we were allowed to do what we needed to do.

Keeping abusive violence secret was not simply the squad's "policy;" the battalion made clear what was expected:

Q: So...what-what sort of post-deployment um briefings or debriefings were um laid on for you guys when you got home?

A: Um...that...certain topics should not be discussed with the general public.

Q: And who-who were-what level of command was giving these?

A: Well command passed um, it-it came down from battalion down the pipeline, from our squad leaders that were holding private little briefings with their respective squads.

Q: And so what sorts of things were forbidden to speak about to the public?

A: Um, number one topic was the handling and treatment of the EPW's [Enemy Prisoners of War] or detainees.

Q: And was that just, and why was that such a sensitive topic?

A: Um...the military was already kinda casted in a bad light due to what happened at Abu Ghraib and other things that have happened since then. So they were just kinda...getting all their ducks in a row, trying to make sure that nothing gets out to the media that it's still going on.

Chris had no doubt that both the secrecy and the acts themselves were approved by the highest authority in the unit:

Q: On your way to your deployment, which your squad leader made a specific, had a specific discussion about photography in—in the light of Abu Ghraib, on your way out of Iraq, was there any kind of conversation?

A: Um...our battalion commander, as we were getting ready to board the plane from Kuwait to Ireland and then back to the United States, um...he told us that we were going home, though a lot of us...truly weren't going home. "But the things that happened...try not to think about em and don't speak about em..."

Q: This was your battalion commander saying that?

A: Yeah. Um...he...he okayed some of the things that we did.

Q: How was that communicated to you?

A: Um...he was on a platform and...just got our attention, the usual way he would, "Smoke 'em if you got em. . . ."

Q: When you say he okayed some of the things you did, what-what things you're referring to?

A: Um...our treatment towards the indigenous population.

Q: And what sort of things did he say to you?

A: Um...he commonly referred to the old Vietnam quote, "Let me win your hearts and minds, [or] I'll burn your damn huts down..."

Q: Did he explain where the priorities were... as far as he was concerned?

A: (Sigh) "Peace by any means necessary."

Q: (Pause) And...by "peace" what kind of condition do you think that meant?

A: (Pause) If there was anything threatening peace in our area, we had to deal with it.

Chris plainly believed that the abusive violence that forwarded missions was expected and approved by the battalion command, as was the silence surrounding that abuse. Even still, the ethical "bureaucratic" NCOs possessed the authority to

force adherence to (in their presence, at least) proper treatment of people captured by the squad. Given the overall command impetus for results “by any means necessary,” the mixed messages from senior NCOs, and the squad’s own predilections, there is little wonder that Chris and his squad invented ways to abuse detainees out of sight.

Being mean for mean’s sake

To Chris, expressions condoning abusive violence gave full license to the worst acts he could imagine in service to mission objectives. There seemed no self-regulation of the abuse, and as we have seen, Chris’ squad quickly employed abusive violence for mundane and sadistic purposes. Frank fully embraced effective instrumental abusive violence; but this is only one side of the coin. The other is his personal rejection of unnecessary cruelty. The former deserves no regrets, the latter is not nice.

Once, after a major firefight resulted in several members of Frank’s unit being killed or wounded, two detainees were murdered. In that same situation, Frank committed an act that differs in character from the abusive violence he otherwise perpetrated. He stepped on the head of a bound detainee while passing by; that was the extent of his action. He brought it up when asked about the single instance indicated on his questionnaire involving his personal participation in abusive violence:

Q: Can you tell me about that one time?

A: Um...well, and this [referring to the study interviews] made me think of it a few more times. Like, see, I didn’t really think it was abusive whenever I, you know, grabbed that guy and smacked his head into the wall and made him open up that lock for me, and there was a few other times where I did stuff like that. Ah, I personally don’t consider that abusive; I just don’t. In this specific example, there was a guy laying on the ground, and when I walked past him, I stepped on his head and—I just stepped on his head when I walked past him, like, like—I was walking and—and he was laying on the ground sideways and I stepped on his head like it was a stepping stool, ah...I—I..I guess I consider that abusive.

Q: Okay. Why is that different from other things in your mind?

A: Um...because I wanted that door opened, and that dude knew how to open it, and he needed to open that door. I personally needed him to open that door, and I knew no amount of talking to him was going to get him to do it, I mean that’s how they respond. I mean, I just don’t...

Q: No, I'm sorry, go ahead...

A: It's just not—I don't know...

Q: The guy—the guy...

A: And me stepping on that dude on the ground, that's just...being an asshole for no, just being mean for mean's sake, to just like, the end-state was to be mean, you know, and that's why I consider that abusive.

Q: Okay.

A: Just mean for meanness sake. If no other reason, then...

For Frank, violence used to complete a mission is not abusive; to be mean simply to be cruel is wrong. Throughout the interviews with Frank I was struck by his use of the terms “mean” and “not nice” to describe people and situations of appalling violence. Those terms have specific import to Frank.

Stop you're going to hurt yourself

Frank knew that the abusive violence used by the Americans would cost them dearly. He tried to prevent this harm, and his fears have been borne out. He also views this as impossible to prevent.

Even as Frank's unit was obtaining impressive results in destroying insurgent infrastructure networks, he had real concerns about the effects the abusive violence was having on his comrades. We talked about what that was like:

Q: Now...in one of the conversations we've had, you mentioned that at the time, you observed other people doing things that were, and this isn't the term used, but I—it's what I got out of it, that was more extreme or brutal, that you said that you were thinking that you could have—thinking about your colleagues that “you're going to have a hard time with that later.”

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you ever express that to them?

A: Oh yeah.

Q: In what ways?

A: I was kind of like a spiritual leader in our platoon and I kind of like held people accountable to things too.

Q: So?

A: I would say it just like that. I'd be like, "Man, like you might, you know, be careful..." and I really wouldn't say it in the fact of like... "stop, you're going to hurt that guy..." it was more of like a "stop, you're going to hurt yourself..." type of thing and it was usually back in the tent, you know, and we're going over stuff and I'm like, "Man, I know you get pissed off and frustrated, but dude..." you know. And they'd be like, "I know, I know..." you know, ah, yeah, I would—I mentioned it a few times...not too many though, because I'm not one to harp on people.

Frank went home and eventually left the military. He found that his predictions for his friends who were more abusive were borne out:

Q: Did any of the guys who engaged in the behavior that you were concerned with was going to be ultimately hurtful to them--did any of them have problems with it later?

A: Oh yeah, absolutely...to a tee.

Q: How did you know that?

A: They tell me, they talk to me. They call me at two in the morning about their soul not being in order. They get divorces, they go to jail, they do drugs...they have a bad life, they're very guilty, they have post-traumatic stress disorder and are disabled by it.

I asked Frank whether the abusive violence, and its associated problems for his friends, were avoidable. He answered by describing the men he served with:

A: They will act like that, and that to me is already a problem; there's already a problem there, so no, it's not avoidable. If they are placed in that situation, it is not avoidable, because they would have issues with other instances as well, I believe. I just think that that guilt makes it a lot worse, because you have no one else to blame it on, you know; you could deal with your friend dying better than you could deal with self, you know, persecution. "Ooooooh, I really wasn't very nice..." "I shouldn't have done that..." And I don't know if that's a fair answer, and all you have to do is provide one exception to refute the entire generalized statement, but that's how I feel about those specific instances.

Q: Well, and that's what I'm asking.

A: Yeah.

Q: I'm trying to get...

A: Yeah.

Q: ...what...how you frame what not only you did or didn't do, but the effect that it had on you and others, your friends. Is there...and again, if you, do you have any thoughts about any ways that the organization can protect their people from exposing themselves to that kind of situation?

A: Um...no, like I said, you would just have to do such an incredible amount of like...analysis on their psychology or psychosis to isolate the individuals that'd be prone to that sort of behavior, and that is the only way that it can be done, I think, and because making them stop, like you [referring to interviewer] making them stop, like you could not have walked up to this man and made him stop what he was doing. He's a big guy and he's really pissed, and if you try to tell him to stop, he'll probably get pissed at you. I mean, it's not, you're not going to stop it, and not only are you not going to stop it, it's not that bad. Like you should see what happens to us, it really isn't that bad. Ah...

Q: But it's bothering them now.

A: Yeah, absolutely...absolutely, no, you can't stop it, and that's --but you can stop it, but it...we don't have the time and resources to, or the individual talent to only have people there that are going to, you know, act like, exactly like we'd want 'em to, and some people that are really good at the things that we were good at, are just pre-disposed to that sort of behavior.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: It's just kind of how it is. For whatever reason they wanted to travel halfway across the world for the possibility of shooting someone, I mean...that kind of person might like to be mean to people every now and then. That's just—you can't control it or stop it.

So for Frank, the need to have special operations soldiers willing to undertake extremely hazardous missions naturally creates a force that includes persons pre-disposed to extreme violence. Such men, trained to a razor's edge of combat lethality, simply cannot be restrained if they lose control of themselves. Frank's view accepts the fact of, and costs of, abusive violence, to both the abuser and the abused, as inseparable realities of war.

Just don't say anything

Chris described the reasons why the unity of the squad would have been threatened by any member objecting to the abuse. His comments dovetail with what Frank had to say about the attitude of abusers who might be challenged in the midst of abuse.

Chris was asked about those within the unit who did not participate in abusive violence. He shared his thoughts about them and what his reaction would have been if they had intervened:

A: There's, yeah, there's a few that never took part. They watched and...from my point of view, that's taking just as much part as the people that are actually doing it.

Q: Did anybody say, "This is crazy shit, we shouldn't be doing this, guys?"

A: No, they just kept their mouth shut. 'Cause usually your anger transfers from one object to the next.

Q: Hmm...

A: Just 'cause you're on my side and you're telling me not to do somethin', doesn't mean I won't kick your ass later.

Q: Hmm...

A: In order for us to stay, you know, "good," and being able to operate as a team, I need to be able to trust that you got my back, and if you're gonna start questioning what I do, then well that's telling me you don't got my back. So it kinda just, either you can stay and watch, join in or walk away, just don't say anything.

Chris' entire mission focus has devolved to the survival of his comrades. His thinking is saturated with a sense of inter-personal loyalty that knows no bounds of effort or decency. His comments here suggest that anyone who is "telling me you don't got my back," is in danger of becoming part of the out-group that is dispensable, or worse. For soldiers who will kill for convenience, it takes little imagination as a non-participatory observer to know what "your anger transfers from one object to the next," might mean.

Bottling it up and holding it in

Chris' comments describe problems that abusive violence participation brought forth which also fit well with Frank's description of his comrades woes. His account encompasses two generations of soldiers being devastated by their experiences and finding the help they needed to be saved from the worst.

Chris went home with his battalion. During the deployment his attitude toward his command had soured and he became a rebellious malcontent. Back in garrison he and his friends found themselves with little to do but drink very heavily. Chris became an angry discipline problem for the unit and he separated from the military a few months after leaving Iraq.

Chris visited his father and in their time together they found the ability to confide in one another, something each needed. Chris described the first time they discussed abusive violence:

Q: And how did it come out?

A: Um...he started telling me about the things that he did when he was in Viet Nam.

Q: Was that the first time he ever spoke to you about Viet Nam?

A: He—he's told me that he's done bad things. But that was the first time he actually opened up and. . . .

Q: Uh-huh, so when he opened up to you, where were you?

A: Um...we were in the car; we were just driving. I can't remember to where, I just remember we were driving.

Q: And what sorts of things did he tell you about?

A: Treatment of the indigenous population of Viet Nam...in Cambodia and uh, other areas along the Ho Chi Minh trail.

Q: And um...how did you feel when he started talking about that?

A: That...no matter what I said to my dad that he would understand.

Q: And how did that make you feel?

A: Alright... (pause)...I mean...—it felt good to have somebody outside of my unit, but inside my family that I could talk to. I—there was really nobody else that I could.

Q: So your dad talked about the things that he had done. What did you say?

A: I told him about the things that I did.

Q: And how did he respond to that?

A: "You did what you had to do...nothing more, nothing less." He would say, "Your will to survive was stronger than theirs."

Q: And how did you feel when he said that?

A: That that was some form of justification for the things that I did.

Q: And you accepted that?

A: Yeah.

Chris' conversations with his father continued. Chris found them helpful as he was evidencing emotional problems:

Q: And what would those conversations be like?

A: Um... (pause)...lifting; it's the only word I could think of.

Q: Lifting what?

A: It felt like it being lifted off my shoulders ah...I wouldn't, didn't, hafta carry it around all the time.

Q: (Pause) If you didn't have...when you—when you talk about carrying it around, what was that like?

A: It was hard, um...after I got out [of the military] I was—I became very closed off; I didn't really talk to a lot of people. Um, I was described as being extremely rough around the edges because I was direct and to the point, and I—I didn't act like everybody else...even had...random outbursts of anger and violence.

Q: When you had these outbursts, did you know where they were coming from?

A: From in me. It was just me holding it inside and it's just boiling.

Q: When you say "holding it inside" what—what things were you...?

A: I was, was a very angry person, in myself, at the world, at the military at the time. Um, they threw me away, they didn't offer to get me help. Um...I was just very angry and I didn't care where it went.

While Chris found the conversations beneficial for him, he thought they were problematic for his father:

Q: When you and your dad would talk, did—did he...tell you what to expect based on his own experience of coming back?

A: It wasn't really until I came back that my dad started to go get help. When I...was talking to him about my problems, it—it kinda—he had been bottling it up and holding it in for so long without anybody to talk to that when it started coming out, it kinda...I don't know how to put it, it kinda made things worse for him and I sort of feel that it's my fault.

Chris' father seriously contemplated suicide to the extent of making preparations to complete the act. Chris learned of this and persuaded his father to abandon the attempt. Chris' father eventually admitted himself into a hospital and received help for previously undiagnosed PTSD stemming from his Viet Nam service.

Keep me in and the world out

Chris' own moment of crisis nearly overwhelmed him. Anger, contemplated violence, and alcohol abuse accompanied his spiral. He made himself a prisoner to avoid acting on his urges:

Q: When he did that, when he went and got help, um...did you compare that in any way to your situation?

A: Um...no, I didn't really give it much thought until um...I had a...my own incident where I suddenly just stopped caring and I had the extreme urge of going out and just...hurting people for no reason. I just had a complete mental break. Um...

Q: So what did you do?

A: I had managed to barricade myself in my own room.

Q: And what were you trying to keep in or keep out?

A: I was trying to keep me in and the world out.

Chris eventually confided his feelings to someone. His family learned of his condition and intervened, moving him back home. A condition of his being able to return was that he would seek professional medical help, something he knew was necessary:

I mean, yeah, I knew I had issues 'cause I would pass out drunk in a chair with a loaded .45 in one hand and a bottle of liquor in the other and that scared my friends that would be around me. I lived with two friends...and they—they were constantly scared that they were gonna find me in the morning with a bullet hole in the back of my head.

Chris has found that going to frequent sessions at the Vet Center is very helpful. Other than the other vets there, his father, and me, Chris has not been able to confide in his wife or other family about his abusive violence experiences because he fears lowering their opinion of him.

Compassion and humanity

Frank's views of humanity, both in terms of the species and "being humane," strongly influence his sense-making of the war and abusive violence. Humans can be brutal, but for Frank humanity is a quality that recognizes and respects the dignity in others.

Frank mentioned that the "humanity" in the platoon changed during the deployment. He told two stories to illustrate. In the first incident, from early in the deployment, he entered a room to find a man moving toward a gun. Frank described how his time in Iraq affected his judgment of the event:

And I ran over there and kicked him in the side rather than shooting and killing him, and toward the end of our deployment, that level of compassion and humanity had significantly decreased, ah you know, I would not have ever taken that extra effort to not kill him.

In contrast, Frank offered another example from late in the deployment:

Q: You mentioned that there was a third instance in which people who were detained ended up dead with your unit, in this case, shot. What can you tell me about that?

A: Well ah, that was really quick too; it went down really quick. Ah, this guy actually came out of his room, ah...and he had a rifle, but, you know, his

hands were like up over his head like this... and I don't know what your definition of a detainee is, but to me, at that point, he's detained. You know, I mean I don't have absolute 100% control over him, ah...

Q: Was it your opinion he had, he was submitting at that point?

A: Oh, absolutely and ah-then he got shot and killed. Right then.

Q: And did the shooter say why?

A: Because he could.

Q: Is that what he said?

A: Well no, but that's why he did it. This guy had a gun and, you know, he's going to die and there's going to be a gun right next to 'im, I mean, and that speaks to the deterioration of compassion that I referenced earlier.

Interestingly, Frank saw the rising lethality of the unit as some measure of diminishing humanity within the Americans. He did not attribute the change to a view of the Iraqis becoming lesser-than humans. This contrasts strongly with the thinking of Chris and several of the other soldiers whose abusiveness increased as they started to see Iraqis as animals. This is not to say that Frank necessarily views all humans at an elevated level; rather, he sees all humans at being at an animal level. Some are privileged to avoid the full reality of that situation. Here he discussed whether he expected the brutal tactics that Ted was reputed to use:

A: Hmm, yeah, I did, because I—you know, I was lucky enough to deploy later on in my military career. Well, I had already traveled enough to understand that not everybody thinks like I do, and people in other parts of the world are forced to be more real, and not that I consider those tactics to be ah, not that I agree with them or anything like that, but there are more of primal nature and human beings are animals and we're afforded the opportunity to not have to act that way. We're afforded the opportunity to use only our higher level thinking whereas most of the entire planet lives in a world where they have to act like animals to survive. So no, it didn't surprise me, because I really know how people act and people resort to the most heinous things you could ever imagine. I was a little taken back, I wasn't really surprised.

Frank's sense-making of the sometimes brutish nature of human existence does not eclipse his essentially respectful view of humanity. Perhaps that is a clue to why he criticizes himself for being "mean" in a relatively minor act. His sense for the

dignity of his enemies, and for himself, came out when he spoke about close friends who wanted to know about combat:

Q: And were you open or hesitant?

A: Ah...I'd say hesitant.

Q: With those folks, why were you hesitant?

A: Because a lot of it is just, you know, it's just not good and, you know, as far as people wanting to know about killing people, you know, I—I...I had a lot of respect for the fact that they're humans, and I think it's very disrespectful to tell a story about killing someone; it's just not...right, I mean, they were—you know, it's just, the incident's over, and you should give them respect, not them, and you should respect yourself enough to not have that be one of the things that you involve yourself in, is talking about doing very, very mean things to people and killing someone is the very meanest thing you can do to somebody, so I guess that's why—it's just, it's just not something I want to be involved in.

Everything is a contradiction

Chris' present views on the abusive violence he and his squad perpetrated are a tangle of confusion born of feelings of justification, personal disconnectedness, and guilt.

I asked Chris what he wanted to be understood about the abusive violence:

(Pause) It's not necessary...but at the same time, when you're there and when it's happening, you feel that it is. That you aren't completely yourself when you're doing it. It's kind of...happening and you don't have any real control about it.

I asked Chris whether he was speaking directly about the abuse that he and his unit had actually committed, when he said "it's not necessary:"

Yeah, when we were taking them back to base, we didn't have to degrade 'em the way we did. We didn't have to beat them, we didn't have to put our cigarettes out on 'em, we didn't have to cut 'em with knives. We didn't have to kill some of 'em just because we didn't want to deal with paper work. I mean it...that's not necessary, but, you know, when you're there and you're actually doing it and you're angry and...you don't care, you feel that it is, and I know it's a complete contradiction and statement, but that's how it really is.

Everything you do is a contradiction; you're taught your entire life that killing another person's bad. But yet, you join up, you go over there and you kill people. It's a contradiction and that's really what life is, it's just...a bunch of contradictions. You're told not to do this, but then you're told to. It's...it's just situations that we're in and how we act in those situations.

While Chris describes a confused feeling that the gratuitous abuse was unnecessary, other answers indicate that the instrumental abuse, what the command countenanced, is another matter:

Q: How do you view some of the things that you did in Iraq now?

A: Just doing what I was paid to do, following orders.

And:

Q: When you look at the abusive violence that you participated in, what did that do to you?

A: (Heavy sigh) It...it wasn't what I signed up for, but it was part of my job. Or at least that's how I viewed it. That's the only thing that came from it; it's just another day at work.

This is not to indicate that Chris merely shrugs off his behavior. He does think about the de-humanization and degradation:

Q: When you look back on your experiences in Iraq, what do you consider the worst experiences to have been?

A: My worst experience?...losing my friends.

Q: (Pause) And what other things were really bad, when you think about Iraq?

A: Then a close second is how I treated the people...how I thought of them as being more of animals than actual human beings.

The hallowed crucible

Frank's sense of the war, and his own experiences and insights gained from being in it, are strongly bound up with a view that he was granted the priceless opportunity to see humanity with a clarity not often otherwise occasioned.

I asked Frank what he had learned about human nature:

Ah, war is insane, because it makes people literally resort to their true nature, I mean, you walk around here, people are fake, these are not real human beings, I mean, yeah, they are, I'm not trying to get too philosophical or anything crazy like that, but real life, keeping it real, I mean...like honest to God, like that's how human beings really act right there placed under primal conditions, you know, you really just get to see, you know, how people are, how they really, really, really are, what they truly deem to be important and what they are willing to do to keep themselves alive, and you know, what they may not be willing to do to keep themselves alive or...or help someone else or not help someone else or...just things like that. There's just a lot of questions that cannot, otherwise be answered unless you're in a true crucible that presents the opportunities to, you know, you're in an atmosphere, an environment that can, you know, produce these questions, and they give you an opportunity to—to—to respond to this stimulus, and by you, I mean humans.

When Frank went home there were things about his experiences that he felt could not, or should not, be shared. The elevated human experience that other study participants had hoped for was certainly prominent for Frank, but was not overlaid with the same regret or shame mentioned by some:

Q: When you got home and, and you...left active duty, um...were you able to share many of your experiences with non-veterans?

A: No.

Q: Why?

A: Um, they're just very personal experiences and in a lot of ways, I just kind of feel like, if you want to know what it's like, then go do it. Like I had to go through a lot to get those experiences, and I know that people want to know things and I guess I should have more of a sense of empathy in providing, you know, some sort of insight into those situations, but at the same time I look at them as almost like, like a hallowed revered, I mean it's like I've done something that not many people get to do and, and if you really want to know what it's like then go do it. That's—that's kind of, I guess that's one reason, two, and I just don't think they'll relate, ah, three, I ah, I just don't know that I could articulate it in a manner that would provide the explanation that I want them to have and not, you know, have them develop their own idea based on what I say, ah...

Not conducive to building your soul

As valuable as war and its experiences are to Frank, he took from them all he needed. He sought other things for himself, and saw that remaining a soldier would no longer serve.

I asked Frank about his peacetime aspirations:

Q: You also said that you got out to be the kind of person that you wanted to be.

A: Yeah.

Q: What was that?

A: I just want to be a wholesome all-around good person; I want to be an active person, I want to be a husband, a loving husband, I want to be married for a long time, I want to have a good job, I want to be a—I have this strong sense of civic responsibility; I've served my community in one form or fashion in my entire adult life. Even with my job now and all my previous jobs, um...I want my kids to think I'm a good dad; I want to, you know, I just want to be a good well-rounded person who's at one, not at one, but at peace with myself.

Q: You said that that lifestyle, the military lifestyle, I don't know whether you meant that in general or the special operation lifestyle?

A: I suppose I meant my job in particular.

Q: Was not conducive to building your soul?

A: No, not at all.

Q: What—what...

A: Well, it's just not nice to do that, and I mean, yeah, it is awesome, and to me it is like the ultimate test of what it is to, you know, to be...and to live, and to stay alive, ah...but you know, you just can't devote yourself to killing other people and still foster other parts of your nature that are more pleasant and by doing that job that, literally was my job, was to kill other people, and that is, that's just not nice. I mean...it just isn't.

Q: You mention that several times yesterday that you saw the decline in the humanity of your [unit]...

A: Yeah, I really did, and I paid close attention to things like that. I was an observer as much as a participant.

Q: Did you feel that corrosive influence on yourself too?

A: Absolutely.

Q: How did you feel about that?

A: Oh I knew it wasn't good, and I knew I couldn't continue to do it, if I wanted to become the person that I wanted to be.

Frank's ability to be observer and participant produced both a restraint that prevented him from engaging in the most sadistic abuse and a detachment which allowed him to value the lessons he had enlisted to learn. Chief among those lessons was the need to leave the ultimate experience of war behind in order to explore the life experiences of love, marriage, fatherhood, civic involvement and peace.

It's what I did

Chris' post-deployment reflections on himself as the perpetrator of abusive violence once required a denial of responsibility. His present sense is different.

Chris shared his thoughts about the abusive violence from when he was freshly returned home from the war zone:

Q: Now...when you got back during that month or so before you were able to take significant leave, did—did you reflect on the abusive violence that you observed and participated in?

A: I ah...I kept telling myself it was somebody else, it wasn't me. And for a while it worked...I just kept believing that it was somebody else that did it.

Q: What did you think of that other person?

A: (Pause) I...thought that they were a monster. (Pause) That that person had no place back in the States. I had no place back in the States.

Here, Chris views the abusive self as the non-human, undeserving of the way of life in America, the same America whose prior generations' war sacrifices had fascinated and perplexed Chris before he enlisted. As hopeless as that assessment sounds, one should remember that Chris was describing his self-view of several years earlier, before his "mental break" and counseling with other veterans. His current

sense may best be revealed when I asked him at the end of our first session about his Personal Calm Score:

Q: How—how are you feeling right now on a scale of one to 10, between entirely calm and entirely uneasy?

A: Hmm...about a seven or an eight. It's not something that I'm proud of; but it's what I did and I have to live with it.

While this was one of the highest scores reported by any of the participants, and thereby indicates the distress that his war recollections can still trigger, Chris has put his experiences within a perspective that indicates that he no longer distances himself from responsibility for the abuse and he accepts that it is a burden he will have to bear. Implicit in such a sentiment is the orientation of a present self that recognizes a prospective future, not trapped by the past, but nonetheless marked by it. As with Frank, Chris' becoming a husband and father offers an identity other than the one he imprinted upon himself while a child sitting in his father's uniform.

Shared Themes

During the interviews with Chris and Frank, several themes appeared to be salient in each of their sense-making of the events experienced in Iraq.

Good violence versus bad violence

Both Frank and Chris find justification for instrumental abusive violence in terms of their requirement to obtain information. When Frank discusses slamming a detainee's head into a door he emphasizes that "I personally needed him to open that door, and I knew no amount of talking to him was going to get him to do it." Chris similarly felt that although he had not enlisted expecting to abuse people, "it was part of my job." This justification allows them to separate violence that was necessary up to the point that it served valid military objectives from what is "mean" or "unnecessary" violence.

It is interesting to note that neither soldier's units were primarily intelligence gathering forces; they were nevertheless commissioned to seek out information and were freed to devise their own methods. This factor underscores a possible sub-theme of "command authority" for the abuse. To Chris, this is a salient consideration as he recalls the abusive violence. The term "by any means necessary" and the repeated instructions to keep silent about abuse, cast some of the abuse as an unpleasant but accepted reality of war. Frank did not discuss explicit command authorization; however, he only once mentioned the need to hide information about abuse. That was in the context of an inquiry relating to the deaths of detainees killed

in the aftermath of an ambush in which the unit suffered injuries and death. Otherwise, his description of being in the field with officers did not include any mention of having to hide the abuse from them. Indeed, command authority is implicit in his unit's practice of studied absence from the sessions where it was expected that Ted would torture prisoners.

Objecting as Hazardous

Both men shared the view that all unit members were expected to be complicit in the abusive violence through their silence. To do otherwise would have hazarded angry backlash from those unit members willing to be most abusive. Frank found a path into raising the question of reducing the level of angry abuse by not criticizing the actions on ethical grounds but instead by voicing concern for his comrade's well-being.

Abusive Violence Hurts the Abuser

These two accounts certainly convey the sense held by both Chris and Frank that abuse injures the soldiers who enact it. Frank's comrades with disordered souls, Chris' father's near suicide almost thirty years after the abuse, and Chris' own slide in the direction of self-terrifying violence certainly illustrate the importance of this sense of damage. Additionally, Frank's awareness that continuing to be associated with the special operations' violent milieu would strangle his hopes for fulfillment offers poignant proof that this theme is important to him.

Frank's Themes

Human Dignity, Humanity, and the Human Animal

Frank reveals a complex view of humans and the relationship between cruelty, fear, survival instinct, and dignity vis a vis abusive violence. The "real" existence of the mass of humanity sits at the animal levels of primal survival, aggression, submission and survival. The few are privileged to exist in a world governed by higher-order sensibilities and an excursion into the world of those who "keep it real" is a signal experience for the worthies willing to make the trip. In the end, self-respect demands that one treat the experience with reverence and accord the enemy one kills with the dignity they deserve as human beings.

Abuse Properly Applied Works

Frank was adamant that a full understanding of human nature, and the will to survive, exposes the simple truth that putting a prisoner in genuine fear for his life will result in truthful information. "Always. Every time." He disdains the clinical approaches of the normal military interrogator and, ever mission-oriented, advocates immediate abuse before detainees are officially processed.

Chris' Theme

The glamour of absolute supremacy

Chris's expression of the "unique and wonderful feeling," of holding the fate of a human being in his hands, is a powerful sense of the experience for him. After the extended torture and killing of the older man, Chris' unit carried on with torturing by waterboarding other captured insurgents and watching the life leave them, without any desire to obtain intelligence. Such fascination with ultimate control was present in the crazed scene of prisoner mutilation in the wake of the rescue mission combat. It is also there when Chris, referring to the unit's habituation to torture, utters, "Just because we could. There's nothing that they could do about it."

These two chapters contain many of the most frank, and frankly most difficult to consider, accounts of abusive violence received in this study. The two men whose sense-making I have tried to make sense of appear to have entered their combat lives willing to be a part of abusive violence. While they were there, they took part in, and did not change their outlook on, the routine practice. Afterward, Chris came to a differing sense about some of the worst abuse, while Frank's views remained largely unchanged throughout and afterward.

In the next chapter I will present the account of a soldier whose experiences moved him along a journey that began with hatred, traveled through routine and murderous abuse, and by three transformative experiences, delivered him to mental and authoritative positions which compelled him to be the savior of Iraqis and the men he led. The journey's end is not yet in view as the former soldier's present life is overshadowed by anger, debilitating flashbacks, and a pervading sense forlorn of hope.

Chapter 7. Richard Miller

In this chapter, the experiences of one soldier, Richard Miller, will be considered. His sense-making of those experiences, both at the time they occurred and later, allows us to approach an understanding of the way he saw his personal motivations for enlisting in the military, and all of the events that occurred as a result of that decision. His story shares many features in common with the soldiers described in the last three chapters in terms of theme and events; however, the manner in which some of those experiences are now framed is of course the product of his individual journey.

Miller's experiences demonstrate the fullest transformation from hateful abuser to staunch abuse objector among the fourteen participants. Miller began his journey into uniform full of hate for Muslims, and zeal to protect America and punish her enemies. He, like Chris Alexander, was assigned to an infantry squad that was headed by a veteran soldier whose prior combat deployments had engendered callousness toward abusive violence. In Miller's case, the squad leader's attitude toward the Iraqi populace was one of hate, vengefulness, and brutal domination. The squad operated in a platoon whose leadership countenanced and encouraged the harshest levels of abuse. Whereas Chris Alexander's squad-level acceptance of abuse, coupled with a generally permissive battalion policy toward violence, was still moderated by mid-level NCO attempts to enforce professional norms of behavior, Richard Miller existed in a situation where his immediate chain of command presented no deterrents to the soldiers putting extreme abusive measures into action. Chris' squad may have casually abused captured insurgents and used atrocious measures to extract intelligence, but Richard Miller's account describes his squad openly terrorizing the population through street beatings, murders in the field, creation of a torture dungeon, and a COIN policy that relied on terrorizing the population rather than trying to win support.

Miller's account can be viewed as an example of abusive violence allowed to flourish in as permissive or encouraging an environment as likely to be seen for military forces of a liberal democracy. Under authoritarian or totalitarian regimes that created official torture and extermination organizations there may have been circumstances that would have allowed soldiers even greater freedom to maim and murder; however, for early twenty-first century western democracies, I cannot envision wider latitude of action than available to Miller's squad. Even within the confines of the American prisons of Guantanamo or Abu Ghraib there did not seem to be the limitless opportunities for abuse.

As a case, therefore, Miller would seem to represent a chance to see the zenith of American abusive violence in CT and COIN; and yet, we observe a man primed by his 9/11-inspired hatred against Muslims, groomed by a murderous squad leader to enact brutality, torture, and murder to the point of near insanity, coming to command the same squad of willing abusers, who deliberately elects to forswear abuse and to lead his men away from the dangers that atrocity represents for them and their victims. Even as Miller's abuse is monstrously greater than others in the study, his despair in its aftermath is more profound as well. It is for these reasons, the similarities and singularities, that Miller's experiences are accorded the treatment of a separate chapter.

Pre-deployment

Miller came from a family that included military veterans. His father, brothers and uncles served in the military, some seeing combat in Viet Nam. As noted in Chapter 2, Miller's decision to enlist was motivated by the 9/11 attacks. He described his choice:

A: I came from a mostly military family, so...a decision like that wasn't frowned upon, it was very much deemed as, as a good deed, something that you should do anyways, not just because of September 11. I had a good job and, and...I had a family and everything and so I never even really considered joining the military until September 11.

Q: How soon after September 11 did you decide that you were going to enlist?

A: Almost immediately; unfortunately, I had an injury that I had to wait until I was better before I could go into the military, so...I think I enlisted first part of 2002.

Miller's reactions to the attacks went beyond a sense of patriotic obligation; it extended to hatred and harassment.

Q: So you were a civilian on September 11?

A: Right.

Q: What were your feelings then?

A: I was angry; I...I thought how can anybody do this to us, we're Americans, and...somebody definitely had a death wish to do this to us, ah...and I immediately, almost immediately the stories came out it was from

Muslim terrorists, and you know, I hated Muslims; I started walking around Wal Mart and stuff going after Muslims, um...

Q: In what way?

A: I would follow them to see what they were doing, and I would call them names, ah basically call 'em out in public, and families, Muslim families walking, you know, in Wal Mart or at a grocery store, just anywhere. I would ah, kind of hunt them down thinking that they were all out to get us. Ah...it was, because everything that was on mainstream media was coming out that it was, you know, Muslims are out to attack us.

Q: Were your views, at that time, supported by people around you?

A: Absolutely. I think...almost everybody in the nation was pretty much terrified of, of these Muslim terrorist and "what's next," you know? I think, well for myself, and many people I knew, you know, if we didn't protect our families, then nobody would, and these Muslims were going to somehow miraculously appear in our living room and kill our families and so my whole thought process was getting to them before they could get to me.

Miller enlisted with a desire to undergo special operations training and assignment to an elite unit. He served an initial enlistment in a non-combat role, followed by a transfer to the kind of training and unit he had always wanted.

Miller's view of all Muslims as "terrorists" wishing to "kill our families," did not rely on military indoctrination to create a dehumanized view of the people of Iraq. The military training only served to reinforce his existing opinion. Miller described the racism included in his initial military training:

A: I was already somewhat racist towards Muslims, but the way that everything was, "Kill, kill, kill the Muslims..." and "I went to the market where all the Hajis shop and pulled out a machine gun, or pull out a machete, and I begin to chop," stuff like that, stuff we chanted and marched to was pretty horrific. Talked about crunching babies, Muslim babies under our boots and.

Q: Did they use the term Muslim, what was the term?

A: Haji, the-the term was Haji, and Haji was used in the same way that, I guess, you would have used Gook in Viet Nam, and even though the word Haj, to Muslim men is-is a compliment. Call him a Haji he's been, made the voyage the Haj, they've taken the Haj to Mecca and...but ah, the, you know, stuff like, "What do you, Haji babies and dreams have in common? We both crush both

of them under our boots,” stuff like that. You know, and, and a big part of me was like, “Okay, this is just [deleted] training; this is just, you know, they’re trying to get you to, to...” I was quite a bit older than most of the recruits, so, and...I was putting it in my head, “Okay, they’re just trying to get these kids to understand the seriousness of-of the ah-of what’s going on overseas with Muslims” and stuff like that.

The seriousness of an active war-zone, and the strategy to be used to survive there, were brought home to Miller when he was assigned to his special operations unit. As with Chris Alexander, Miller was a combat virgin coming under the control of a squad leader with experiences of heavy combat that formed the agenda for the first half of the deployment:

Q: In your squad, had any of the soldiers. . . . been deployed to combat before?

A: Just my squad leader.

Q: And what did his experiences consist of?

A: He’d been wounded three times.

Q: Where?

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A: Iraq; each time he had been wounded he-he received three purple hearts on three different deployments to Iraq, and ah...he hated, hated, hated, hated the Iraqis, knew that we were going to be going back to Iraq, so...um, gave him, I guess, you could say, an opportunity to exact some revenge.

In describing his expectations about detainees, Richard brought up a skewed phrase also distorted by Chris Alexander’s unit. It clearly showed Richard and his unit’s orientation toward combat captures:

Q: What sort of expectations did you have before you went, about any interactions you might have had with any future detainees?

A: Um...I didn’t really have any thoughts of detainees, and I didn’t even really think of us taking anybody prisoner to begin with, you know? We’re in a fire fight, we shoot to kill, and...screw enemy, you know, screw taking prisoners, and...

Q: Were there any, was there any training on prisoner control?

A: No none. I mean, it—it was stuff like, how to clear bodies when walking up on a body and to make sure they're not...they're alive or dead. You put two in, you know, two in the heart and one in the mind. That was—every time we were told, “the hearts and minds” and that’s the first thing that came to your head, was two in the heart, one in the mind or fire two rounds in the heart, one in the brain. Whenever we were told, “We’re going to go over and win the hearts and minds...” that’s kind of what was implanted into our head.

The battalion’s vision of its deployment was shaped by the battalion commander’s assurances to the men that they would not be put on route security or policing duties. According to Miller, “our battalion commander kept stating, ‘Don’t worry, don’t worry; I’m going to give you every chance you got to shoot mother fuckers in the face.’” For Miller, this was a welcome message.

Richard described his thoughts once he knew that his battalion was going to be deployed to Iraq:

Q: How did you feel about that?

A: Was excited. I wanted to do it; I was ready, this [is] what I’d been training for. This is what I wanted to do and a lot of people asked me, “Weren’t you afraid of dying?” “No, I’m not afraid of dying, you know...I’ve got God on my shoulders... and we’re doing the right thing; we’re doing great things for God and country...” and I believed all the propaganda all the way up until that point. I knew that...you know, Saddam Hussein and the people of Iraq had everything to do with the attack on 9/11, as --everybody in Afghanistan and everybody in Libya and Iran and Saudi Arabia, they had a hand in it, so.

Richard was poised to enter Iraq some years into the occupation; the warm and welcoming emotions toward Americans had long soured. His hatred of Muslims, sense of just retribution for 9/11, and the messaging of American culture and media in general coupled with that of the military training and his squad leader’s personal virulent outlook combined to make Miller a fearful instrument of abusive violence directed at the Iraqi people.

Abusive Violence in Iraq

The entire population was terrorists

In Iraq, as reported by other study participants, Richard and his comrades saw all the people of Iraq as threats. He explained how this viewpoint arose after being asked about his unit, contrary to expectations, having prisoners to handle:

A: Yeah, almost immediately we started dealing with detainees.

Q: And...in your mind what kinds of people were going to be—becoming detainees?

A: In my mind it was terrorists; we were dealing with terrorists altogether and we were told that the entire population was terrorists, and there were no innocent people there. The minute you thought somebody was innocent, they were going to throw a bomb your way or—or shoot you, so.

Q: Who was providing you with that understanding, who was saying these things?

A: Ah...battalion commander to...our company commander and company first sergeant. All the—the entire line all the way down was all the way down to the lowly private.

Miller described the unit's general treatment of the community as an attempt to "out terrorize the terrorists." It became quite common for the unit to beat people on the street for little reason beyond the perception that any failure to instantly comply with the Americans' commands signified Iraqi defiance.

To disrespect their religion and their people

Miller mentioned that the unit was involved in raids and routine searches of Iraqi homes. Threats and humiliation were commonly used. Miller described the ways in which terror was delivered to the homes of the population, when I asked him about using threats to motivate suspects to talk when captured in their homes:

A: Quite often. I mean we'd threaten to rape their women; we'd make the women undress in front of the men and just overall [behave like] animals towards them.

Q: When...you made the women undress, what was your object at that point?

A: To disrespect their religion and their people. To make them see that we don't give a shit about them, them, their religion, their Allah, any of that, we don't give a shit; they mean nothing to us.

Q: What did you expect would be, when that message was delivered to them, what did you think the effect was going to be?

A: I think, for the most part, we just didn't care. We didn't care what they were going to do. At that point, we hated them, we wanted to kill em and "Do

something. I'll bet you won't—bet you'll, watch you do nothing, watch you do nothing like a little punk bitch, watch you do nothing..."

Q: So the, it wasn't so much intimidation as humiliation?

A: Right.

Miller described the first street violence meted out by his squad and the subsequent introduction of physical abuse toward detainees:

Q: Do you remember the first time there was a move from threat to action?

A: For my squad and it—we used to, and it was [not] even necessarily just towards the detainees, it was—we were always threatening people to go back inside their homes when they were stepping out to see what was going on with us and where we were going to, you know, hurt them and...and it turned into instead of threatening them; we'd just walk up and hit em, so...

Q: So was the first physical violence against a by-stander?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you remember when that happened, and how?

A: Approximately about a month after being there, and we were out on patrol and...people were coming out of their homes and opening their gates to see what was going on, what was happening out in the streets just to watch us and, and...we kept telling them to go back inside, "Get back inside." This one guy, he's standing there, he's just smiling at us and...the smile looked...to be kind of taunting, and I walked up with my squad leader and we punched him a few times and had the interpreter there telling him, "See, you should have went inside, you should have went inside."

Q: Who punched him first?

A: I did.

Q: As you were walking over toward him, what were you saying to the squad leader about this guy?

A: I was saying, "This punk mother fucker, I don't know why he doesn't listen to us and go inside. We're going to show him why he needs to go inside..."

Q: And what your squad leader say?

A: Nothing; he's just laughing.

Q: Okay, and when you say you punched him a couple times, where did you hit him?

A: In the face.

Q: And...how did you feel during that?

A: Um, I—I think I felt satisfied because...nobody'd ever listen to us there, they didn't take us seriously, and...you could point your weapon at a bunch of em, and they'd just be like, 'Yeah, you're not going to shoot us...' and...um, they didn't change the way they thought about that until we got non-lethals and started firing our non-lethals at em, so...

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Q: Okay. And um...when you were punching him what did you hear?

A: Just him...ah...I heard the sound of my gloves hitting him and his...he wasn't screaming, he was just making the noises of any man that get hit, like "Uh, uh..."

Q: And what did you hear yourself doing or saying?

A: I was cursing him.

Q: And...

A: Like, "Piece of shit, mother fucker..."

Q: About how long do you think it went on?

A: Just a couple of seconds.

Q: And what was his condition at the end of that?

A: Beat up but otherwise okay.

Q: Bloody?

A: Ah, more swollen, we were hitting him on the side of the face and my squad leader kicked him while he was down on the side of the face and—and he tried to climb back over his fence, his little gate there and um, we were

punching him when he was doing that, and we broke his gate to where-it like was only on one hinge, then he...

Q: He fell?

A: Then he fell.

Q: Did you see, um...did other by-standers observe what was going on?

A: Yeah.

Q: What did you see in them?

A: Fear, then they went back inside their homes.

Q: And what did you see in your other soldiers?

A: Ah...laughing, joking.

Q: What were they saying?

A: "Funniest shit ever" stuff like that.

Q: So...when was the first time that one of your detainees was subject to striking?

A: Hmm...pretty much immediately, about that time frame.

Miller's sense of this incident was one of satisfying release of frustration, quite early during the deployment. He also observed his peers' humorous appreciation for the spectacle and the neighborhood's fearful compliance to return to their homes. With violence he was able to force a change to the irksome fact that "nobody'd ever listen to us there, they didn't take us seriously."

Miller's first experience with abusive violence toward a detainee took place a short time later. While conducting a search of a residence, Miller found a piece of equipment believed to belong to an American service member. Miller described the situation:

A: We had done a knock and search of the home and underneath the bed of this young man, who was probably 17, 18 years old, we found some washer timers, um, and we also found a U.S. Forces IBA [Interceptor Body Armor] under...

Q: IBA is?

A: The protective gear, body armor.

Q: Okay.

A: With no plates [hard armor inserts], but we found the IBA underneath his bed which indicated to us that at one time they had a service member. They had either taken this off of a dead service member or had detained the service member, and so we took this individual back to our COP [Combat Outpost], which we had a ah—we called it “the dungeon.” We were in an old [building] and underneath the [building] was a basement-type deal and it was called “the dungeon” because it was real steep steps and underneath the building was a room, that I guess you could say almost resembled a wine cellar, and real damp and dark and real creepy, and that’s where we did all of our—all of our detainee interrogations. It was my squad; it was in fact my—my team that had captured this individual, but we took him downstairs and it was my squad leader who began the interrogations of this—this kid.

Miller related his reaction to finding the equipment:

Q: How did you feel when you saw it?

A: I was angry, ah...

Q: Which part made you angry?

A: The IBA...the service member IBA, because there’s no way that this individual had an ACU [Army Combat Uniform] IBA unless he had taken part in—in some sort of killing or detaining of a U.S. service member. That was my thought process on that, um...so we had this 17-year-old kid...and we took him to the—to “the dungeon” and...

The abuse started before the trip to the COP:

Q: You see the stuff, you get angry, then what do you do?

A: I struck the young man with the stock of my weapon, and ah...

Q: You went out into the living room?

A: Right, and immediately hit him with the stock of my weapon and placed flex cuffs on him, and then I had my member take him, my team member take him to the...Humvee while we had—they put the Israeli pressure bandage over

his eyes and the mother was screaming and I was yelling at her to “shut the fuck up.”

Miller explained that it was his squad’s common practice to delay reporting the capture of any detainees to the company in order to prevent the military police from taking custody of the detainee and thereby interfere with the squad’s own interrogations. This case was no exception:

Q: Okay. So in this case, had—prior to this, had you and the squad leader or anyone else in the platoon worked out that you were not going to report up to the company?

A: You didn’t really need to talk about it, it was just kind of a known, kind of a given that you know, these—these fuckers didn’t deserve our respect and we’re going to do what we wanted to do.

The young detainee was put into the trunk of the Humvee and kept there for several hours as the squad continued its patrolling. He was taken back to the COP and led down into the “dungeon” and left under guard in a stress position until the soldiers were ready to deal with him. Miller described what happened next:

A: So then after myself and the other team leader and my squad leader were done, you know, getting something to eat, we went down there; we had an MRE for the detainee...we didn’t take the—the ah...um...the bandage off of his eyes, he was still sitting in that position. We went down there, we...had the interpreter with us and we started asking him questions about where he received the IBA, what were his plans with the timer and the kid was horrified. He kept asking if we were going to kill him, and my squad leader kept telling the interpreter tell him, “Yes, we are going to kill him, because he’s not giving us any information.” And so the kid, you know, the kid’s crying, scared. I started realizing that this kid didn’t—I mean if he had anything to do with anything, he would have told us. How horrified this kid was. Um...my, the team leader who—the other team leader decided to take the Mossberg 12-gauge shot gun and racked it and put it up underneath his chin while we were talking to him and told him, you know, “We know you’re lying, give us the information.” And the kid was crying and he then wet himself.

Q: When he racked it...was the weapon charged with a live round?

A: Yes...um, and he had the round under, the weapon underneath his chin and at that point, you could see that the detainee wet himself, and everybody started laughing, myself included because I’ve never seen anybody wet

themselves over being scared, and I was like, “This guy doesn’t know anything; he would have told us something...” and they were like, “No, he—he fuckin’ knows something...” and this, I was like, “Well, I’m going to go take my guys and do some training...” because I kind of had enough of it, you know, at some point it just becomes monotonous, it’s the same thing that you do to people over and over again. Gets the same results, nobody knows anything...

Q: By that time, your unit interrogated people down there before?

A: Yeah, I never had, but that was the first one that I had. You know, I’ve only been in the country a month We actually turned him in to the—to the MP’s there along with the evidence.

Q: In that interrogation, what physical force was used?

A: Um...me using my stock of my weapon to hit him that one time, um...but mainly it was...placing the weapon in parts of his body and threatening to shoot him.

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A: There was that one point where...I didn’t witness it, but one of my soldiers said that they placed the ah—they pulled the man’s pants down and placed the weapon on his genitals, so...

Q: When you saw the muzzle placed under his chin with a live round in the chamber, what did you think was going to happen?

A: That they were just scaring the kid.

Q: Okay. Did the people there seem to be in control of themselves?

A: Um, I wouldn’t say in control; it was a little more of a crazed, like...action, but I knew that they wouldn’t shoot this guy up close like that with a 12-gauge, for the simple fact that it’d be way too messy. I mean, he had the—there’s like, right here like this and it’s too close, nobody’s stupid enough to do that to somebody.

Q: What did you think about that incident afterwards?

A: Nothing really, I thought it was just an everyday, what we were—what we were doing, what we were there for.

With this account, Miller relates his sense of the commonplace nature of the abusive violence used against this detainee. He also reveals his sense at the time that

these actions, although not strictly speaking within the proper protocols for reporting detentions, were fully within “what we were there for.” His later participation in abusive violence would be much more involved and destructive.

By this point Miller’s sensibilities took no account of whether killing the detainee might be either morally wrong or unlawful. Instead, he is convinced that no killing would occur using the shotgun because it would have been “way too messy.” It would have been “crazy” to be splattered with gore, but not so to terrorize and perhaps cleanly kill the boy.

The worst part of me

The next incident represents the crossing of a major threshold for Richard. In it he describes the results of anger and frustration, abuse gone beyond the pale, and the taking of the obvious solution. He also describes the effect on his men, and himself. One month into his arrival into Iraq Miller has fully acted upon his anger toward Muslims, transforming himself into a torturer and murderer who doubts his own sanity.

Q: How did that incident start?

A: We were out doing knock and searches, and ...we were in a barber shop and there were a couple of men in there and this one man just kept like looking at us, like mean mugging us, and so I sent our interpreter over who punched the guy in the face and we grabbed the guy and we brought him, we took him into our vehicle and we were beatin’ the hell out of him inside of our vehicle and inside our Humvee and then we took him to the COP, to the dungeon to interrogate him, and at this point, three members of our, of our company had already been killed by roadside bombs, and so...through the anger, one of my good friends was already killed, and in anger I started to interrogate this, this member myself along with my platoon sergeant, er, my squad leader.

Q: How was he dressed?

A: He was dressed in a—in the white, ah...”man dress,” they called it, and he had a—he was an older gentleman, probably in his 40’s and...gray hair, um...a bit of the gray, graybeard going on, like gray stubble, but...ah...so we took him to the dungeon.

Miller’s account demonstrates the continuing force of his reaction to anything less than cowed submission by the Iraqi people. Combined with the added rage over comrade’s deaths, this habitual physical abuse of Iraqis became more serious.

As Miller had mentioned, the initial beating took place in the squad's vehicle:

Q: Was he restrained?

A: No he wasn't; this one wasn't restrained. He was actually...

Q: From point of capture all the way down there he...?

A: Right, he just—he was just covered up like this the whole time because we were striking him.

Q: Did he receive any injuries when he was being beaten only?

A: Couple of his teeth were knocked out...and a lot of blood.

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Q: How many people participated in the beating?

A: Three.

Q: What was the interpreter doing during that?

A: Sitting in the vehicle...laughing. Once you look back, you could see that the interpreter was laughing kind of nervously, but laughing, like just trying to be a part of it without trying to be a part of it.

The team returned to the COP:

Q: Okay, so you're downstairs?

A: Right.

Q: In the dungeon, and who took the lead in the questioning?

A: Me.

Q: How did it start?

A: I was with the interpreter and I started asking him...to... "Tell me where the militia is, where's militia?" and he kept saying, "I don't know Mister, I don't know..." and I said, "No, you're a liar; you're a fuckin' liar, tell me where the militia is." And then I was like "[militia name], you know, it was [militia name], are you [militia name]?" and he was like, "No, I'm not [militia name]..." I was like, "No, you're [militia name] aren't you?" At this point, I was just, I was just frustrated; I was pissed off. Nobody ever seemed to know anything, and I took out my SOG knife and I started cutting his face.

Q: Where?

A: On the cheek right here, started slicing down his cheek, and ah...

Q: When you did that, what did you hear?

A: I heard him screaming and ah...

Q: What else did you hear?

A: Laughing.

Q: Who was laughing?

A: The—my men behind me...and also myself.

Q: What were you saying?

A: I don't recall saying anything; and I don't recall laughing, but I can hear myself laughing. That's when I started, I guess you could say, 'peeling off skin from his face'...seeing how deep I can go and what's underneath the skin.

Q: And what did you find?

A: More and more blood.

Richard's frustration-venting abuse may have been couched in the guise of interrogation, but it quickly descended into the same kind of blood-letting that took place on the ride in the back of Chris Alexander's Humvee. This situation differs from Chris' in that the revenge, frustration and anger in the dungeon was in no way fueled by the aftermath a battle in which the soldier's life and limb were threatened. Here, Richard's rage had gone too far; consequently, it was not possible for the detainee to be turned in to the MPs.

Miller described the course of action selected:

Q: And then what happened?

A: Um...kept questioning him, he was unable to talk anymore, and...think through shock, part of his face was just hanging down. You could see inside of his mouth, here...because there was no skin there, and...I knew that we would get in trouble for doing this if we were to take him to any kind of MP station or whatnot, so I instructed my team to...get ready to go out and talked to my squad leader and he was like, "Yeah, take him out." So we took him out...

Q: When...you use the term “take him out” what—did that have a single or a dual meaning?

A: It had a dual meaning; it meant for us to take him out of the COP and then “take him out” because this guy can go and tell on us, and...so we drove him approximately two miles away from our COP, we dismounted, walked up next to a, we called it “[deleted]’s Gorge” because it was where somebody had fallen into a gorge. It was just a huge [unintelligible] and ah...fired a round into the back of his head and he dropped.

Q: Did you have one of your men shoot him?

A: No, I shot him myself.

Q: Did you use your personal weapon for that?

A: Yes.

Q: Were you at all concerned about ballistics?

A: No.

Q: When you say “he dropped”, what do you mean?

A: He dropped into the gorge; he was still standing and I walked up behind him with my M4. I just fired one shot into the...bottom part of his head.

Q: Was he still blind folded?

A: Yep. (sigh)

Q: At that point, had—were his hands restrained?

A: No, his hands were not restrained.

Q: What did you hear after you fired?

A: Um...all I heard was the ringing from the shot in my ears.

Q: What was visible in front of you?

A: It was dark at this point, it was—like you could see lights in homes, and that was about it.

Q: How many of you had taken a ride out there?

A: Five. It was a full vehicle.

Q: What was the conversation on the way out there?

A: There wasn't any; we didn't...it was like the...you just knew what to do, you didn't have to discuss it, you didn't want to discuss it.

Q: What was the mood like on the way back?

A: Jovial, clappin' and joking; talking about going to get something to eat.

Q: Did anyone...

A: Talking about pussy, stuff like that.

Q: Did any—anyone refer to the shooting?

A: No.

Q: When you got back, what'd you guys do?

A: Went and got something to eat, laid down and watched our own personal movies or played video games on our own personal PlayStation portables.

Q: Did you say anything to your...squad leader about...?

A: I just gave him the OK sign.

Q: How long were you out?

A: No longer than 15 minutes.

In the aftermath of the killing Richard and the other men seemed to have snapped back into the banter and attitudes of a macho special operations team; however, for Richard, this was not the complete reality:

Q: Um...did you think about it afterwards at some points?

A: Yeah, I did. Um...unfortunately, that was my first kill, and I quickly learned that you can't just kill somebody and go on about your day like nothing happened. It stays with you; it lives with you. No matter how hard you...try to justify or forgive it, forget it, it just—it's there, it'll always be there.

Q: That night when...

A: I kept seeing it back in my head again.

Q: Which part?

A: The biggest part was the carving the skin off of his face, and listening to him scream.

Q: What were you thinking at the time that you were imagining this or recalling it?

A: (Pause) I kept hearing myself laughing. It's like...the worst part of me, knowing that I wasn't laughing but I could hear myself laughing and knowing that even when it was going on in real life, I wasn't laughing, but I could hear myself laughing inside my head and...that's when you start to believe that maybe you're a little bit fuckin' psychotic.

Q: How long into the deployment were you at that point?

A: This was one month into my deployment.

Just a few weeks after leaving home, living in a world of ever-perceived threat, Richard Miller and the men with whom he served had become routinely violent abusers of the Iraqi population. He was immediately deeply troubled both by what had happened and his warped sense during the grotesque torture that his inner-self was gleefully enjoying the experience. He names the thing he fears he has become: "a little bit fuckin' psychotic."

Richard may have been afraid of what he was becoming, but as we further discussed the incident, his additional thoughts about both the cutting and the aftermath were revealing of more dimensions of his sense-making at the time:

Q: I'd like to ask you a little bit about...why you, what you were trying to do...at the time you drew your knife. What was your object, do you think?

A: My object at first was to just scare him by cutting him a little bit, just a little bit, and what I found when I started cutting him is that I couldn't stop cutting him. I just kept going more and more. It was almost like a...like I say now, it's like a release. It was like an anger release; I was able to release a lot of pressure within myself by carving this man's face off.

Q: Were you thinking about the casualties at the time or was it not that defined, or?

A: Yeah, it, it wasn't even really, I—I don't think I was really "thinking" at all. It was just a natural action, like once I started cutting, it was almost as if I was skinning an animal, and then it had no more meaning than that.

Q: When you said that you wanted to scare him, were you intending that that was going to be the only result, or were you trying to get information that you thought he actually had?

A: I was trying to get information that he actually had, that I thought he had and because, you know, everybody in Iraq knows something, but nobody in Iraq knows anything. They're always saying that they don't know anything, but they all know something. There's no way that you can live three houses down from a known terrorist suspect and not know a damn fuckin' thing, it's impossible, but yet, no matter what you did to these people, they never knew anything.

Q: Now...um...when you saw that you had gone further than you should have, what did you feel?

A: I didn't feel anything at the time.

Q: Did you feel, um...like, "Oops, I shouldn't have done that?"

A: Probably more so a sense of accomplishment than anything. Something that I've never done before and to actually...kind of a bravado thing, like, "Oh shit, this mother fucker peeled somebody's face off. This son of a bitch is crazy." You know, it's kind of like a...it's a bravado thing that your other soldiers who saw it are going to be like, "God damn! This dude fuckin' just peeled somebody's face off!"

Q: He's hard-ass?

A: Pretty bad ass, yeah, "he's hard, he's hard core". Which is ultimately what you want in the military.

Richard points further to the community as dangerous co-conspirators of insurgent violence toward the Americans. He implicates everyone by baldly stating that they all know about the insurgents but always claim ignorance. His absolutism, "all" and "always" offers universal condemnation for universal guilt. In this mindset he can "know" that the man from the barbershop deserves to be tortured because he is part of the enemy effort. Silence, and protestations of innocence, did not convince the American with the knife to stop skinning the man like a game animal. Miller felt amazement that no matter what was done to the populace they obstinately persisted to claim ignorance; he entirely rejected the notion that any of the persons Miller grabbed off the street, or in shops, might actually be ignorant.

Miller also described the sense of “accomplishment” that his atrocity engendered and the increase in macho prestige he imagined he deserved for the heinousness of his act. In his self-view, Richard has captured what every soldier ultimately desires: the awe-struck respect of other men of violence for the extent to which he is willing to ignore humanity in order to bring misery and death to the enemy. In this aggrandized view, questions of guilt or innocence are irrelevant in the face of such grim glory.

Finally, Miller also introduced the sense of not being in full control of himself when he declares that his initial intent was to frighten and to barely cut, but that “what I found when I started cutting him is that I couldn’t stop cutting him.” This bespeaks a self-revelation, a finding, a discovery, about a proclivity that was previously hidden. Also, his account speaks to a sense of non-agency, a helplessness to halt the brutality; in this he is like Chris Alexander who felt that someone else was torturing the elderly man. Richard sees that a previously unacknowledged “other” has taken control. He speaks directly to the “release” of pent-up anger. He has given his anger freedom to act in order to discharge “a lot of pressure.”

The mechanisms of routine atrocity

Miller described to me that his squad continued along its lethal path, joined by other units in his company. They also began to employ “drop weapons,” a practice that other participants mentioned using as well. I asked him about the gorge:

Q: Was that...a place that was used often?

A: Whenever we needed to get rid of somebody, that was the place that we used.

Q: Okay. Are you able to estimate how many times it was used that way?

A: For my platoon...three or four times...total, but now there’s other platoons in my unit who knew of the gorge as well, so...they knew that, you know, that was a good way, when you didn’t have a drop weapon, that was a good way to get rid of somebody. We started collecting drop weapons, probably...a month and a half into our deployment, like collecting them, like actively collecting them to where they were sitting in the vehicles; you got 10 or 15 in each vehicle.

Q: AK’s or what?

A: AK’s, um nine millimeters, brass knuckles, you can shoot someone over brass knuckles, knives...stuff like that, anything that you wanted to use, that you could say, “Okay, this individual here had a weapon, so I fired.”

During the following months Miller's squad continued with its casual beatings and murders, sometimes without even resorting to using the Gorge or the niceties of drop weapons. I asked Richard about whether his platoon had eliminated anyone before the first use of the Gorge. He explained some of those circumstances:

A: We've done it, you know, we—we pulled over and picked up men off the street and beaten them so badly that we can't...we take 'em to another side of town and drop 'em off, knowing that they're going to die of their injuries. We just drop 'em on the side of the road, knowing that they're going to die. You know, it wasn't every day that we put a round into somebody, but...we would beat them so severely or—or cut them so severely that they, they're going to die. You cut somebody's femoral artery, they're going to die; it doesn't matter what—what—how far they can crawl, they're gonna die. And it's real easy to cut somebody's femoral artery.

Q: How many times do you think you were involved or your squad was involved in leaving somebody to die?

A: About six times.

Q: And this was some time in the first eight weeks of deployment?

A: Throughout the first six months of deployment.

Using a practice mentioned by other participants, Miller's unit engaged in indiscriminate firing when they were attacked by an IED. Miller also said that the instruction came from the top:

A: I knew I got orders at one point while we were in Iraq from the battalion commander himself, stating . . . whenever anybody was hit with IED, to, "Kill every mother fucker on the street..." and that's the highest, I mean, as far as you're concerned, your BC [battalion commander] is god. His word's god; it doesn't matter anybody else's word, battalion commander, that's as high as it goes, so...he's obviously getting his orders from way higher than that.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: So BC was the, was god, his word was god.

If the word of god was to kill everyone in the vicinity of an IED explosion, there is little wonder that the men in Miller's squad felt justified in beating and killing others who might have information, or sympathize with insurgents. The violence may have

become habitual, but Miller was to discover a line that went beyond even his callous limits.

I never wanted to kill a kid

Miller described a mission to arrest a suspected insurgent denounced by an informant as being responsible for planting a bomb that killed one of Miller's good friends. The squad entered the home and secured the occupants. He explained how the event unfolded:

Q: And did you have a good identification on the target?

A: Yeah, we knew that he was the adult male in that house.

Q: And...how many males were there?

A: Three.

Q: Ages?

A: One adult male, one teen-aged male and one young male, probably around eight or nine years old.

Q: Okay. So everybody is secured?

A: Uh-huh, yeah, the women are in one room which, was a mother and daughter, approximately 13 or 14 years old.

Q: Your interpreter's inside with you?

A: Uh-huh.

Q: Your squad leader is where?

A: Squad leader's upfront with the interpreter asking questions.

Q: And then what happens?

A: Um, the man keeps saying, "No, no..." the person who told on him is a liar, ah...he had no part in any IED, he works at a metal shop, that's all he does, he's just trying to support his family, and...and that's when my squad leader put his hand around the younger boy's mouth and held him up to him and took a throw-away nine-millimeter and put it up against the boy's head, and the man was crying saying, "No, please don't..." and he—you know, I'm just standing there providing security out the doorway, and I can see everything

that's happening, and ah...that's when you hear the nine millimeter go off and...he shot the boy in the head.

Q: Were you watching at the time?

A: No, I was looking out the door when I heard the nine millimeter go off; I turned around, and that's when I saw the boy hit the ground.

Q: Did it startle you?

A: I didn't really have a startle response anymore.

Q: I see. Were you...expecting that the boy was going to get shot?

A: Maybe in some small way, but...I knew that it was a scare tactic that we used many times.

Q: Had anybody been shot actually?

A: No.

Q: And which boy was this?

A: Eight-year-old boy.

Q: What did you hear?

A: Screaming from the women, ringing of the gunshot and inside myself, I just kept saying, 'Fuck, fuck, fuck!'

Q: What did the squad leader say immediately after?

A: "I told you, that's what you fuckin' get." And then we grabbed the man and took him back to our COP.

Although Miller felt that he no longer had a startle response, he was still capable of feeling shock and dismay.

Q: When the...well, in this situation that you just described, did you think he meant to pull the trigger or that he was surprised when it went off?

A: Everything that I saw was it was intentional.

Q: What did he say afterwards about it?

A: We didn't talk about it afterwards, we never talked about it.

Q: But he didn't talk about...

A: Whether it was an accident or on purpose, he...you know, you hear, "That's what you fuckin' get", and you're just like, "Oh shit, fuck!" you know, I never wanted to kill a kid. Did I have a part in it, yeah...but I never, like that wasn't my intention going there, with killing children. I wanted no part of that.

Back at the COP Richard refused to participate in the interrogation, even though the detainee was suspected in his friend's death.

Q: And um, what happened in the dungeon?

A: I wasn't a part of that; I went, I didn't want to be a part of it. I went to my cot, and I turned on the TV or the TV, the computer, and started watching my "Six Feet Under" episodes.

Q: Why didn't you want to be a part of it?

A: Just tired of it, tired of...us getting nowhere and it being the same repetitive thing over and over again, same thing every fuckin' day, same thing.

Q: Well, what was it?

A: Questioning, getting nothing, hurting, getting nothing, checking the same fuckin' houses...the same blocks, the same people, just tormenting 'em every day. I was just getting tired of it, not knowing what the hell I was doing there anymore. I didn't—didn't want to be a part of it. It was making me sick to my stomach; it was making me...hate everybody that I came in contact with. It was making me hate my family back home, hate my privates, hate...my wife...at the time, I was hating everybody. I just didn't want to be a part of it anymore.

Richard found no means of acting on his self-hate. His loathing could not overcome the fear that he had about raising objections. His comments in this regard dovetail completely with those of both Frank and Chris:

Q: So...at some point, you begin to...have these feelings, what did you think you could do about it while you were there?

A: Ignore 'em, ignore it, I mean...what can you do? You are what you are, and...you just have to learn how to accept it, and so I tried joking about it, and...just for the most part, ignoring any kind of...conscious desire to not want to do it. You start to, well for me, I started to allow the evil to grow in a good-to-go way, because what do you do? You can't go, "Hey look, this isn't right

guys..." I mean...you go against people that you're with and the people that you're with are going to kill you. You can kill an eight-year-old kid, why the fuck wouldn't he be able to kill me?

Richard's response to feeling that he could not object was to suppress the desire to object. He delved deeper into the "evil" as a means of coping with the impossible-seeming situation. In his mind, being "good to go" with continued abuse was the only obvious choice. Richard also reveals that he deems himself to be a person who is both capable of abusive violence but relishes it. He "is" that person, not a person who has done some things, but as he put it "what can you do? You are what you are..." The question in that statement indicates a belief that what he is, or has become, is unchangeable: "you just have to learn to accept it."

It was ineffective and pointless

During our interviews and informal conversations, Miller described that near the mid-point of his time in Iraq three things occurred that allowed him to see his situation differently. He experienced the birth of his child; his squad leader went back home, making Miller the one in charge of the squad; and he was present when other Iraqi children were shot by Americans.

Miller also began to doubt the effectiveness of the brutality his battalion was using toward the Iraqis. We discussed this.

Q: You said a moment ago that all of the abuse the detainees incurred as part of seeking information, but that you never got any.

A: No.

Q: Did--

A: None of that was valid. (Pause) You beat somebody enough, they're always going to say something, what you want to hear but they usually just told on a neighbor or something like that.

Q: Um...during the course of your deployment, did you evaluate the effectiveness of those methods, while you were over there?

A: Yeah, while I was over there, I started to see that everything that we were doing over there was bullshit, that it was ineffective and pointless and causing more enemies for the United States than we were helping, so...

His doubts tempered his willingness to engage in all-direction punitive fire after IED strikes occurred. He explained his reaction to the battalion commander's order:

Q: At the time it didn't make sense?

A: No, it—it never really made sense to me, I mean, I'd always figured that we were going to be...making more enemies than anything, by-by killing people's husbands, wives and children.

Q: At the time you were doing it though...um...?

A: It was my job. My job was not to question and that's why my job was to do and die.

Q: And...

A: That's the way I looked at it.

Q: Uh-huh. At...some point, did your compliance with that SOP change?

A: Yeah, almost immediately um, when that order was given, even though we had been doing it already. Um...for the most part, I usually fired my weapon up into the rooftops of buildings, um...

Q: Before that?

A: Yeah. I—I never really saw much reason for—for killing a kid on the street because of an IED. I'd fire my weapons into rooftops or empty fields as well, as a couple of other soldiers of mine.

American or Iraqi, it's still a human life

The incident involving other Americans shooting Iraqi children along with adults was the event that changed everything for Miller. The misgivings that had been growing about the ineffectiveness of wholesale brutality as well as the line-crossing children shooting combined to prompt a change:

Q: After that, when your squad detained people, did your attitude change translate into changes in how your...how detainees were being treated?

A: Yeah, I would never, I would never take part in—in any of the detainee abuse, um and I told my soldiers that if I caught them abusing detainees, um...that they were going to have to deal with me, and give an Article 15, and see if I can get them court-martialed, and pretty much most of my soldiers, at this point, were on my page. So, um...they viewed things the same way I did and ah...um...by this time I was in charge of an entire squad, so...to be a squad leader and have, and had had half of my guys who agreed with me and half of them who were still gung ho going to go out and shoot people and stuff so...it was hard to maintain both sides of people.

Q: So once you—did you declare that to everybody in the squad?

A: Yeah.

[]

Q: So when you made that declaration, what kind of feedback did you get from the soldiers?

A: Um...grumbles from some of em.

Q: What'd they say?

A: "Are you serious, this is what we're here for."

Q: And did you...reply to that at all?

A: Um...yeah, I mean, whenever a soldier talked back I'd just smoke 'em [punish], until they stop talking back.

Being the squad leader gave Richard the authority to order his men to cease their abuse. Although Miller was assured that some of his men agreed with his position, he nonetheless understood the resistance that this change would create with some of the troops. His account does not reflect a simple heart to heart moment with the squad; rather, he delivered the word to his men from his position of authority and

threatened formal military justice for abusers. Having given himself over to a new set of objectives, he is willing to abuse his own men who are unwilling to comply.

Miller described in further detail his motives for making the change.

Q: We were talking about the more humane treatment that you decided that you and your squad would use with detainees. Once you started that policy, did you feel better about what your involvement was?

A: I—I felt better personally and I think that I had a problem with making—my conscience, and having one more, one more innocent person's death on my conscience, and that if I could, if I could just save one person at the hands of my squad, then I was doing better than what I was, so...um...

I asked Miller about the number of Iraqis his squad had killed before this directive who had not deserve to be killed. He estimated that nearly all of the killings were unjustified. We talked about the aggression of the squad before the new order was issued and the effects it had:

Q: And...for the second half of your deployment, did that number go down to or near zero?

A: Um...nobody in my squad that I'm aware of pulled the trigger on anybody.

Q: Now...up until the point you made a decision to change how your squad was going to operate, did you see that the aggression of the squad was higher than when you first got there, the same or growing?

A: Up until the moment that I changed my squad, the aggression had grown and was continuing to grow.

Q: So...

A: ...And we—we very much had a god-like complex.

Q: Would it be fair to say then that...the situations of the second half of deployment being similar to the first, that your squad would have killed more people in the second half of the deployment than the first if you hadn't changed?

A: Without a doubt.

Q: So...your actions, would it be fair to say then, that your actions did, in fact, save a lot of Iraqis?

A: I'd like to think so.

Miller did not come by his epiphany on his own. He attributed much of his change in thinking to a young soldier in his squad who was a steadfast opponent of the abusive violence and the war in Iraq:

Q: Did his presence and his—how he acted, um...did it have any influence on anybody else?

A: On me, I think it had a big influence on me. Um...we would sit on guard duty together and he would talk to me and I'd listen to him and ah...even though I didn't agree in the beginning, I started to agree with a lot of his views towards the end because it just made so much more sense than what we were doing, and ah, I guess I can attribute this young kid with changing, you know, the way a lot of my, my thoughts were.

I asked Richard about his current view of the logic that applied during his deployment: to dominate the AO by out-terrorizing the terrorists:

A: No, logic is the first thing to escape your—your mentality in war; there is no logic, it's all based on feelings and emotions. Logic is—is a foreign thing in your brain when you're in, in war.

Q: The concept of...dominating the area and...

A: Yeah, that's completely illogical.

Q: Then did it fit with your feelings and emotions at the time to do those things?

A: Well I think that, when—when we were told that the only way to maintain our AO was to kill these people. Did it make sense at the time? Yeah, it did because you're not thinking logically. You're thinking about preserving your own life or the life of your buddy to the right or left. You're not thinking, "Okay, if I kill this person, his son's going to grow up and want to kill me..." You're not thinking that, that logically. So...while I—living in the moment, everything seemed like you were doing it for the right reasons. Ah, but then, you know, hindsight's 20/20; you take a look back and you're like... "oh, shit I created more enemies for the United States than if I was to never have done these things."

With these answers, Miller mentions some of the same thinking employed by other participants. Chris Alexander's declaration that killing detainees always seemed

“logical at the time,” but not when considered after returning home, echoes here. The preservation of self and comrades as the over-riding consideration was also spoken of by others. Also, the late realization that American troops’ abusiveness would fuel an enmity measured in generations, was inherent in the shame felt by some participants for their participation in, or failure to stop, that abuse.

I explored with Miller the choices he made while in Iraq, and whether he might have had no truly good options. His answers describe the evolution of his thinking and perhaps the virtues of his later conduct:

A: And one way or another somebody was going to lose a life. It was deciding whether or not...at least for the first half of my deployment that the American lives were more important than the lives of the people of Iraq, and then the later part of my deployment was realizing that every life lost is a life lost and it didn’t matter if they were American or Iraqi, it’s still a human life.

Q: What you’ve described to me is an assessment also that...the decisions you made in the second half of your deployment to restrain the men’s behavior did not result in greater losses of life?

A: No.

Q: Either American or Iraqi?

A: Right.

Q: And, in fact, reduced Iraqi casualties and didn’t create as many enemies as if the prior conduct had continued. Would you say that it’s a fair assessment that by not creating those enemies, less attacks occurred on Americans?

A: I would like to hope that that is what happened. It seemed like we were getting attacked just as much but...um...I don’t know. I’d like to think that...me not shooting the guy for thinking he had something could have...at least for a night saved one life, I mean, the next day someone in a different squad could have shot that man’s son and he become an enemy of us anyways, but...I had no hand in it. When I got—when I got blown up in Iraq, I wasn’t angry, I wasn’t upset at the Iraqis, because I would, I started to view them as the same as you and I. I would have done the same exact thing. If I kicked in your front door and shot your kid in the head, are you going to thank me for it and say, “Hey, I—I know you’re looking out for me. This is our freedom and democracy...?” or would you pick up a weapon and try to kill me, kill every single person who looked like me? I’d do the latter, and I would do it until the day that I died.

So...even, even for one day, I saved that person from wanting to kill us. I don't know, it's just the way I look at it.

Miller's ability to think of the Iraqi's as human, to equate them to himself, was one result of the abuse his former de-humanized view of Muslims had enabled. Being able to see the natural response to the violence in terms of his imagined own reactions had the tables been turned, offered Richard the vision to see that saving one Iraqi life, "even for one day," might have spared the Iraqis from hatred and the Americans from deadly retaliation.

We were all monsters

The effect on troops engaged in abusive violence was a theme that Frank Wright had talked about when he described the "disordered souls" and post-deployment outcomes of his friends. Miller attempted suicide after returning home and found little help from civilian psychiatric care. He was unable to relate to the relationship problems that the other patients were troubled by. He described why he was not able to be open with them during group therapy sessions:

A: Here I am thinking their problems are jokes and whenever they'd come to me, I didn't want to talk about what, in a group session, I didn't want to talk about what I was feeling for fear of being labeled a monster by somebody.

Q: How did you label yourself?

A: As a monster. As an evil person.

Q: Now, the things you did were the same things done by your squad mates. How did you label them?

A: We were all monsters.

Q: Um...

A: But I think, I think I'd label the—the younger ones as just misguided kids who, if it wasn't for my commands of doing this, then they would have never done it. I ah...I was the one who encouraged it most of the time.

Richard gives name to his assessment of what he and others became in Iraq. It is the same "monster" title that Chris Alexander believes is unworthy of a life in America. Miller also shoulders the responsibility for corrupting the younger soldiers in his squad with his examples, encouragement, and commands.

I asked Miller about PTSD among his comrades:

Q: The diagnosis of PTSD, was that something that other members of your squad received?

A: Yeah.

Q: How many folks that you're aware of?

A: Every single one of them...even the most hard core, "I'd never get PTSD" soldier, um is now taking anti-psychotics and anti-depressants just to—and has been deemed, he was supposed to go to Afghanistan this summer and he was deemed unfit for duty because of his Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

At some point Richard spoke to some groups about the war. He found forums to be constraining, again concerned about how others would view him. He did speak to individuals, both as a way to unburden himself, but also in some way to share out the pain and horror he lived with. He explained:

There's a lot more that I wouldn't say in public for fear of the way people are going to look at me, than, say on one-on-one basis where it's just me and one other person and no matter what they look at, how they look at me, they actually have to live with what I tell them. It's them that has to go to sleep with the images that I had in my head. And I started to look at it as "fair is fair," you've asked to do this, why can't—why can't these people look at these images and see these images that are in my head. So they can see that life's not all rainbows and lollipops, and there's a reason that soldiers are killing themselves with a higher rate now than ever before. It's not because we're doing great things for God and country.

There's a special place in Hell reserved

Richard's troubled memories are not the worst legacy of his abusive service in Iraq. The need for release that was fulfilled by the cutting of his victim in the dungeon has not entirely left him. When I asked him about his rising sense of hatred and futility in Iraq, he described what he found within himself in Iraq that has followed him home:

Q: How did you feel about yourself?

A: I think that's the one thing I hated worse than anything or anybody was myself for what I...was turning into over there and how much I enjoyed it. I mean I enjoyed hurting people. To this day, I still have a problem not hurting people, because I want to, I want to hurt people. I want them to feel the pain that I feel inside, but I want theirs to be physical. I don't know, it's hard to explain (quiet laugh). Like I just want to hurt people, and it makes me feel evil;

psychotic and...my wife doesn't understand that when I get angry, I just want to hurt people. I go out and I pick fights, I go out and I bait people into fights with me just so I can hurt em, and she just doesn't understand why, and I don't know how to explain it to her. I like to break people's bones in a fight; I mean I was trained in the Army and, you know, Brazilian Jiu-jitsu and...I don't go toe-to-toe with people, I take 'em to the ground and I break something; I just want to break some—I want to hear it snap, I want to hear them scream...it makes me feel better, it's like me releasing the scream myself.

Richard's indescribable pain, his own "disordered soul," the need to hurt that makes him feel "evil" and "psychotic," is the most pronounced expression of the troubling aftermath of involvement in abusive violence among the fourteen participants in this study. Miller gives fullest voice to the thing that bewildered Chris Alexander when he barricaded himself in his room, trying to keep himself in and the world out. The life that Richard occupies can be described: hurt. He is, and he does.

At the end of the interview process it was my habit to ask participant's whether they could suggest ways in which I could improve the study experience for participants. As I drove Richard back to his hotel he gave an answer that brought into high relief the daily reality of his life. Richard suggested I place a small radio playing background music in the small quiet office that we had used. I asked him why. He replied that during the silences he could hear the screaming, in his head.

Richard does not blame others, nor does he absolve himself. His sense of his experiences is stark, unrelenting, and hopeless:

Q: Um...what is your view of now...of what you and your squad mates did to the detainees especially?

A: My view is that we did horrible things and there's no amount of redemption that can change it. There's no amount of apologies or forgiveness that can take away what we have done, and...and as I mentioned before there's a, there's a special place in hell reserved for people like us. There's not much you can do except accept the consequences for your actions.

Richard's Themes

Richard Miller's experiences reveal the following themes in his sense-making of his experiences with abusive violence. Most of the following are interpretations of the

sensibilities he employed at the time of the events, adopting interpretive language that represents Richard's thinking.

Facilitating Abusive Violence

Word of God: Command Authority. The battalion commander and Miller's squad leader are two key figures who embodied the command authority's full support, encouragement, and alignment with abusive violence.

Communal Guilt. Miller's fury and vindictiveness resulting from the 9/11 attacks placed responsibility squarely on all Muslims in America and every Muslim country. The Iraqi population was simply the group of people placed within Miller's reach. Communal Guilt also attached to the perceived community support for insurgents and militias attacking the Americans.

Community Terror. If Communal Guilt was the crime, Community Terror was the punishment. To be brutalized by the Americans was the deserved pay-back for the crime of being inconveniently Iraqi during an occupation by troops who saw themselves surrounded by threatening animals.

Frustration and Fists/Obey or Pay. Everyone knew something, but everyone denied it, everyone frustrates us, so everyone gets beat. Some decide they aren't going to be happy about having American saviors occupy the streets and foolishly fail the submissiveness-test. They get beat, tortured, and killed.

Laughing, Joking, and Battering. Abuse, if you're not the one being abused, gets a laugh. Sometimes the laughter is simply submissive, nervous, going-along laughter so you're viewed as a good egg, and not the next one to be broken.

Drop Guns and Other Niceties. Rules can, and should, be got around. Drop Guns, beating in Humvees, dropping dying victims far from home, dungeons and gorges: all good ideas for abusers. Simple. Obvious.

Inhibiting Abusive Violence

Ineffective, Pointless, and Worse. The beatings, torture, intimidation, and indiscriminate killing don't make us safer. Can't blame them for resisting; if they did this stuff to us, we'd want to kill them too.

Wanted No Part of This: Discovering the Limit. Killing kids is going just too far; not what I signed up for.

It's Still a Human Life: Global Shift. Their kids are like my kids. Their reactions to oppressive occupiers I can understand. They're human too. If they die, or we die,

it's still a human life. I need to save human lives: theirs from our abusive violence, ours from their retaliation. We are the true threat.

Monsters and Misguided Kids. Some of us were Monsters, relishing the release of rage on the bodies of our victims. Monsters led the younger soldiers laughing and cheering into the abyss. They were just kids, led astray by us.

Have to Deal with Me: From Scourge to Shield. Nobody will abuse Iraqis, or else. No new Iraqis died, no new soldiers were turned into monsters. At least we stopped making things worse for everyone.

Aftermath of Abusive Violence

Hurting: Releasing the Scream. I enjoy hurting others. My pain is released by their screams. It makes me feel better. On the other hand, it makes me feel evil, psychotic. There can be no forgiveness.

In my time spent with Richard and his wife before the interviews, I learned of the flashbacks that place Richard back in Iraq. They are so strong that his wife is unable to summon him from them and takes their children into the basement so that they will not see their father pacing in the house, his mind years and continents away. Richard told me that the only peace he has found has been due to the patience and love of his wife. He has still not shared with her everything he told me, but her calming influence does not require her to know all he has done or seen in order to help. He says that next to her is the only place he can fall asleep.

In this chapter I have presented the words of one soldier whose experiences with abusive violence and his sense-making of them offer a number of themes that are in common with others. Richard Miller's experiences include heinous examples of abuse, but they also encompass efforts to become more humane as the commonality of sensibility with the Iraqis toward children and oppression were recognized. Miller took steps to save his men from the hell they would otherwise come to deserve and to save the Iraqis from the beating, torture, and murder that he and his men represented.

Miller's sense of guilt over what he did before he took command of the squad is great, and, in light of his actions, not undeserved. He and others see themselves as having become monsters. It is difficult not to be horrified by their stories, but it is also difficult to not hope that they can find peace. As others have said, to understand does not mean to excuse. The participants made choices and, as Miller says, must live with them. For some the choice to object was not apparent, while for others the choice not to object was similarly invisible. Doubts plague some of each group. Although being troubled at not being forceful enough while addressing abuse by other troops is

a background issue for some participants, having been a gross abuser creates problems that occupy the foreground of the present.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the superordinate themes evident within the groups of participants and those which, perhaps only expressed by one person, still offer insight into the experiences of abusive violence committed in the service of Counter-terrorism and Counter-insurgency that may not have been otherwise evident.

Chapter 8. Findings, Implications, and Conclusion

This study has been an attempt to understand abusive violence as it has been used by individual Americans since September 11, 2001 during the United States' world-wide war on terrorism. The study focused on the individuals and their sense-making of abusive violence rather than the state-level priorities that justify the use of abusive violence as a tool to apply in the CT and COIN contexts.

Much has been written about the decisions that led to American policies of extraordinary rendition, indefinite detention, and interrogations of suspected terrorists as Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib, and other secret intelligence centers around the world. Guantanamo, as a place of continued detention, and the purported spawning ground of interrogation approaches many considered abusive, continues to be a problem for the United States. In 2013, as this thesis is being written, President Obama frames Guantanamo thus: "It hurts us in terms of our international standing. It lessens cooperation with our allies on counterterrorism efforts. It is a recruitment tool for extremists (Washington Post 2013)." How the men and women who carry out national CT and COIN policies decided to use or eschew abuse, what the experiences of making those choices and executing them were like, and the latter-day sense-making of those experiences are the questions that required an individual level research focus, rather than a policy or state level focus.

If one applies President Obama's comments on the *place* that is Guantanamo to the perceived *activities* of torture and other abusive violence attributed to that place, then it becomes difficult to understand why harsh interrogation techniques do not deserve the same termination from use that the president is seeking for the facility. In other words, if torture aids the extremists' cause and harms American efforts, then one should prevent abusive violence in its various forms, and especially torture as its worst iteration. Given that the practice of enhanced interrogation techniques has the ability to escape the bounds set for it, both in terms of degree of harshness and narrowly prescribed authorized-use situations, then understanding how individuals actually decide to use the "approved" and "feral" methods is an important factor in choosing how to stem the introduction and spread of abusive violence and its toxic consequences.

This study has added to the store of knowledge relating to those decisions to use such abusive violence. In particular, it has carefully sought the recent experiences in American abusive violence that accompanied CT and COIN efforts since the 9/11

attacks. While the results of the study were never intended to be projected to any larger group of Americans, they do reveal the personal emotions and modes of thinking that some American military and security personnel used when undertaking abuse that included what was, at the time, considered commonplace. Since the same techniques had been endured during training by the soldiers, they were deemed acceptable for use on detainees. As also learned during the study, the use of much harsher abusive violence was practiced by some Americans up to and including excruciating torture perpetrated for purposes of information extraction, enjoyment, emotional release and infliction of agony on despised enemies. The perpetrators of such grave abusive violence who participated in this study give only partially lucid explanations for their conduct. They recall the events from a remove, as if someone else was carving the victims with knives or someone else was responsible for the delighted laughter in the charnel house.

Findings in Relation to Prior Research

The findings in this study sometimes seem to confirm earlier research and elsewhere to contradict prior findings. Inasmuch as prior research has ranged from short-term psychological experiments, to studies of broad swathes of torture history and archival study of individual military units, to studies of totalitarian regime professional torture establishments, it is natural that the study of abusive violence undertaken by soldiers representing a liberal democracy would have features of varying similarity to earlier attempts to understand the nuances of individual willingness to commit abuse.

Obedience to Authority

The findings of this research tend to support the Milgram findings on Obedience to Authority. Specifically, the relationship between obedience to authority is obviously evident in this study's Macro Command Authority finding, and is even more salient in the Micro Command Authority finding. Where the organization or senior commanders praise, promote or prompt abusive violence, the lower echelons find license to improvise abuse. The extent to which the situation-definitions supporting or inhibiting gross abusive violence is refined and modulated by the Micro Command Authority appears to delineate the actual extent of movement from so-called "torture lite" to less-than-clean techniques of physical torture such as beatings, cutting, burning, bone-breaking, and coercion-killing of third-parties, and direct killings of inconvenient abuse victims. There is little doubt that the abusers fell into the agentic state theorized by Milgram.

Milgram (1974) also described strain experienced while following orders to abuse (153-157). He described means by which such strain is relieved. He cited

avoidance, denial, and subterfuge. In the current study these same mechanisms are present. Study participant Roy Howard described the distancing he used to avoid some exposure to the pain caused by the guards forcing detainees to maintain stress positions that he had mandated. Likewise, Antonio Hayes described allowing an injured detainee to be relieved from maintaining a stress position whenever a senior soldier was not present; he would help the prisoner to his feet when he heard the other soldier approaching the cell. Hayes' subterfuge allowed him to both relieve the strain of being involved in abuse and maintained good relations with the other soldier. Hayes also pretended to have other superseding assignments as a means of avoiding interrogations. Numerous participants described an inability at the time to recognize detainee suffering for what it was, especially with respect to forced exercise and other hazing they observed or directed.

In explaining the processes that allow disobedience, Milgram (1974) describes a progression that runs from inner doubt to externalization of doubt, to dissent, to threat, and finally disobedience. The progression as Milgram charted it was based on the actions of his experimental participants who were operating in short duration relationships to authority figures from whom explicit directives to continue inflicting pain were received. The experiences of some of the current study's participants seem to have followed the progression Milgram laid out, especially among those who directly objected to abuse.

De-humanization and deindividuation

The effects of de-humanization and deindividuation reported by Bandura and Zimbardo, with respect to increased intensity pain delivery, are certainly borne out by the experiences reported by the participants. The change from human to non-human labeling was provided by military training references, military senior commanders' use of epithets, and junior leader explicit identification of Iraqis as animals. In one reported instance, the near-death experience of Chris' hand-to-hand grappling knife-fight, the change of the Iraqis into animals expendable on the altar of group-survival was abrupt and profound. The sublimation of the individuals to the deindividuated squad, detachment, vehicle crew, or special operations unit sharing a common identity, wearing common uniforms, and operating in darkness, at distance, and beyond the view of blind-folded victims, was not only obvious, but in some cases desired as a public that feared the unit performed feared its members.

Hyper-masculinized environment

The kind of environment reported among the Brazilian violence workers by Huggins, Haritos-Fatorous and Zimbardo was also evident in some of the more egregious abusers' accounts. Chris Alexander's squad banter after incidents, Richard Miller's embracing the badass perception of those who witnessed his torture,

mutilation, and murdering, and even Frank Wright's self-described elite and ultra-lethal platoon members, all fit within the violence inspiring milieu of the Brazilian hit-squads and torturers. Also, the hazing reported as foundational to creating abuse-ready soldiers and police in Greece and Brazil was also present with several of the participants.

Social and political conditions

Crelinsten and Schmid (1994) cited two sets of conditions under which one might expect torture to arise. One of those sets was labeled "social and political conditions," and *inter alia* included the following:

- a national emergency or other perceived threat to security;
- the need to process large numbers of suspects;
- the dehumanization of an outgroup (national, religious or ethnic);
- a high level of authorization to violate normal moral principles;
- the presence of a "sacred mission" which justifies anything. (9)

Given the nature and limitations of the present study, it would not be appropriate to say that the findings of the study "support" the condition list provided by Crelinsten and Schmid. What can be said, however, is that the list surely seems reminiscent of the experiences of several of the participants. The first four conditions were certainly present within the themes salient to some or others of the participants. I did not hear participants speaking in terms of "sacred mission" justifying atrocity in the way that security state torturers may have cited a duty to protect a culture or way of life from being polluted by communist or other "godless" insurgents. From a view point of an over-riding priority becoming a "sacred dogma" that would justify torture or other immoral methods, the "Survival of Us" theme was used as a self-evident justification by several of the participants.

Progression

Crelinsten wrote about the progression of experiences that torturers received that transform their sensibilities and allow them to torture:

Here we see many of the progressive features of training, the gradual movement from one world view (human, civilian, empathic, caring) to another (inhuman, torturer, cruel, detached). The subject (the conscript/recruit/torturer-to-be) is progressively desensitized while the object (the subversive/Communist/terrorist/victim-to-be) is progressively dehumanized, objectivized, stripped of any identity except the demonizing labels of the dangerous enemy. (1994, 48)

While Crelinsten wrote about torturers from various countries who were trained to execute tortures of the most heinous kinds in specific support of authoritarian regimes, and whose training was often as explicit and formalized as one might expect in any other professional military school, the experiences of the current study's participants include many of these same transformative aspects in the shift from civilian to soldier to abuser.

Crelinsten's work showed that the world's thousands of institutional torturers virtually never escaped from their duties. Gripped by fear of being turned on by their fellows, those who wish to change feel compelled to carry on with their daily work of inflicting indescribable pain. Some very exceptional few make the extraordinary break by refusing to continue and accepting the punishment of the institution, or defect from the atrocity industry and speak out.

US military studies in Iraq

In addition to psychologists and social scientists' research, there is a small body of research that benefitted from a unique level of access to the general environment in which the majority of my study participants acquired their relevant experiences. The US military conducted annual studies of various aspects of troop mental health in Iraq and Afghanistan. In the studies conducted in 2006 and 2007, researchers added battlefield ethics to their areas of review. Their research provides an additional dimension to the literature which is of relevance to my study. Although the interviewees in the present study served in CT and COIN forces that operated in various cases before, during, and after the military studies, those studies derived findings similar in character to those found here.

In 2006, the American military conducted an annual Mental Health Advisory Team study (MHAT IV) of troops in Iraq. As part of its study it conducted focus groups among soldiers who had been deployed for varying periods. One group had only been in Iraq for one month, the other had had its deployment extended several times, being in Iraq for fourteen months at the time of the sessions. The differences in the two groups assessment of their missions is reminiscent of the progression described by some of this study's participants. As cited by the MHAT IV report:

The first group thought that they were doing a job that was important in fighting terrorism in Iraq instead of letting the terrorists fight in the United States. [] The second group did not see a purpose for being in Iraq. They thought that either we should leave and let the Iraqi's fight a civil war, or let Soldiers go after insurgents no matter the risk of collateral damage. They thought that Iraqis would learn to cooperate with coalition forces in fear of

their cities being destroyed (Office of the Surgeon General United States Army Medical Command 2006, 3).

The differences in attitudes about the primary mission track quite closely with the progression that several of this study's participants reported. Early on in their deployments the study soldiers felt that they were in Iraq to assist in its recovery and to protect America from terrorists. Later several adopted the view that personal and comrade survival was of primary importance. Some of the participants arrived in country with units that embraced the view that the intimidation of the populace, the so-called "out-terrorize the terrorists" focus, made sense. These units included troops who had served earlier Iraq combat deployments and the kinds of attitudes expressed by the MHAT IV veteran troops may well have similarly persisted.

The MHAT IV report summarized some of its key findings regarding battlefield ethics:

Less than half of Soldiers and Marines believed that non-combatants should be treated with dignity and respect and well over a third believed that torture should be allowed to save the life of a fellow team member. About 10% of Soldiers and Marines reported mistreating an Iraqi non-combatant when it wasn't necessary, either by destroying their private property or by hitting or kicking them. Less than Half of Soldiers or Marines would report a team member for unethical behavior, instead preferring to handle it themselves at the team level (Office of the Surgeon General United States Army Medical Command 2006, 42).

The following year's report (MHAT V) noted that "attitudes regarding the treatment of insurgents and non-combatants [] may be influenced by training and may also be a pre-cursor to behavior (2008, 31)." The participants in the current study certainly made mention of de-humanizing attitudes espoused in training and tied the general outlook of the Iraqis as less than human to abusive violence that they and others around them committed. The report's authors chose not to continue to survey for attitudes, citing literature that indicates a weak link between attitudes and behaviors. For that reason, they elected to concentrate on reported behaviors.

Both the MHAT IV and MHAT V studies used surveys of soldiers which in part examined unethical behavior. Five questions were asked of soldiers in both years, three about abusive behavior, and two about units “modifying” or “ignoring” rules of engagement. The results were reported in the MHAT V report:

Adjusted Percents for Male, E1-E4 Soldiers in Theater 9 Months

Unethical Behavior Variable	Percent Reporting One Time or More		
	MHATI V	MHATV	p-value
	2006	2007	
1. Insulted and/or cursed non-combatants in their presence	34.60%	33.00%	0.403
2. Damaged and/or destroyed private property when it was not necessary.	10.90%	13.60%	0.054
3. Physically hit/kicked a non-combatant when it was not necessary.	5.30%	6.10%	0.377
4. Members of my unit "modify" the Rules of Engagement in Order to accomplish the mission.	10.90%	7.40%	0.024
5. Members of my unit "ignore" the Rules of Engagement in Order to accomplish the mission.	5.70%	4.30%	0.107

(Office of the Surgeon General United States Army Medical Command 2008, 32)

The only significant difference between the two years’ results was a drop in the second year of units modifying Rules of Engagement to accomplish the mission. Subsequent years’ MHAT studies did not ask about attitudes or reported behaviors relating to battlefield ethics.

The present study has obvious differences from the MHAT reports cited above due to methods employed and study focus. In this study a limited number of persons were studied using the processes of IPA, primarily semi-structured interviews followed by interpretive analysis. The MHAT study asked about only three specific types of abusive conduct, of which only one dealt directly with physical abuse directed at people. Also, the reports, as one would expect based on the study designs, did not report on what the abusers believed were the reasons for the abuse. MHAT IV did report on relationships between non-combatant mistreatment and such factors as level of anger, unit casualties, mental health issues, and handling of human remains.

In general, the levels of mistreatment appeared higher with personnel for whom the dependent factors were present.

The MHAT IV findings were of interest while designing the current study, but since this study was never intended to seek generalizable results, they could only provide peripheral background information. The current study directly sought to learn the participants' explanations for the abusive conduct and therefore resulted in the subjective sense-making of individuals. In general, the reported experiences of the participants tend to be consonant with some MHAT IV findings. Participants cited anger in general and anger over comrade casualties as reasons for some of the abuse they engaged in. Participants did not generally link mental health issues per se and handling of human remains to abuse they observed or committed.

Rejali on American Post-9/11 Method Transmission

Torture historian Darius Rejali (2007) has examined the ways in which methods of torture have been taught to Americans during both the Cold War era and since 9/11. His work reviewed instances of supposed formal torture training and found that there is very little evidence of training programs that taught torture methods to Americans in ways similar to the Greek or Brazilian case previously discussed. Instead, he determined that the available evidence shows democracies generally tend not to disperse knowledge of torture methods through formal training programs and manuals. He contends that in an era of enhanced human rights monitoring less programmed informal "craft apprenticeships" allow for torture to be adopted without the existence of documentary evidence likely to implicate government leaders. As such, informal structures allow for methods to "spread through backroom apprenticeships, networks of whispers, knowing glances, and the enabling power of averted eyes" (2007, 526).

Rejali compared manuals produced by the US CIA and US Army for training of allied personnel during the Cold War. Although the manuals did provide some limited information about methods such as stress positions, environmental and sleep manipulation, sensory deprivation, forced standing or sitting, etc., the evidence from the actual practices of other countries which may have received the training materials shows little reliance by those countries on the American advice. He also examined the instruction outlines for the training programs delivered by Americans and found no support for the view that torture was being taught. Rejali wrote, "In short, interrogation programs, even those that allow for torture, do not appear to be the main channels by which torturers learn their craft. . . . Even in American counterintelligence, where one would expect to find this training most clearly, the time spent on teaching interrogation of *any* sort is so short that it could not have been a program priority" (emphasis original) (2007, 431).

According to Rejali, the transfer of torture methods occurs via low-level personnel sharing information instead of formal programs approved by high-level leadership. A notable exception may be the transformation of American Survival, Escape, Resistance, Escape (SERE) training, which Rejali described as forcing students to be “hooded, deprived of sleep, starved, stripped of clothes, exposed to extreme temperatures and painful noise, choked with water. . . , and subjected to harsh interrogation including humiliation, sexual embarrassment, and desecration of religious symbols and books” (2007, 432). SERE training specialists provided advice to American interrogators at Guantanamo. Guantanamo interrogators took techniques learned from the SERE program and developed a request for Department of Defense approval that included a number of SERE techniques for authorized use at Guantanamo, including assault, stress positions and sleep deprivation (Rejali, 2007). In only one specific example he could find, did Rejali report on formal classroom training by Americans in which specific techniques were taught to would-be American torturers: “In 2003, the CIA selected fourteen agents for the interrogation of a dozen top al-Qaeda suspects and trained them in six authorized torture techniques, including the Dutch method of choking with water” (Ibid., 430).

In the main, according to Rejali, Americans in Iraq and Afghanistan developed torture methods by drawing from their own experiences (some acquired while they were SERE students, or from other painful personal history), the media, and observations made of other units’ methods. Rejali wrote that his research “found very limited evidence in favor of the thesis that torture training is transmitted through official manuals or centralized interrogation programs. . . . Perhaps others will uncover more programs and manuals eventually, but as far as the published evidence goes, the craft apprenticeship hypothesis remains the most plausible explanation of how most torture techniques get transmitted. Interrogators appear to pass on techniques largely through low-level transmission between ordinary soldiers and policemen or by means of simple imitation on the job” (2007, 434). The experiences shared by participants in this study certainly support Rejali’s findings. No evidence of formal training directed at the creation of torturers was described by the soldiers. Their “learning” of abusive violence techniques took place in the low level transmission methods described by Rejali from soldier to soldier, victim to soldier, and in two cases from fathers to sons. Their own difficult experiences during training and disciplinary hazing provided further examples of techniques from which they could select.

Original Research Questions

As noted previously, IPA studies do not attempt to extrapolate beyond the data provided by participants to conclusions relative any other persons or groups. The use of IPA does, however, provide insight into how some individuals in similar situations make sense of the experiences they lived through. The significant life events recounted by this study's participants included their entry into environments that included potential American abusive violence in CT and COIN campaigns. That entry was followed by exposure to abusive violence enacted by others and sometimes engaged in by them. Lethal force against bystanders and detainees was used by some of the participants or their comrades. Turning to the original questions the study was designed to address, here are the views prevalent across accounts or strongly-held by fewer participants.

Why did using AV makes sense at the time to participants?

The wording of the question presupposed a considered and rational "sensible choice" criterion being employed by those who engaged in abusive violence. The reality of the lived experiences as related by both abusers and observers of abusive violence describe something far different going on. With the exception of the interrogators who were following pre-set guidelines or instructions involving environmental manipulation, stress positions, or "monstering"¹⁷ methods, or the deliberate and largely controlled instrumental violence employed by Frank Wright and his special operations comrades, the kinds of abusive violence generally described were highly emotionally charged. Much of it was in the form of angry lashing out against individuals captured after attempting to kill the Americans, against neighborhoods immediately surrounding IED strike sites, or as part of campaigns of intimidation and domination seen as necessary to ensure survival.

For those who explained their own feelings, or sought to explain the motives of others who abused, the venting of frustration and anger or the reclamation of a sense of control were common reasons offered. This applied in numerous situations including the mocking-treatment and hazing of detainees; the beatings of Iraqis who failed to show sufficient submissiveness in the face of American's demands for obedience in streets, shops, and homes; and even the "long drive-by" shootings in which frustrated convoys and patrols fired on cars, homes, fields, and people as they drove through IED attacks.

¹⁷ "Monstering" as used herein refers to boisterous violent scene-setting of the type engaged in by Antonio Hayes and his team-mates. Soldiers used the crashing of cell doors, shouting, banging of chairs against walls, manhandling and jostling of detainees, finger-twisting, and a general reliance on shock and surprise to frighten and confuse hooded detainees.

In some cases, the violence was an enraged response to surviving harrowing combat or the deaths of friends. Both Chris Alexander and Richard Miller described the appalling carving and killings of detainees in the wake of such events. Frank Wright also reported the brutal deaths of two detainees in the immediate aftermath of violent combat in which comrades were killed or grievously wounded.

In other cases, the use of violence against the local Iraqi population as a whole was a deliberate tactic to advance the strategy of mass intimidation and domination. To “out terrorize the terrorists” was a sentiment that spoke to the adoption of a COIN outlook that sought to create within the civilian population a cowed submission to, not a willing support of, the American forces. Brandon Peterson firmly believed that it was the only thing that prevented the population of the first city his unit occupied from rising up and killing the outnumbered Americans.

Sometimes abusive violence was contemplated or completed because of curiosity or simple amusement. Chris Alexander and Stephen Scott reported being curious about waterboarding. Stephen might have tried it on a detainee if the conditions had permitted him to do it with impunity. Chris and his squad mates did experiment on a passerby for a bit of fun. Later they used the same tactic to terrorize and kill three detainees. Stephen Scott and Sam Bailey both mentioned seeing others in their units menacing unsuspecting Iraqis with weapons simply for their own or others’ amusement.

Abusive violence was also carried out because it was easier than doing something else. Chris Alexander’s squad debated the relative merits of summarily shooting a captured roadside bomber versus turning him in for detention and probable torture. They shot the victim to avoid paperwork. In another case, Brandon Peterson described persuading his team not to take a stand against delivering a detainee to be tortured by the Iraqi police simply because he was tired and wanted to finish his day without unnecessary drama.

Abusive violence was also committed because abusers found the activity fun or otherwise alluring. Several participants reported laughter from themselves or others present during episodes of abusive violence including street beatings; secluded location scarring torture; and simple detainee harassment and hazing. Participants’ responses, such as Chris Alexander’s recollection that the power to torture or kill a prisoner imparted a “unique and wonderful” feeling, gave voice to the sense of dark enjoyment that abusing with impunity sometimes produced. Others recognized the temptation that such power offered but restrained themselves from acting out their desires.

According to this group of participants, they and their comrades enacted abusive violence most often as a result of feeling frustration, anger, and pressure. They were frustrated at fighting an invisible enemy who could not be found to punish. They were angry because they lost friends to attacks and blamed the populace for supporting those carrying out the attacks. They were pressured to produce intelligence or to survive their deployments. Some abusive violence of the clean types reported by Rejali was used by the interrogator participants, but generally excluded methods that involving striking, electrocuting, or suffocating.

How did AV abusers choose the method of abuse employed? How did they learn of possible methods from which to choose?

Again, the participants report experiences largely divorced from a considered choosing from among alternatives. When moved by immediate irritation or anger, participants reported physical striking such as punching, kicking, and butt-stroking with rifles. These were methods taught during combat training. Participants also reported using finger twisting, compliance blows, and forced kneeling which were tactics learned during civil disturbance training. Certain stress positions and forced exercises that were used against detainees were first endured by soldiers as physical exercises during military training or as punishment hazing in training schools and serving units.

The enhanced interrogation techniques used by interrogators were learned from observing the practices of other interrogators. In other cases interrogators learned from detainees how they had been treated by other units. Some methods were more easily chosen because they did not resemble what soldiers recognized as torture. For instance, making someone assume the “electric chair” stress position or remain kneeling on concrete surfaces for hours outdoors in the winter seemed to lack the raw insult and obvious excruciating pain that other methods exuded. Also, these softening-up methods offered the interrogators an advantage of distancing them from the abuse since they could be enacted at the interrogators’ behest by guards out of the presence of the interrogators.

Sometimes there was the informal transfer of techniques during casual conversations between line soldiers and special operations and intelligence soldiers who described a range of abusive methods they employed. Waterboarding, extremely loud music, bright strobe lighting, the use of military police dogs, and temperature manipulation were transferred via these methods.

Intelligence training courses were also inadvertent ways that abusive techniques were transmitted. The two trained military interrogator participants both recounted instructors mentioning the use of electric shock generated by field

telephones as a method that had been used in Viet Nam. Also, Wayne Watson described a range of interrogation tactics formally taught to him during interrogation resistance training he received as a new agent. He had been offered what he considered to be pseudo-psychological explanations for why those methods would be effective. None of these three participants used the methods they had learned of in training.

Two participants reported learning torture techniques from their fathers. Stephen Scott reported being curious about waterboarding because his father had told him personal stories as he grew up about its effectiveness in Viet Nam. Chris Alexander learned the use of wire cutters for finger-lobbing as a child reading his father's Viet Nam war journals.

Chris Alexander had also learned of abusive methods employed by the members of his squad during their earlier combat deployment. One member of Chris' squad used a technique, delivering electric shocks via a re-purposed lamp cord, that he had seen used in a movie.

As mentioned earlier, the overall impression received from the accounts of the participants was that, especially with respect to finding methods supportive of interrogation, approaches had to be improvised. Some, such as Frank Wright's bashing a prisoners head against a locked door he wanted the prisoner to open, were direct, immediate, and capable of gaining the desired result in short order. Others were less effective even though they might have been less or more violently injurious. An ad hoc searching for the magic key to get prisoners to divulge their secrets seems to have pervaded the interrogators' experiences. With respect to non-interrogational abuse, participants relied on their personal experiences and simple ready violence of the fist, boot, and rifle butt.

How do veterans now view the abusive violence they observed or perpetrated?

Participants reflected on the abuse they committed or observed with a range of perspectives. The most common comments reflect regret and guilt over abuse committed and abuse not prevented. This is most pronounced in connection to actions the former abusers judged were done "unnecessarily." Acts that were done either to obtain information or to ensure survival appear to be assessed as "necessary" if they were controlled, effective, and devoid of emotions of anger or sadistic enjoyment. As an example, Chris Alexander's regret over the beating, cutting, and electrocution of the Iraqi elder is expressed by his feeling of "unaccomplishment," which refers to the fact that the most effective method (e.g., threatening to find and torture the prisoner's loved one) could have been used earlier. To Chris, the regret was about wasted effort. This is not the same as guilt, however. I suspect that if one

of the physical tortures had netted information, then Chris would have considered it “necessary” and not regrettable. In contrast, Chris referred to other instrumental violence in a manner that reflected a belief that they were necessary duties that, while distasteful, did not induce feelings of guilt.

In some cases, expressions of regret for failing to prevent abusive violence were made by participants whose conduct, viewed from a third party perspective, appeared blameless. Charles Wilson expressed shame for not preventing the death of a detainee who died because the Americans holding him did not have a translator with them who could tell them that vitally needed medicine was in the prisoner’s truck. Wilson, who at the time was very likely one of the lowest ranking soldiers in a forty-man platoon, had no duties directly related to the prisoners. After they were captured, he returned to his vehicle and played with his Gameboy while the senior NCOs and officers in the unit decided what would happen. Wilson, at the time a mere vehicle driver, considers his failure to speak up about the pleas from the prisoners as among his worst conduct while deployed. Although it seems unlikely that anything he could have said or done would have changed the outcome, it was the failure to recognize at the time that something should have been done, coupled with the failure to try to do something, that haunt him.

As mentioned before, Sam Bailey is similarly concerned that she should have been more explicit in her warnings to her battalion commander that unit members were being heavy-handed with the population that had welcomed the Americans with open arms. Her doubts continue, although there is probably not enough information available to determine whether the reasons for subsequent attacks on the battalion had anything to do with their treatment of the locals.

Chris Alexander’s sense of guilt over things he and his squad did was tied to wanton cruelty un-related to their missions. He expressed feeling badly about degrading detainees, killing to avoid paperwork, cutting and scarring prisoners, and burning them with cigarettes. He is only partially able to explain how those episodes happen. He blurted out his confused framing of the acts: “I mean it...that’s not necessary, but, you know, when you’re there and you’re actually doing it and you’re angry and...you don’t care, you feel that it is [necessary], and I know it’s a complete contradiction and statement, but that’s how it really is.” He is unable to reconcile the conflicting demands of civilized conduct and what feels necessary in war. He settles on a view that life is “a bunch of contradictions.”

Frank Wright feels little remorse for his personal conduct, again because the violence he used was necessary to the mission. His strongest feelings about abusive violence are much the same now as they were during the deployment: humans in

genuine fear for their lives can be induced to divulge secrets and the use of extreme violence to create that fear will cause serious harm to the abusers in later years. He is also of the opinion that effective special operations units must recruit and use men willing to become professional killers and that some such men will enjoy hurting and killing people. For practical reasons, Frank considers the negative aspects of abusive violence to be unavoidable if special operations forces must be deployed.

Roy Howard went to war seeking the elevated human experience. He came away from his Iraq experiences having seen himself as an actor on the wrong side of the protector/abuser dichotomy. Knowing that he used painful and injurious interrogations techniques including extended stress positioning, solitary confinement, and sleep manipulation, he is bewildered that at the time he did not immediately recognize the immoral and abusive nature of the methods. He also is coping with the realization that part of his willingness to use those techniques was a desire to have the experience of observing their effectiveness. He admits that he acted out of frustration and anger and was tempted to cross the line into scarring and worse physical torture. This recognition is both troubling and reassuring to him; he is concerned that he contemplated the worst, but is relieved that there were limits to the depths to which he could sink.

Richard Miller's present sense-making of the abuse experiences of his squad are dominated by the brutal treatment to which Iraqis were subjected by him and others. His fear of being psychotic, of harboring a pain that can only be relieved by inflicting bone-breaking pain on others, and of being beyond any peace or forgiveness darken his vision of the past and the future. He blames no one else for his plight, believing that like Jacob Marley he has forged the chains he now carries link by link in his prior life. He is afflicted by PTSD and sometimes suffers debilitating flashbacks. He has trouble recognizing that it was his decisive act to halt the murderous conduct of his squad which made the difference to the Iraqis and the soldiers spared the effects of the unit's violent spree. He acknowledges the peace-instilling influence of his wife and love of his children. He does know too, that his children gave him the lens by which he saw Iraqi children as human, and thereby reacquired the vision to realize that any life, Iraqi or American, was worth saving.

Superordinate Themes

The superordinate themes identified in this study are representative of the thoughts of most participants or are especially salient with relation to a smaller number of the participants. In one or two instances, the superordinate themes may have been of great importance to only one participant but are reported as

superordinate as they indicate a unique insight or perspective which seems descriptive of an important aspect of experiencing abusive violence.

Survival of Us justifies any aggressive measures thought useful for survival

Participants' frequently offered that they were willing to do anything necessary to ensure the survival of their comrades. Interestingly, this declaration was often made without reference to personal survival, although frequently an inclusive "we" was used. The commitment to one's fellows, especially expressed by the combat arms soldiers, left little doubt that participants had experienced a deep attachment to comrades. Although often couched in language such as "we will do anything we need to do to survive," it was clear that this was not true. I heard no willingness to desert, refuse to carry out duties, or sabotage mission capabilities. The mission shift to "Survival of Us" was offered as a self-evident over-riding justification for aggression.

Dehumanized Other allows abusive violence against detainees and general population.

Numerous participants spoke of the sub-human view of Iraqis that abusers held. This came from abusers themselves and others who observed abuse. Several mentioned the training they received at induction or in serving units as being specifically racist and made killing and abuse of Muslims a habituated concept.

360o Threat Environment means EVERY Other represents danger/deserves punishment

During deployments several participants developed the view that every Iraqi, including women and children, represented grave threats to soldiers. In some cases, the failure to meekly submit to American superiority was taken as resistant hostility. In a similar vein, the ability of insurgents to plant and trigger IEDs was interpreted as possible only with the active support of the community. The belief that every Iraqi always was aware of who the insurgents were and what they planned to do was a justification to terrify any Iraqi taken off the streets in the pursuit of information. Continuing attacks therefore were proof that the community had to be intimidated into withholding support for insurgents or deserved to be collectively punished for attacks against the Americans.

Frustration/Anger/Revenge/Rage/Domination create pressure that AV relieves

The inability to obtain actionable intelligence through properly restrained methods; the constant threat of IED strikes or ambushes when in the field; rocket, mortar and truck bomb attacks while at bases; and the general misery of being away from home in a climate of oven-like temperatures, created a sense of powerlessness and frustration. When casualties from attacks were added to the mix, the level of frustration, anger, and desire for revenge grew. Some participants cited the need to

relieve that pressure as a reason why they or others engaged in levels of abusive violence that ranged from detainee hazing and street beatings of bystanders to scarring tortures and murders.

Re-humanized Other prompts reduction/cessation of AV

Several of the soldiers who engaged in abusive violence described a moderating effect that came after they began to view the Iraqis as humans. This came about through a mix of influences. One such influence was coming to the realization that detainees were, contrary to expectations, not terrorists or insurgents; they were, instead, the “catch” from neighborhood sweeps for military-aged males. Another influence was acquiring a point of view empathetic to the detainees or the general community. Several participants stated an understanding that they would have taken up arms against an occupying force that treated Americans the way they treated the Iraqis. Another re-humanizing influence was the guilt that abusers began to feel for the way they treated detainees. Their own assessment of the meaning of their emotions relating to their conduct helped to bring about a realization that the Iraqis were humans and as detainees were the responsibility of their captors to care for properly. These and other factors allowed several of the participants to reduce or completely curtail their abusive conduct.

Self-reproach persists

Participants report current feelings of shame, guilt, and self-loathing for abusing others or failing to prevent others from abusing. Re-framing some acts as “doing what we had to do” appears to relieve some participants from feeling responsible for the abuse; however, where the abuse is regarded as lacking the moral cover of necessity, long-lasting negative emotions were reported. Choosing to turn away from abuse, even to the extent of preventing others from perpetrating abuse, does not seem to protect participants from ongoing self-reproach. More than one participant reported that supporting anti-war efforts was a personal necessity stemming from their feelings of culpability.

Findings derived/implied by superordinate themes

The accounts of personal experiences shared by study participants offer their own idiosyncratic histories and efforts at making sense of various events. While this cannot be a basis to claim universal findings related to American abusive violence in CT and COIN operations since September 2001, the experiences so related allow one to consider possible implications. Although in individual cases below, the language used may seem to be positive claims, they are not. They are simply inferences reasonably drawn both from the body of interviews themselves, and the analytical interpretations derived therefrom, but may be useful in forming concepts for future

inquiry. Having made this general statement of qualification for the following, I have chosen to avoid the odious clutter that would accompany repeating similar provisos at each instance.

- Macro-level Command Authority: High-level authority to commit Abusive Violence in the form of EITs or Community-Domination/Community-Punishment postures provide ample license for the so-inclined to abuse detainees or whole communities.
- Micro-level Command Authority: The lowest level authority figure, including at times moral-authority figure, has the most influence on either unleashing or retarding AV. The squad or section leader can commit and thereby foster routine beatings, occasional torture, and killings of detainees or loved ones of field interrogation targets.
- “Survival of Us” mission-shift facilitates more brutal levels of abuse including intimidation of populace through street beatings, indiscriminate shooting in retaliation for IED attacks, psychological and physical torture, and killings.
- Frustration, fear, and anger combine to fuel affective abusive violence, both in contemplation and action. Beatings, scarring tortures, and cover-up killings can result.
- Hazing experienced by troops in induction training and while with serving units reduces the perceived “wrongness” of hazing detainees. The logic of “if we do it to our own, why wouldn’t we do it to them?” can pervade.
- The widespread and frequent nature of hazing made its use against detainees virtually disappear into the background, even for those who would have halted more obvious violence.
- Some military systems/training act to inhibit/retard wanton abusive violence. Training in Geneva Conventions emphasis in interrogation training was cited as a source of hesitation to employ enhanced and abusive interrogation techniques. Training that persuades interrogators that punishment will follow illegal means can inhibit choices made in the field.
- Determined abusers will evade systems that inhibit/retard/restrict abusive violence. Abusive interrogation methods, including physical tortures and scarring tortures, may be employed in field locations before detention center accountability procedures take effect. Abuse in those circumstances can lead to un-planned over-kill violence. In worst cases, cover-up killings may ensue.
- Convenience can result in going-along with AV tasking or can be the tie-breaker to abuse. In the case of troops who have already engaged in serious physical abusive violence, killing prisoners instead of removing them to detention can occur if they harbor strong belief that prisoner is responsible for

- American casualties, and an argument for conveniently avoiding detention procedures by summary killing is advanced.
- Abuse can amuse. Laughing about abuse can signal nervous acquiescence or full support for abuse.
 - Objectors can influence abusers to alter behavior. Sometimes alterations are simply cosmetic, sometimes temporary, and sometimes profound.
 - A single significant event can be, or at least seem to be, the salient tipping-point incident that demarcates abuse/non-abuse:
 - Chris surviving hallway knife fight led to Iraqi's as animals/Survival-of-U.s priority.
 - Antonio interrogated wounded father led to "I understand why they mortar us/I deserve to die" perspective.
 - Kids shot by Americans, following other events, is the reason Richard Miller halted all AV against Iraqis.

The accounts offered by the study participants demonstrate that egregious abusive violence can arise within the armed forces of a democracy without the explicit and overt orders, atrocity institutions, and death camps of twentieth-century totalitarian states. The testimony clearly shows that it is possible for murder, torture and the terrorizing of a civilian populace can come from ordinary soldiers being allowed to give vent to frustration, fear, and anger.

More can lead to less: A proposed progression model of AV inception, escalation, and reduction

The individual accounts from observers, abusers, and objectors give a fragmentary view of abusive violence from a multitude of angles. Compositing those fragments into a view of how AV begins, grows and recedes, is admittedly fraught with the risk of mis-describing the "true" course of the phenomenon. Indeed, I would not subscribe to a view that there is a single "true" progression; however, by attempting to fit the provided pieces into an approximate "mosaic," we can use future research to refine, clarify, or completely re-draw this early image. If the image proves durable, then perhaps it can be used to affect the conduct of future CT and COIN campaigns.

Having made choices to wholeheartedly participate in heinous abusive violence does not mean abusers cannot self-reform. Prolonged exposure or use of indiscriminate AV can lead to conditions conducive to lessened abusiveness. Repeating AV seems to affect abuser self-image ("turning in to" unwanted identities) and the perceived image of the "other." The lack of confirmation that the violence is being directed at "terrorists," acts to open a point of view of the detainees or public as victims of oppression. The adoption of that viewpoint leads to, or can be a result of,

an assessment of them/us equivalency: the “if an occupier did this to me and mine” logic. Understanding why the insurgents are trying to kill the occupying army (“us”), opens a “Re-humanizing” that robs the abuser of the moral license and the instrumental/usefulness rationale to continue abuse.

I believe that a progression model that describes entry into abuse and exit from it, based on the combined accounts of participants, can be proposed. By proposing this model, I do not claim that it models the only pathway, or even the pathway that any single participant traveled. It reflects the thinking directly reported, or implied, by many of the provided accounts, and therefore is a composite model. It is proposed as a single interpretation of how abusive violence may come about and may desist. The ordered list represents the way in which later perspectives are derived from some or all of the earlier-stated views. The model begins with pre-service reasoning and develops based on indoctrination, training, leader influence, experience influences, and outsider and peer input.

The proposed progression model

1. We are Humans, possessing dignity and morals (Including mercy).
2. The Other is NOT Human.
3. Therefore, The Other CAN be abused.
4. A Survival-of-Us mission-shift REQUIRES us to “Do Everything Necessary.”
5. Therefore, the Other MUST be abused.
6. Abuse on whim amuses and relieves feelings of frustration, anger, rage.
7. In an absence of more effective CT and COIN tactics, abuse is good, and, more must be better.
8. The most atrocious abuse returns power to abusers, bestowing a unique and wonderful feeling.
9. Excessive, unnecessary abuse promotes self-doubt, self-loathing, shame and guilt.
10. Unnecessary abuse, coupled with recognition of victims’ innocence, promotes identification with oppressed point of view.
11. Identification with oppressed point of view fosters “Re-humanization” of the Other: Other = Human.
12. Re-humanization, coupled with assessment that abuse is an ineffective and counter-productive COIN approach, promotes reduced or terminated abuse.

13. Reduction in abuse does not relieve abusers of guilt, shame, or self-loathing; although, a change to other activities can offer a temporary shift in focus/framing of deployment.
14. Self-perceived “unnecessary abuse” preserves guilt/shame self-assessment post-deployment.
15. Self-perceived “unavoidable abuse” has less or no guilt/shame self-assessment post-deployment.
16. Self-labeled “unnecessary abusers” who are unable to reconcile atrocious abuse/guilt/shame with obligations of “humanity,” classify themselves as inhuman “Monsters.”
17. “Monsters” are trapped by altered identity. They either re-humanize selves as persons who made mistakes (“it is what I did”) and try to get along with each day or they cannot conceive of any forgiveness, including self-forgiveness, and await entry into that “special place in hell.”

Suggested Further Research

The Jongman and Schmid research desiderata mentioned in Chapter 1, while not the core points of inquiry of this study, certainly share the prevailing sensibility that serves as the foundation of the Detainee Interaction Study. When we examine the illicit and tortuous methods of CT interrogation, or the export of suspects for abusive proxy interrogation, or contemplate the effectiveness of “out-terrorizing the terrorists,” we implicitly acknowledge that those approaches and practices lie outside civilized norms. They warrant special study because their use by states deserves attention in the same way that disease is studied for definition and cure-seeking. It is my view that those methods must be rejected unless they deliver extraordinary benefits to the opponents of terrorists without harmful side-effects. The experiences shared by the participants of this study offer us no such assurances and instead bear testimony to the toxicity that abusive violence delivers to victims, objectors, and abusers alike.

This study has contributed to the study of terrorism and counter-terrorism by examining the lived experiences of a small number of actors who were placed into CT and COIN operations in the wake of 9/11. The particular group of participants was recruited to study how abusive violence was experienced by some Americans who observed, objected to, or committed abusive violence. The study’s findings include partial answers to the original study questions, sense-making themes interpreted from the participants’ accounts, and inferences derived from those accounts relating to possible ways of conceptualizing abusive violence in the recent American case.

Inasmuch as the use of abusive violence is arguably detrimental to strategic interests of liberal democracies engaged in CT and COIN campaigns, injurious to many individuals directly victimized by the abuse, and appears to have lasting and negative consequences on perpetrators of the abusive violence, further study of the phenomenon is clearly justified.

The present study, while providing new data, is only able to support claims about the ways in which fourteen individuals experienced abusive violence. There are additional areas of study that may lead to fuller understanding of the effects of allowing or employing abusive violence in CT and COIN. Further, if a fuller understanding of the mechanisms that promote and inhibit the use of abusive violence by individuals is derived, such understanding may identify means of decreasing the use of abusive violence and its negative consequences for states, institutions, and individuals.

Some areas of future study include:

1. Similar IPA study of CT and COIN operatives from other liberal democracies that sent personnel to Iraq or Afghanistan.
2. Broader-based studies using IPA or other research methods such as survey of American veterans. Capitalizing on the reach of military services, government and non-profit veterans' service agencies, or veteran membership groups could be helpful in collecting data useful in confirming or refining the theme and inferential findings of this study.
3. Given the effects of Macro and Micro Command authority indicated in this study, research into the attitudes, training, and experiences of junior and senior unit commanders may identify weaknesses or gaps that fail to prevent, or indeed promote, abusive violence by the lower ranks.
4. Researching the battlefield ethics training delivered at various career points for soldiers. Also, researching the battlefield ethics training delivered pre-deployment and at various points during deployment to soldiers.
5. Repeated survey of soldiers during deployment to measure changes over time in attitudes relating to anger, frustration, fear, dehumanization, and mission-identification/articulation. Designing methods of measuring abusive violence behavior frequency and severity over time may also provide useful information regarding precursor, coincident, and post-incident attitudes and other factors related to abusive violence.
6. Identifying ways in which the "moral bubble" of the small group can be deliberately pierced with messages that counter the groups' thoughts that abusive violence is necessary or useful. Such messaging could also include the acceptable ways in which soldiers, or groups of soldiers, can object to orders

- that violate laws of war, human rights, or place them in jeopardy of punishment.
7. Study the ways in which those who disapprove of abusive violence can safely influence fellow soldiers from continuing to abuse. Consider making speaking out against abusive violence a positive attribute of moral courage celebrated by military history and tradition.
 8. Investigate means by which small unit operations can be removed from the unobserved, secret, and unsupervised environments in which much of the abuse can occur. Helmet cams, dash-cams, weapons cams, and cell-block cams are used in other environments such as combat aircraft and police operations to allow for after-action and after-mishap investigations. Their ubiquity may serve to deter misconduct, or may alternatively become so commonplace as to become invisible, and allow for documentation of acts during low-level abuse development.
 9. Consideration should be given to studying whether regular email and other private messaging to soldiers that promote or solicit reporting of abusive violence within units can be used to deter and reduce abusive violence. In the alternative, such reporting may allow for effective investigation leading to removal of leaders who facilitate or otherwise fail to control abusive violence.

Conclusion

The most significant finding of this study is that the reduction and full cessation of abusive violence by single or small groups of soldiers does not require intervention by outsiders. This appears to be contrary to what might have been understood as a result of the Milgram studies on obedience, the Zimbardo's analysis of his own SPE and the Abu Ghraib abuses, and Mestrovic's study of Operation Iron Triangle. The experiences reported by this study's participants demonstrate that what Ervin Staub called the Continuum of Destruction can be accurately termed the Continuum *Beyond* Destruction. The forces of Differentiation and Devaluation that result in Dehumanization, which in turn opens the pathway to Moral Exclusion, when coupled with the Defense of Self and need to reclaim power have been amply shown in this study to create the urge in participants to commit abusive violence. Those combined forces have also enabled some to carry out hazing, beatings, coercive and painful interrogations, scarring tortures and summary executions. The influence of command authority permission or demands for coercive measures or abusive violence seems associated with the more extreme behaviors.

What the literature and laboratory experiments have not previously demonstrated is the strong counter-influence of extended participation in abusive

violence. What Dave Grossman described as the “still, small voice of humanity,” is evident in the accounts of study participants who, while remaining under the influence of the systems and situations theorized to create abusers, found their ability to recognize the innocence and mirrored humanity in the Iraqis upon whom they had visited such hatred and abuse. In some cases that voice did not become audible until after the deployments ended, but remarkably, multiple participants described reversing their attitudes and abuse during their deployments. Sometimes those reversals were private and unannounced changes resulting in individual moderation or avoidance of abusive situations. In the remarkable case of Richard Miller, the change was not only publicly made, but forcefully mandated to his subordinates.

Both Zimbardo and Mestrovic describe the power of the reference group to create the conditions for abuse. They also both find from the cases they studied a need for intervention to come from outsiders belonging to a different reference group. This study raises the question of whether the reference group that supports abuse can evolve beyond abuse via a history of violence that fails to deliver the security and domination the group seeks and which history also creates self-loathing within the soldiers. Can one squad of soldiers become its own “different” reference group and provide the perspective to allow for an “auto-intervention?”

The laboratory studies of obedience to authority, willingness to do harm, and role-adoption were time-limited and failed to discover the effects of longer-term harm-infliction behavior. The ethical restrictions on human subject studies would probably preclude such experimentation. Case studies of abuse, such as Abu Ghraib and Operation Iron Triangle, are hindered in their ability to provide similar insight because they are selected from cases where the abuse was found out by outsiders, presumably before self-moderation occurred. It is also possible that self-moderation was not reported because it was not looked for during the gathering and presentation of evidence in prosecutions for war crimes known to have been committed in very specific locales and timeframes.

The hidden nature of the self-moderation phenomenon is most obviously explained by the natural desire of reformed abusers to avoid the punishment served out by courts martial. The study participants also made clear that the prospect of losing the esteem, affection, and support of loved ones is a powerful deterrent to disclosure of the passage through a period of being an abuser. The rapport-building efforts, promises of anonymity, and the commitment to non-judgmental long-form interviews combined to deliver the data about the post-9/11 era that other experimental and empirical methods have missed.

A second finding of this study is a confirmation of what the Abu Ghraib scandal revealed: Americans too commit abusive violence. This study has provided more details of the range of abusive violence committed by Americans, but it is clear that even in the absence of formal institutionalized torturer creation programs, American soldiers operating under the pressures of CT and COIN, can develop a desire to abuse, and in some cases will commit, in the small scale available to lower echelon units, acts of abuse that go well beyond what has been previously reported. Routine scarring torture, aggravated assaults, waterboarding and murders happen out of a need to reclaim a sense of power and control, out of rage, to obtain information, and in some cases, for simple amusement. The abuse can become so “normal” for some squads of soldiers, that killing can occur to avoid paperwork or as the “obvious” method of concealing unplanned abuse.

When democracies respond to terrorist attacks they have a choice of whether that response will follow a law-enforcement model, a war model, or some hybrid form. In the case of the American response to the 9/11 attacks, a War on Terror was declared. The US dispatched hundreds of thousands of men and women to the far corners of the world to carry America’s fight to the enemy. Those men and women went for a variety of reasons, both personal and geopolitical. Some significant number were persuaded to believe that insurgents resisting American invasions, co-religionists of the 9/11 conspirators, and whole civilian populations did not deserve to be treated with human dignity and respect.

The significant life experiences shared by the study participants provide insight into the forces that can shape the attitudes and actions of some soldiers and intelligence operatives who find themselves with the power to enact abusive violence upon the “Other” found in the persons of detained individuals or captive populations. What they tell us is that some Americans in those circumstances, exposed to indoctrination that rendered the people under their power as inhuman, vicious enemies, and led by superiors who countenanced or encouraged abusive behavior, succumbed to pressures of frustration, fear and anger. What they also tell us is that some, subject to identical pressures, did not so succumb, but instead found the courage to directly object to the abusers, to divert their comrades from participation, and to extricate themselves from the occasions of abuse.

The accounts provide personal evidence of the range of petty cruelties and gross atrocities that did occur when participants and their comrades were not properly curbed from lashing out. They also tell the stories of abusers who turned away from the worst abusive behavior. The adage that absolute power corrupts absolutely bears re-considering, for as some participants demonstrated, even when power remains absolute, the capacity of “monsters” to recognize the small clear voice

of their own humanity remains intact. A way back can be found if circumstances permit. Some “monsters” do not find the way out in time to prevent soul-crushing disorders. Even those who do not descend to such depths are scarred by abusive violence.

The participants tell stories of young adults gone to war for many reasons, some noble and others not. Nearly all of the professional interrogators and combat arms soldiers speak of being ill-prepared for, and inept at, questioning the persons they were sent to seize or who were thrust upon them. The fact that virtually no one knew how to effectively interrogate, and the immense pressure they felt to accomplish a mission thought to require “breaking” people, meant that the temptation to employ force, pain and threats was difficult to resist.

Few of the participants who spoke of committing abuse now view their abuse as justified. They may have believed at the time that they had little choice but to terrorize those within their power, but in only one instance does that view persist.

As a citizen of a democracy that claims to honor the sanctity of rights inalienable, I believe that that country owes a responsibility to its sons and daughters sent across the globe, and to those upon whom our global power projects, to ensure that our soldiers always know that there are choices other than abusive violence, and that they are neither called upon, nor permitted to abuse in America’s name. It was for those reasons that I undertook this study. The images from Abu Ghraib persuaded me that groups of Americans had come to the conclusion that debased behavior directed at helpless detainees made sense. I have been privileged to hear voices that add to the tortured logic that can lead to abuse.

Having been privileged to interview the fourteen participants, I am now no less offended by the conduct exposed during and after the Abu Ghraib revelations than when I first learned of them. Some of the acts recounted within this study are far worse than what happened there. The time spent with the participants has created a sense of understanding the path traveled by some who became “monsters” and the suffering they endure. I wish to make plain that to understand is not to excuse, and that none of the participants seek such excuse. Each abuser bears the weight of every act he chose to carry out. Their victims’ suffering dwarfs any guilt that they may experience, but it would be a mistake to think that abusive violence leaves anyone unscathed. Participant Louis Sanders’ words perhaps encapsulate much of what was learned in this study:

What causes, I think, a lot of the problems, especially, you know, all the problems which also affects the detainee situation, that we are separate from

the other, you know, that there is some kind of super disconnect. That what we do to other people really doesn't affect us, which allows us to do these things to other people. But whether we like it or not or want to accept it or not, what we do to others we—you know, we do to ourselves, and there's no way that you can go to war and or you know objectify somebody, detain them, torture them, mistreat them and think you're going to walk away clean...it's not going to happen.

The citizens whose nations engage in Counter-Terrorism and Counter-Insurgency struggles probably suffer from the same belief in that "super disconnect." Neither they, nor their governments may "walk away clean" if they fail to address the forces that foster abusive violence undertaken with the power they bestow upon their military and intelligence forces.

Appendix 1: Participant Harm Mitigation, Confidentiality Protections and Lone Worker Risk Mitigation Protocols

Participant harm mitigation

To minimize emotional harm to study participants I consulted with a number of American psychologists and counselors with extensive experience working with patients who had endured combat or other traumas resulting in diagnoses of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). I received information regarding how to assist participants who might experience flash-back episodes during interviews as well as the kinds of mental health services available to military veterans, and the ways in which the consultants suggested that topics under study could be best approached. The overarching message was that I should not avoid discussing in a direct way the experiences of interest because of fear that raising such topics would cause distress to the study participants. As was pointed out to me by one counselor in a Vet Center in North Carolina, it is not as if the troubled veterans are not already daily thinking about their difficult experiences. Several of the counselors observed that participation in the study might offer some of the veterans opportunities to discuss troubling experiences for the first time with someone whose judgment they did not fear, which they predicted might prove to be a positive experience for the participants. Part of the study plan included me providing each participant with printed information regarding the US Veterans Administration Suicide Prevention hotlines and other programs as well as the address and telephone numbers of Vet Centers offering counseling to veterans both in the city where interviews were conducted and locations nearest to participant residences.

Among the potential harms to study participants is the public association of their identities with violent heinous acts. The dismay and disapproval of family and friends who may have constructed a vision of the participant's war service as solely honorable and heroic, and whose ongoing emotional support may be key to participants' well-being, could certainly lead to participant harm. Also, since at the outset it was hoped that the study would be able to locate persons who had participated in conduct similar to that which had already resulted in courts martial and imprisonment, I considered it imperative that collecting data to aid in understanding the phenomena accompanying decisions to commit abusive violence should not harm participants in

judicial as well as personal and psychological terms. As such, I deemed confidentiality provisions during data collection and reporting as critically important.

Confidentiality protections

A number of safeguards were put into place in order to assure participant confidentiality. Participants were told that they could participate entirely anonymously, without revealing their names to me. I also dispensed with a signed consent form for the same reason, instead documenting consent through the recordings and transcripts of the interviews. Prospective participants were given contact methods for me that included certain enhanced security features. Participants were assigned aliases at the time of interview, which aliases were the only labels used for study materials associated with the participants. Demographic information regarding participant education, ages at the time of joining government service and periods of contact with detainees, and other items were collected without reference to any identifiers, including aliases. The University authorized me to withhold from my supervisors the identities of the participants, if known. My supervisors did enjoy complete access to anonymized transcripts of the interviews for oversight purposes.¹⁸

Transcripts were prepared by a commercial service contracted under a Non-Disclosure Agreement, which service used transcription computer equipment provided by me. The provided computer was stored by the transcription service under secure protocols including passwords, encryption, and physical security measures intended to prevent determined software attack and moderate physical attempts at removal or unauthorized inspection. File transfers were generally accomplished in personal meetings with the service, although on a small number of occasions files were electronically exchanged via encrypted format. After the last interview transcript was completed by the transcription service, the previously provided equipment was retrieved, the audio and transcript files were erased, and the relevant hard-drive spaces were over-written multiple times using a security tool from a well-regarded commercially available data encryption service. I personally reviewed the transcripts and scrubbed them of information that could be easily used to investigate the identities of participants. In some cases unit names or numbers were removed, location names in the US and overseas were deleted and other individual information was expunged.

¹⁸ As another protection for participant identities, I investigated whether the US National Institutes of Health would be willing to issue a Certificate of Confidentiality covering the study. Such a certificate offers a statutory immunity from subpoena for protected research materials, although that stated immunity has not been honored by US courts in all cases. For a number of reasons, largely relating to the unprecedented application from a non-US institution, and the lack of an institutional storage facility for the research products, I decided to forgo applying for a Certificate of Confidentiality.

As a final safeguard to participant confidentiality, I requested and received University permission to tell participants that I would refuse to provide their identities to anyone, including as might be sought via legal process. That promise was extended to all potential and actual participants and I am fully committed to fulfilling that promise in the unlikely event that attempts are made to identify participants.

This is a representation that I did not offer lightly, and nor do I think other researchers should do so either. However, I do believe that there are a number of reasons why a serious inquiry seeking recollections of deeply personal experiences in matters that affect individual people and states, and the relations between states, merits such strong confidentiality protections. Foremost among those reasons is the consideration that in striving to understand how individuals come to commit heinous behavior, one must first understand that they have committed such behavior, a point not easily reached without their frank admissions. Such candor cannot be expected if making revelations of the acts, the thinking that led to them, and their aftermaths, would be tantamount to creating information likely to result in the participants' public opprobrium or evidence leading to punishment in criminal and civil courts.

In addition to the instrumental advantage to be gained by offering unconditional confidentiality, it is my opinion that although the study participants may be admitting to committing acts of assault, torture and murder, it would be detrimental to the study of such wartime phenomena if social scientists were transformed into gatherers of evidence for subsequent tribunals. I do not in any way argue that individuals who commit such horrible acts should be immunized from the legal consequences of their involvement; however, it is the separate duty of civil and military authorities to investigate and bring to justice such offenders. If there is a rational basis for punishing those acts, then there is a similar, if not greater, rational basis for preventing them in the first place. With sufficient study, it may be possible to develop theories that describe the pathways and mechanisms that result in abusive violence, and which may in turn point the way toward methods of blocking those pathways and interrupting those mechanisms. Understanding how these acts occur in real terms, rather than in abstract academic or legal debate, is an argument that strongly favors the collection of as accurate a set of empirical data as possible. One such method of collection surely must be to ask the involved parties themselves to relate in their own words their own experiences and thoughts that resulted in and from their brutal behavior. During planning for this study it was my view that offering to ensure confidentiality, even against possible legally empowered investigation, would enhance the likelihood of candor, and was worth potential eventualities.

Any researcher who chooses to undertake similar research will be well served to deliberate at length the strength, and limits, of their commitment to the research and

the research participants. It is one thing to blithely offer promises of confidentiality, but the researchers in at least one study involving terrorist killings during the Irish Troubles are in danger of having their participants' taped interviews and identities collected as evidence in a murder inquiry by the Police Service of Northern Ireland. In my view the informed consent obtained from study participants who extend their trust at the risk of grave personal jeopardy must include an honest statement by the researchers involved of the limits to which they will protect that information. That statement can only occur if the researchers themselves have settled the "what if" question for themselves.¹⁹

Risk Assessment and Mitigation

The University required that a Risk Assessment be prepared and presented for review by the School's Risk Assessment Officer. Possibilities addressed included concerns relating to normal crime activity, large scale weather events, vehicle traffic hazards, terrorist attacks, and lone worker risks. All but the last were to be addressed by simple straightforward measures employed in everyday American urban life. The situations involving potential lone worker risks were judged by me to be worth establishing certain additional protocols.

Lone Worker Risk Mitigation Protocols

Normal risks associated with solo researchers visiting unfamiliar communities and locales within those communities were further complicated by virtue of the fact that participant identities had to be kept confidential, and some of the participants might be operating with impaired self-control. It was also taken as a given that the participants would be trained combat veterans with access to firearms and that some participants would have had experiences including inflicting torture and fatal injury to detainees. Relying upon personal professional experience as a security consultant and high-stakes threat assessment professional, and the counsel of a highly experienced forensic psychologist with whom I had co-managed a number of situations involving moderate to high risk of targeted violent attacks, I developed the following protocols.

1. I would carry a personal alarm device secreted on my person that would transmit a distress signal via cell phone to a service staffed around the clock by operators capable of ascertaining my location within 25 meters via global positioning satellite technology.

¹⁹ For a full discussion of the BC Belfast College situation from the standpoint of one of the researchers, see the text of a paper presented at the Oral History Network of Ireland (OHNI) Second Annual in September 2012 by Anthony McIntyre:
<http://bostoncollegesubpoena.wordpress.com/2012/10/07/the-belfast-project-and-the-boston-college-subpoena-case/>

2. I would try to schedule the participant meetings in venues of my choosing, preferably in conferences rooms of hotels or offices where there were other persons nearby. If this was not possible, then a hotel room or public location such as a restaurant or lobby would be used. Next in preference would be a semi-private location under my control, such as a vehicle. Least desirable would be the participant's private residence or vehicle. A participant's residence presented certain potential suitability concerns beyond individual safety, primary among them being the potential inhibition to participant candor due to being overheard or interrupted by household members or visitors during interviews.
3. As a check to possible misjudgments due to becoming over-invested in any one interview opportunity, I agreed to call the forensic psychologist and discuss any situations where I was asked by participants to vary from my established interview plan before proceeding with a change.
4. Prior to each interview I alerted a third party that I was about to enter an interview and that I would be texting a pre-arranged all-clear signal by a certain time. In the event that I failed to send the signal, the third party was given a contact protocol to initiate with me by mobile phone to ascertain my status. The protocol included a duress/non-duress response sequence. On three or four occasions this protocol was used when either interviews exceeded the expected ending times or I forgot to send the required signal.
5. Also before each interview I left in a secure digital format the actual location of the interview and the name and contact information of the participant. The means of obtaining the data were safeguarded in the safe of a law firm that had agreed to release the sealed envelope to my representative if I had failed to communicate the all-clear within established time frames. I had an established safety response team and operational protocols for the team to use in following up in case of probable problems. After each interview I erased the digital meeting information.

The lone worker safety methods proved to be flexible enough to accommodate interviews held in person either in Honolulu or in the two other cities where I travelled to meet with participants. The GPS based tracking duress alarm was easily concealed and remained undetected by all participants. The robust plans for response in the case of problems allowed me to assure my family, supervisor, and School risk officer that my safety was reasonably assured while in the field. I was also satisfied that the confidentiality of the participants would not be compromised except in the worst case, and then only the last participant's information would be exposed.

Appendix 2. DIS Webpage from School of International Relations

Detainee Interaction Study | School of International Relations | University ... <http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/intrel/projects/detaineeinteractionstudy/>



University of St Andrews

Detainee Interaction Study

Detainee Interaction Study

Since September 11, 2001, the United States and its allies have been engaged in Counter-Terrorism (CT) and Counter-Insurgency (COIN) operations around the globe. During that time, American involvement in abusive violence against persons detained in these campaigns has been a prominent feature of the policy discussions of the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere. What have been little appreciated or studied are the individual decisions made by the men and women on the ground that result in the actual abuse.

The Detainee Interaction Study is examining the lived experiences of American military and intelligence veterans who observed or participated in abusive violence in CT or COIN campaigns since September 11.

What is Abusive Violence?

For this study, Abusive Violence is defined as deliberate violence not necessary for self-defense. For example, violence directed at an insurgent sniper position would not be considered abusive violence. However, violence directed at an insurgent after he had been captured from the same sniper position would probably be considered abusive if the prisoner was not an immediate threat to others.

Method and Study Areas

The study will include in-depth and confidential semi-structured interviews of participants. The interviews will be conducted in person within the US, or in some cases via internet. Participants will be provided the opportunity to fully share their experiences through these interviews. An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis will be applied to each interview and across interviews to identify important themes relating to the major areas being studied.

Three major areas will be studied:

1. What were the reasons that individuals decided that abusive violence against detainees was necessary?
2. How were specific methods of abuse developed, learned, shared and selected for use against detainees?
3. How do individuals, no longer operating within the combat and other contexts in which the abuse occurred, now make sense of the abuse they observed or participated in?

How to Participate

Persons interested in participating may send confidential email to:

dstudy@neomailbox.net

Further Information

[Detainee Interaction Study: Call for Interviews \(PDF, 321 KB\)](#) ()

[Detainee Interaction Study: Participant Info Sheet \(PDF, 73 KB\)](#) ()

Edit | School of International Relations, Arts Faculty Building, The Scores, St Andrews, KY16 9AX Tel: 01334 462938 Email: intrel@st-andrews.ac.uk

1 of 1 5/30/2013 10:33 AM

Appendix 3. unspokentruths.org webpage

Webpage established as part of participant recruiting efforts.

unspokentruths.org



unspokentruths	Why Unspoken Truths?	Study Details	Who is John Tsukayama?	Veterans
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The Detainee Interaction Study

Welcome to unspokentruths.org, the portal web page for the Detainee Interaction Study, which is being conducted by John Tsukayama, a PhD candidate in the School of International Relations at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland. If you have come to this site, then you probably know that John is speaking with post-9/11 American military and intelligence veterans who were exposed to or involved in abusive violence during Counter-Terrorist and Counter-Insurgency operations in order to understand their unique experiences and perspectives. Force not necessary for self-defense, especially if directed at detainees, is an aspect under study.

unspokentruths.org



Home Page Why Unspoken Truths? Study Details Who is John Tsukayama? Veterans

Why "Unspoken Truths?"

However veterans may feel about their experiences involving detainees, they probably haven't shared them with others since returning home. They are often concerned that friends, family and colleagues can't understand what they saw and had to do, yet for the veterans those experiences are some of the most compelling memories they carry. The Detainee Interaction Study offers a confidential and non-judgmental opportunity for veterans to help social science understand the truth about how detainee-directed abuse arises during COIN and CT operations and what those experiences mean to veterans.

unspokentruths.org



Home Page Why Unspoken Truths? Study Details Who is John Tsukayama? Veterans

Study Details

The Detainee Interaction Study is examining the lived experiences of American military and intelligence veterans who observed or participated in detainee-directed abuse in CT or COIN campaigns since September 11, 2001.

Method and Study Areas

The study will include in-depth and confidential semi-structured interviews of participants. The interviews will be conducted in person within the US, or in some cases via internet. Participants will be provided the opportunity to fully share their experiences through these interviews. An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis will be applied to each interview and across interviews to identify important themes relating to the major areas being studied.

Three major areas are being studied:

1. What were the reasons that individuals decided that abusing detainees made sense?
2. How were specific methods of abuse developed, learned, shared and selected for use against detainees?
3. How do individuals, no longer operating within the combat and other contexts in which the abuse occurred, now make sense of the abuse they observed or participated in?

Specific information about the study objectives, built in confidentiality safeguards, and study procedures can be found at the University of St. Andrews website. [Click Here](#)

unspokentruths.org



[Home Page](#) [Why Unspoken Truths?](#) [Study Details](#) [Who is John Tsukayama?](#) [Veterans](#)

Who is John Tsukayama?

I come from a first career far from academia. I spent more than two decades as a specialist consulting investigator working with corporate, legal and government clients in the areas of financial fraud, employee misfeasance and malfeasance, and high risk threat management. I am now pursuing a PhD with the University of St. Andrews in Scotland.

My interest in military affairs stems from a family background where my father along with his brothers and cousins served during World War II, some in Europe or the Pacific, and others during the occupation of Japan. Both of my brothers served in the armed forces, one retiring as a Marine Gunnery Sergeant. I have younger relatives who served in combat in Iraq and Afghanistan. My family history has made me especially cognizant of the fact that while wars are declared by nations, they are fought by individual men and women committed to serving and surviving in a context alien to the rest of us. Much of my research has been devoted to seeing their choices through their eyes.

I hold an M.Litt. (Distinction), in Terrorism Studies from the Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence, School of International Relations, University of St. Andrews and a Bachelors in Political Science/History from Brigham Young University Hawaii.

A reasonably accurate picture along with more about me can be found on my University of St. Andrews web page. If you really want to see it, [click here](#).

unspokentruths.org



[Home Page](#)

[Why Unspoken Truths?](#)

[Study Details](#)

[Who is John Tsukayama?](#)

[Veterans](#)

Veterans

Dear Veteran,

If you are thinking about participating in the study, please accept my thanks. I promise to honor your experiences by treating them as the important, unique, and personal events that they were. The truths that they represent to you are specific insights that none but those that lived through those experiences can understand the way you do.

If you are a veteran who was exposed to or was involved in detainee abuse and might be willing to contribute to the study in a confidential manner, please read the information on the Study Details page and then send me an email with any questions you have or the best way to contact you. [Please only send email to this mailbox:](#)

distudy@neomailbox.net

This email was set up to enhance your privacy and was specifically established with a Swiss service, outside the United States and the European Union:

I do not need to know your true name. I am willing to interview you anywhere in the US. I cannot do my study without your contribution. I am not a veteran, which is why I especially need your help.

Thanks again,

John Tsukayama

Appendix 4. Participant Information Sheet Text

Participant Information Sheet

Project Title: Detainee Interaction Study

Email: distudy@neomailbox.net

What this research study is about

You are invited to participate in a research study.

I am John Tsukayama, a PhD student at the School of International Relations at the University of St. Andrews, Scotland. This work is part of my research, which is supervised by Dr. Jeffrey Murer. The study will look at the individual experiences of American military and intelligence personnel who interacted with detainees during Counter-Terrorism and Counter-Insurgency operations. The aims of the study are to:

- Describe the kinds of interactions between Americans and detainees
- Describe the practices employed during those interactions
- Understand the way those practices were developed, learned and chosen by American military and intelligence personnel
- Report the post-deployment thoughts of the Americans involved in detainee interactions

Why you have been invited to participate

You are someone who may have had interactions with detainees while you served in a military or intelligence arm of the US Government. As such, I believe that your personal experiences are important sources of information and understanding that are vital to my research.

What you can expect if you agree to participate

You are invited to participate in an interview with me that should last for an hour or more depending upon the things you have to share and the amount of time you have available.

I am willing to travel to meet with you for the interview.

If you consent to being interviewed, I will audio record the interview and I will always advise you when the recording is starting and stopping. In addition, there may be shorter follow-up conversations in which I seek clarification from you or when you may contact me with other information you want to provide. Those conversations will similarly be recorded.

I will not ask you to sign a consent form. I will however ask you in the recorded interview whether you understand the nature of the research and that you are agreeing to participate in the research.

You may suspend the interview at any point, and you may contact me later should you choose to continue. Likewise, you may decline to discuss any subjects, but remain free to let me know later if you change your mind. You may of course refuse to answer any questions you wish. At the close of your participation I will again ask you to confirm that you understood the purposes of the research and voluntarily consented to participating in the research. Of course, you may withdraw from participation at any time.

What will be done to protect your privacy?

Your identity will be strictly confidential. Period.

I will take a number of steps to protect your privacy. First and foremost, at no time will you be required to give me your true name. Second, while I will collect some background information from you, that information will be kept separate from any audio files or transcripts that contain information about your observations or recollections. That background information will contain no references to the date, time or place of your interview and it will not have any information regarding what you say in the recorded interview. The background information will be kept only by me in a secure storage site.

When we meet I will provide you a list of fake names from which you will be asked to choose one. That name will be used thereafter in the transcript of the interview and anything written about the interview. The digital recording file will be password protected and only I and the transcriber will have access to the password. The transcriber will sign a contract known as a Non-Disclosure Agreement which will require that the original audio file and all copies of the transcript held by the transcriber will be destroyed or returned to me. In addition, after the recording is transcribed, I will review it for accuracy and change anything in it that would obviously identify you. Once I am satisfied that the transcript has been accurately prepared and edited I will effect the destruction of the digital audio recording file of the interview.

I will not give your identity to the transcriber. I will not give your identity to my supervisors. I will not give your identity to the examiners reviewing my PhD thesis. They do not need to know it and will not ask for it.

The transcript of your interview will be held by me in secure storage and I will personally destroy it when it is no longer needed. My supervisor, Dr. Jeffrey Murer, will have access to the transcripts in order to provide me with guidance and feedback. Dr. Murer will be reading the transcripts and will not have access to your true identity. He is also committed to protecting your privacy.

I will refuse any requests made to reveal your identity or to provide information likely to lead to discovery of your identity, even if you have made your identity known, unless you personally release me to provide that information. **I consider your privacy to be so vital that I will refuse directions from any sources to invade it.** The University knows that I have made this commitment to you and expects that I abide by that commitment in my use of your information during my research and any thesis, reports, or publications that I may later produce.

Given the precautions outlined above, it is very unlikely that your identity will become known. Even still, there may be ways in which your participation in the study could become known. For instance, the information you provide may be so specific that anyone who knew you at the time and was present during the events could know who you are. Of course anyone who arranged for you to contact me to participate in the study or anyone you told about your participation would know that we had spoken.

I am not required to report anything you tell me which could be considered violations of government policy, procedure, or law. I would, however, need to make appropriate notifications if you give me information indicating that you or others are at risk of harm. Should this happen, I will tell you and you can decide whether to continue your participation.

How the information you provide will be used

The information provided by you will be analyzed with that of other participants and will be used in my PhD thesis. The information may also be used in future research I conduct. My findings may also be shared publicly in presentations or publications to persons interested in the topics I am researching. Of course, as noted above, I will always be mindful of the need to protect your privacy.

How this research is funded

This research is completely independent. Other than very limited assistance from the University of St. Andrews, no UK, US or other government funding is being provided to support me or this research study. I am an independent researcher obligated only to conduct an honest and rigorous study and prepare a thesis for examination by the University and its examiners.

Contacts for Further Information

John K. Tsukayama
PhD Student

School of International Relations
University of St. Andrews
UK Tel:+44(0)1331 208 xxxx

Dr. Jeffrey Stevenson Murer
Lecturer on Collective Violence
School of International Relations
University of St. Andrews
Tel:+44(0)1334/46.19.24
Fax:+44(0)1334/46.xxxx

Appendix 5: Rapport Building Efforts

I told participants that the interview process could be accomplished with as few as two full days and nights in Honolulu, but that I recommended a more workable plan should be built around four nights as this would allow for recovery from jet lag and additional time for contingencies, including a possible third interview. I proposed the following schedule to participants who travelled to Hawaii:

Day 1: Arrival in Honolulu and initial meeting with researcher over dinner to allow an informal opportunity to become acquainted and to answer questions participant or supporter might have. If the travel expenses had not been advanced to the participant, I provided the cash at the beginning of the first meeting. Also at the first meeting I provided the participant with hard-copies of the Participant Information Sheet, a map to the interview site, a listing of Veterans Administration Vet Center locations and telephone numbers in Honolulu and in the areas nearest the participant's home, and printed information directed at veterans and their families regarding Veteran's Administration advice and support resources for veteran PTSD and suicide prevention. I also provided some information regarding inexpensive sightseeing and dining options for visitors to Honolulu. Also during the first meeting I took the opportunity to thank the participant and supporter for traveling to Honolulu and repeated the assertion that the participant was free to withdraw consent to be interviewed at any time before or during the interviews and that the reimbursement for travel expenses was not intended to purchase the participant's cooperation or information.

Day 2: The Participant, the participant's supporter and I spend a few hours in further informal interaction. This was generally a two or three hour island orientation tour given by me followed by lunch. Included in the tour was showing the participant and supporter the location of the interview site and providing directions for easiest transport to same. During opportune moments when the participant supporter and I were left alone, I made sure to ask whether the supporter had any concerns which they wished to raise to me. In only one case was a concern related. It concerned frequent flashback episodes suffered by the participant. In all cases the supporters expressed appreciation for the inquiry as well as their being comfortable with me and the processes that had been evident to that point to ensure participant well-being and confidentiality.

Day 3: First interview day, consisting of three or four hours spent together in interview and breaks. Several hours before the scheduled interview time I spoke by telephone with each participant to remind them that they were not obligated to

proceed and could terminate the interview at any time. All elected to start the interview. Most of the interviews concluded at the point in the participant account where the combat deployment ended. The overnight pause was intended to allow me to reflect upon the information received in the first interview and to formulate follow up questions. The break was also intended to give the participants a half-day and evening spent with the supporters in order to either work through any difficulties raised by the first interview or to disengage completely from the study topics and re-focus on the sight-seeing, and relaxation opportunities afforded by the interview locale.

Day 4: Second interview day, again scheduling approximately three hours of interview and another one or two hours of breaks in order to ensure enough time to conduct a complete concluding interview. As with the prior day, before meeting in person I spoke by telephone to confirm with participants that they could stop at that point; again all elected to proceed.

Day 5: No scheduled interview, allowing final sight-seeing and start of homeward travel via night flight. This timing also allowed for some flexibility to conduct an interview if the prior day proved unsuitable for interview by the participant or in the unlikely event that the second interview had to be continued. In one or two cases participants scheduled their travel immediately after the Day 4 interviews.

Appendix 6. Instruction and Background

Instruction and Background Form

Please place a mark next to each instruction below to indicate that you have read and understand the information.

Instructions:

1. DO NOT list your true name or other individual identifying information on this form.
2. DO NOT list the true name of any other person on this form.
3. You may choose to not answer any question on this form; if you do, please write “declined” anywhere in the answer area to indicate that you did not simply overlook the question.
4. If you do not understand a question, please ask the researcher for explanation.
5. This form will collect certain background information about you and will be kept separate from your interview transcript and personal experience disclosure form.
6. An alias (fake name) will be assigned to you and your information during the study. All materials directly connected to the information you provide at this time and the resulting transcript will be referenced only by that alias.
7. During the interview an audio-only recorder will be used. You will be told at all times when the recorder is about to be turned on and off.
8. During the interview and while the recorder is running, please do not use the true name of anyone you personally served with or who was present during events you describe.
9. If at any time you would like to take a break, please let the researcher know and the interview will be paused.
10. During the course of the interview you may be asked to consider your Personal Calm Score. You determine your own Personal Calm Score by thinking about how you are feeling at the time. This is not a precise measure and there is no “right” number—simply how you think you feel at the time. On the scale of 1 to 10 below, please circle the number that best represents how you are feeling right now.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Entirely Calm Mostly Calm Neutral Mostly Uneasy Entirely Uneasy

Circle highest grade of education completed:

8th grade 13 College Freshman
 9th grade 14 Sophomore
 10th grade 15 Junior
 11th grade 16 Senior (College Graduate)
 12th grade 17 Post Graduate (Specify no. years and
 degree) _____

Circle highest grade of education completed at time of detainee interaction:

8th grade 13 College Freshman
 9th grade 14 Sophomore
 10th grade 15 Junior
 11th grade 16 Senior (College Graduate)
 12th grade 17 Post Graduate (Specify no. years and
 degree) _____

During period of experience with detainees, which describe(s) your status: (check all that apply)

Uniformed Member of US Armed Forces Civilian US DoD Employee
 Member of civilian US Intelligence Agency Employee of private contractor to US Govt.
 Employee of private contractor to foreign govt. Employee of private contractor to non-
 gov.
 American Law Enforcement Officer

If serving in US Armed Forces at time of detainee experiences, which service(s) were you in at the time:

US Army US Navy USMC US Air Force US Coast Guard

If member of US Intelligence Agency or American Law Enforcement, please name agency you were with at the time of detainee interaction. If you were a state or local law enforcement officer assigned to a federal operation, in order to assure anonymity, please do not give your home agency name. Instead, name federal organization you were assigned to (e.g., JTTF, etc.)

Agency Name: _____

Age at time of military/intelligence/law enforcement recruitment:

17-19 20-21 22-23 24-25 26-27 28-29

30-31 32-33 34-35 36-37 38-39

40 and over n/a

Age(s) at time of interactions with detainees:

18-19 20-21 22-23 24-25 26-27 28-29

30-31 32-33 34-35 36-37 38-39

40 and over n/a

Rank at time of interactions with detainees:

Enlisted/NCO: E- Warrant: W- Commissioned: O- Civilian Gov.: GS-

Other (specify): _____

Locations where detainee interactions took place:

CONUS Guantanamo Afghanistan Iraq

Other: (list countries) _____

Are you still employed by the organization you were with when you had detainee interaction?

yes no

How long were you with, or have you been with, that organization?

years and months

Please mark the following tasks that were part of your interaction with detainees: (mark all that apply)

capture transport from point of capture guard in field

question in field guard in holding facility question in holding facility

in-process in holding facility provide medical services language translation

out-process from holding facility

other

(describe) _____

Appendix 7. Abusive Violence Self-disclosure Sheet

Abusive Violence can be described as violence directed at people not necessary for immediate self-defense.

The following questions all regard treatment toward detainees or others who at the time were not immediate physical threats to you or others.

1. Please tell us how many times you witnessed, **but did not take part in**, Abusive Violence:

Zero One Two Three to Five More than Five

2. I witnessed the following abusive violence, (circle all that apply):

Threatening Detainee (*verbal only*) Threatening Others (*verbal only*)
 Using Weapon to Threaten Detainee Using Weapon to Threaten Others
 Slapping Punching Elbow Strikes Kicking with Feet Knee Strikes Stomping
 Choking Striking with Weapon Striking with Other Object Finger-twisting
 Arm/wrist-twisting Burning Stabbing/Cutting Whipping Electric Shock
 Pinching/Squeezing with Tool/Implement Poking/Probing/Pressing Existing Injury
 Withholding Medical Care/Medicine Withholding Food Forced Exercise
 Withholding Water Forced Sexual Contact Including Fondling/Rape/Penetration With Object
 Forced Kneeling/Standing to Point of Obvious Suffering Binding/Shackling in Painful Positions
 Hanging from Wrists/Arms/Legs Covering Mouth/Nose to Prevent Breathing
 Squeezing Body with Bindings or Heavy Objects Pouring Liquid Over/Into Mouth and Nose
 Prolonged Exposure to Cold or Heat Prolonged Exposure to Loud Noise Shooting Killing
 Other (describe) _____

3. Please tell us how many times you participated in abusive violence:

Zero One Two Three to Five More than Five

4. Please look again at the list in item number 2 above and **underline** any that you took part in.

5. If something you did that you consider as abusive violence does not appear above, please describe what you did:

Reference:

Appendix 8. Interview Schedule

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Entirely Calm	Mostly Calm		Neutral		Mostly Uneasy		Entirely Uneasy		
Pre:	Can you tell me a little about where you're from?									
I.	Would you tell me why you joined up? (Prompts: were there other reasons too? What concerns did you have about joining? How did you come to a final decision?)									
II.	Before encountering detainees, what expectations did you have about anyone who might be detained? (Enemy/Criminal/Political/Terrorist/Dangerous to you/Dangerous to Others/Possible Intel source? How were those expectations formed?)									
	How did you expect that detainees would be handled by your unit? (What training, if any? Expected none/custodial/preventative/interrogation/other?)									
III.	You note in your questionnaire being present during abusive violence, would you tell me about the first time that happened? [observations—visual/aural? Own reactions (thoughts/physical feelings), thoughts/feelings about incident immediately/shortly afterward?]									
	Would you tell me about any other times?									
IV.	You note in your questionnaire having participated in abusive violence, can you tell me about the first time [Chronology: prelude-incident-ending-immediate afterward? Own reactions (thoughts/physical feelings), thoughts/feelings about incident immediately/shortly afterward? How different from simply being present?]									
	Can you tell me more about how you decided that the detainee should be treated in that way? [Solo decision process (details)? Group decision process (details)? Goals, if any/what hoping to get out of doing this? Barriers? Superiors?]									
	Can you tell me how you decided what you were going to do to the detainee? [Conscious choosing? Spontaneous? Thought would meet goals? Why? How knew about method? Refer to questionnaire]									
	Can you tell me about any other incidents? [Participatory abusive violence—details of experience—differed? How?]									
V.	When you first got home/out, how did you think about these experiences [frequency? Intrusive? distress/pleasure/shame/pride/indifference/other?]									
VI.	Now how do you view what happened?									
	If you told others about what happened, how do they view those events? [impact on own views/self?]									

Appendix 9. University Ethics Committee Approval



University of St Andrews

International Relations School Ethics Committee

4 November 2010
John Tsukayama

Ethics Reference No: <i>Please quote this ref on all correspondence</i>	IR6949
Project Title:	Use of abusive violence by US military forces in counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency operations since 9/11
Researchers Name(s):	John Tsukayama
Supervisor(s):	Dr J Murer

Thank you for submitting your application which was considered at the IR School Ethics Committee meeting on 14 October 2010. The following documents were reviewed:

- | | |
|--|----------|
| 1. Ethical Application Form | 14.10.10 |
| 2. Participant Information Sheet | 14.10.10 |
| 3. Consent Form | date |
| 4. Debriefing Form | date |
| 5. External Permissions | date |
| 6. Letters to Parents/Children/Headteacher etc... | date |
| 7. Questionnaires | date |
| 8. Enhanced Disclosure Scotland and Equivalent
(as necessary) | date |

The University Teaching and Research Ethics Committee (UTREC) approves this study from an ethical point of view. Please note that where approval is given by a School Ethics Committee that committee is part of UTREC and is delegated to act for UTREC.

Approval is given for three years. Projects, which have not commenced within two years of original approval, must be re-submitted to your School Ethics Committee.

You must inform your School Ethics Committee when the research has been completed. If you are unable to complete your research within the 3 three year validation period, you will be required to write to your School Ethics Committee and to UTREC (where approval was given by UTREC) to request an extension or you will need to re-apply.

Any serious adverse events or significant change which occurs in connection with this study and/or which may alter its ethical consideration, must be reported immediately to the School Ethics Committee, and an Ethical Amendment Form submitted where appropriate.

Approval is given on the understanding that the 'Guidelines for Ethical Research Practice' (<http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/media/UTRECguidelines%20Feb%2008.pdf>) are adhered to.

Yours sincerely

Dr. J.S. Murer
Convenor of the School Ethics Committee

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