

The Hoffman report, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the defense of the nation: A personal view

Health Psychology Open
July-December 2018: 1–9
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DOI: 10.1177/2055102918796192
journals.sagepub.com/home/hpo


Martin Seligman

Abstract

I was asked by the Central Intelligence Agency in the spring of 2002 about how the research on learned helplessness could help captured Americans resist and evade torture and interrogation. There was no discussion of how learned helplessness could be used with detainees nor any mention of the interrogation of detainees. James Mitchell and Bruce Jessen later created a program of “enhanced interrogation” of detainees and it was incorrectly reported that they based it on the theory of learned helplessness. I played no role at all in these developments, and I am grieved that scientific research created to relieve helplessness and depression might have been used for brutal interrogations. The unfounded attacks on me and others, however, may have been intended to discourage young psychologists from working with the Department of Defense, and I urge American Psychological Association not to waver in its long-standing commitment to serve the nation.

Keywords

American Psychological Association, Central Intelligence Agency, Hoffman report, interrogation, Seligman

“The Navy formed a high-powered medical team. In particular, it invited Professor Seligman to Guantánamo. This practitioner is a celebrity, renowned for his works on depression. His books on optimism and confidence are international bestsellers. It was he who oversaw the experiments on human guinea pigs U.S. torturers, under Professor Seligman’s supervision, experimented and perfected every single coercive technique.”

Thierry Meyssan (2010) (The secret behind Guantanamo, Voltaire.net.org).

“How does it feel to be the spiritual father of American torture?” the anonymous email read. It was a crisp late summer day in 2015 and I was with Mandy and the kids at the Philadelphia Art Museum. How did it feel? It felt like I had been punched in the gut and I crumpled onto the bench.

Unlike the wildly false quote that begins this article, this email hurt. I have never and would never aid or abet torture. I believe my very purpose in being alive is to increase the amount of well-being in the world and I have worked my whole life to decrease helplessness in the world.

So, as I got up off the bench, clutching my gut, I decided that I must narrate what actually happened. This article is an update of Chapter 24 of my memoir, *The Hope Circuit* (Seligman, 2018). This version was solicited for *Health Psychology Open* by the editor, David Marks in late July of 2018. He asked for my personal observations on statements about me in the Hoffman Report. Since American Psychological Association (APA) is still embroiled in a debate about the accuracy and validity of this report, I imagine he found it timely to publish my observations as my name was mentioned 115 times, and I found it appropriate since I had not commented on this report before.

I have made it a practice to try to not be defensive when my science was criticized, since science advances by criticism. But what was written about me in connection with enhanced interrogation was not about my science, and

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much of it was personal and moral, as well as being untrue. So, I apologize to my readers for the uncharacteristic defensive tone of what follows.

What happened

Here in a nutshell is what happened: I was asked by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in the spring of 2002 to help captured Americans. James Mitchell, Bruce Jessen, and Kirk Hubbard asked me how the research on learned helplessness could help captured Americans resist and evade torture and interrogation. They never asked about how learned helplessness could be used with detainees and they never mentioned the interrogation of detainees. Mitchell and Jessen later created a program of enhanced interrogation of detainees and it was falsely reported that they based enhanced interrogation of detainees on the theory of learned helplessness. I played no role at all in these developments, and I am aggrieved and horrified that scientific research created to relieve helplessness and depression might have been used for brutal purposes.

Here is what the Hoffman Report said about me:

Combining the statements made to us by Seligman, Hubbard, and Mitchell, it appears that Hubbard met with Seligman at his house on two occasions—once along with Mitchell and Jessen, and once along with two other CIA psychologists or attorneys. At these meetings, learned helplessness was discussed (in substantial detail during at least one of the meetings), and Seligman was invited to speak to a SERE conference in San Diego about learned helplessness. Our evidence shows that Mitchell was very interested in the application of the learned helplessness theory to interrogations of uncooperative detainees. Hubbard and Mitchell say that they never discussed interrogations with Seligman and did not provide him information about the interrogation program. Seligman agrees and says he thought their interest in learned helplessness related to its insights for captured US personnel who are trained through the SERE program to resist providing information in interrogations. We think it would have been difficult not to suspect that one reason for the CIA's interest in learned helplessness was to consider how it could be used in the interrogation of others. But this probably depends on whether it would have seemed likely in 2002 that the CIA would use SERE techniques to conduct interrogations. A December 2002 article in the *Washington Post* quoting unnamed CIA officials as describing highly abusive interrogation techniques at CIA black sites would have created this suspicion, but we do not have enough information to know what Seligman knew or thought at the time. And because we do not see any evidence that this was connected with actions or decisions by or communications with APA officials, we did not spend further time investigating the matter. (p. 49)

Now, the detailed history:

My reaction to 9/11 was typical of most Americans. It was the first frontal attack on American soil since Pearl

Harbor and I worried that it was the opening shot of full scale war. What could I do to help my country? I had no high government or military contacts, nor did I know much about Islam or about terrorism, but I did have good convening power among academics. I called my friend and donor, Jim Hovey, and asked whether he would underwrite by convening a group of academics to make recommendations to the White House about how to counter Islamic Jihad extremism. Jim agreed readily.

So, a group of 12 professors met at my house on 15–16 December 2001. Four people from the American Intelligence Community also showed up. I did not invite them and I do not know who did.¹ We wanted to send to the White House unsolicited recommendations to help the nation in a time of great need. Our topic was how to win a lasting victory against global terrorism. Here is what the Hoffman report concluded that we did:

At the close of the meeting, the group had made “six policy recommendations aimed at winning a victory that will lastingly contain global terrorism”: Isolate Jihad Islam from Moderate Islam worldwide; [n]eutralize Saudi support for jihad Islamic fundamentalism worldwide; [p]olice the Arab Diaspora in Western Europe forcefully; [s]ubvert the social structure of terrorist organizations; [b]reak the link between the terrorists and the pyramid of sympathizers; [and] [b]uild American knowledge of Arab and Muslim culture and language.

Seligman denied that there was a “single mention by anyone of interrogation, captives, or torture or any related subject” at the meeting, and the summary document produced by the group does not reflect that discussion of any of these topics occurred. Indeed, Seligman said that he has never worked on interrogations or held a contract with the CIA or any other entity related to interrogations. (p. 162)

I made no recommendations myself: my role was secretary and I compiled the recommendations of the other invitees. We probably sent them to the White House, but I never received any response from the government to this meeting or to the report.

The four people from the government introduced themselves (Steven Band and Steven Etter from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and Kirk Hubbard and James Mitchell from the CIA), but they were totally silent throughout. I did not have a conversation that I can recall with any of them—except at one break, when James Mitchell told me, quite gushingly, in a 30-second conversation, how much he admired my work. He did not elaborate. His remark was striking and I proudly told my wife, Mandy, about it that night.

There was not a single mention of interrogation, torture, or detainees during the meeting.

This meeting was said by the most unrelenting of my critics to be “misty origin” of the torture program and my complicity in it (Kaye, 2009). But there is no basis for this

other than my being in the same room with James Mitchell and Kirk Hubbard for 2 days.

What the critics claim

Jane Mayer (2008a), a *New Yorker* writer, made the first allegations that I aided torture:

Professor Seligman's disavowal actually adds a rather interesting new fact to the story of how the psychology profession played a role in the CIA's "special" interrogation program. In "The Dark Side," I established by interviewing him, that he had personally spoken for three hours at the Navy's SERE School in San Diego, in April of 2002, at a somewhat mysterious confab organized in part by the head of Behavioral Science at the CIA.

... Seligman, it seems, agreed to participate in what he says was an unexplained private high-level CIA meeting, held on the campus of the part of the Navy that runs a secret program emulating torture the SERE School in San Diego.

Professor Seligman says he has no idea why he was called in from his academic position in Pennsylvania, to suddenly appear at this CIA event. He just showed up and talked for three hours about how dogs, when exposed to horrible treatment, give up all hope, and become compliant. Why the CIA wanted to know about this at this point, he says he never asked. But somehow—and this is what is news as far as I know ... Professor Seligman does know that in his audience were the two psychologists who soon after became the key advisers to the CIA's "enhanced" interrogation program: James Mitchell and Bruce Jessen. So, Professor Seligman, must have had some contact with them, since he knew they were in his audience. Did he speak with them? What did they talk about?

... So did Seligman assist the U.S. Torture program? I am careful not to say so in "The Dark Side,"—I just recount the facts of his odd visit to the SERE school.

Mayer does not "recount the facts" and her "interview" with me is a half-truth. We merely had an email exchange in December of 2007, a few months before her book, *The Dark Side* (Mayer 2008b), was published, and I emailed her several paragraphs on 21 December 2007 in response and I also wrote her, "I can try to answer your email queries."

She emailed back "I'll send a few questions your way shortly. I have a lunch appointment in a moment, but when I get back I'll send off an email. Again, thank you for any help on this."

She never wrote me again and so we never had any interview. I have a complete record of our correspondence (I have been careful to do all my interviews about these matters in writing so there would be a public record if needed) and her statement "*Professor Seligman says he has no idea why he was called in from his academic position in Pennsylvania, to suddenly appear at this CIA event*" is

absolutely not supported by any facts. This quote makes me look like either a patsy or a fool. Far from having "no idea why" I was invited, I was told that my speech was to be about how learned helplessness could help American soldiers and diplomats, if captured, resist their captors.

Here are the details of my dealings with the CIA in 2002 and thereafter:

In mid-February 2002, Bruce Jessen, on behalf of the Joint Personnel Recovery Agency (JPRA) invited me to give a talk at the annual conference of the "Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape (SERE) Psychology community." He sent along a collection of papers on how our troops were trained to resist interrogation and survive captivity. He asked to meet with me in April, to discuss the contents of the talk and he signed the letter as "Senior DoD SERE Psychologist."

Two meetings then took place at my house. I have a clear memory of the first, but no memory of the second. Kirk Hubbard and a female lawyer (whose name I do not remember) came to my house and we had a 2-hour conversation. They asked me at length about learned helplessness (procedures, generalization, time course, immunization, biology, and therapy). I went through all this material in detail with them. They told me that their interest in helplessness was how what was known might help Americans when captured to resist and evade torture and interrogation. They suggested that this should be the topic of my speech to JPRA at the San Diego Naval Base in Mid-May.

The next meeting likely occurred later in April 2002. I have had to turn to others to document that it actually happened. The meeting was at my house with Kirk Hubbard, James Mitchell, and Bruce Jessen. I have wracked my brain for many years trying to conjure up any memory at all of this meeting, but with no success. Nor do I have any record of it in my date books. Of all the events I report in this article, this is the only one that I do not remember. So, for its existence and the account of what happened at the meeting, I have to rely on external sources.

Greg Bloche (2011) interviewed a CIA source who confirmed the existence of such a meeting "sometime in the spring of 2002" and the source said that I had a "classic approach-avoidance conflict regarding helping us." I think the source was Kirk Hubbard, since he also affirmed the existence of this meeting to David Hoffman for the Hoffman Report to the APA. The Hoffman Report was commissioned in 2015 by the Board of Directors of APA as an "independent investigation" into APA's role in the enhanced interrogation program.

David Hoffman asked me on email in mid-2015 about the existence of such a meeting in preparing his report. Here is what I emailed him:

I continued to be puzzled about the visit with Hubbard, Mitchell and Jessen in April 2002, since I have no memory of it

So I wrote Kirk Hubbard and sent him all my recent correspondence with you, asking him to comment on its accuracy in toto. Here's his response:

I reviewed your responses to David Hoffman. And I am pleased that I am not the only person whose memory isn't as clear as I would wish! I believe all of your responses are accurate except for a couple of things. There was a second meeting at your home on April 3, 2002 with Mitchell, Jessen and myself attending. The purpose was to ask you to discuss Positive Psychology at an upcoming JPRA conference in May 2002, to which you agreed. As you note there has never been any discussion with you regarding any aspect of interrogation that I am aware of. And I verified that with Jim Mitchell. (Underlining is mine) Second, I did give you a glass vase on April 3, 2002. It was probably worth under \$50.00 and, since I paid for it, it was a personal gift from me not the CIA."

So I surmise from this that there must have been such a meeting and such a gift, since I cannot think of any reason why Hubbard would make this up.

Most important to me, Hubbard (and through him, Mitchell) both confirmed "there has never been any discussion with you regarding any aspect of interrogation.

In spite of my having no memory of the meeting, I believe it occurred. First because Bruce Jessen asked me to meet with him on that date. Second because Hubbard and Mitchell told Hoffman that there was such a meeting and I can't think of any reason they would make this up. Third because I can remember meeting Mitchell only twice and Jessen only twice: Mitchell at my house in December 2001 and also presumably in April 2002. Jessen at the JPRA meeting on 17 May 2002 and also presumably at my house in April 2002. (Neither Mitchell nor Jessen was present at the first meeting at my home in early 2002 and I do not think Mitchell was at the JPRA meeting.)

Jeffrey Kaye (2009), a psychologist and anti-torture activist, who sees me as a liar, sees my failure to remember this meeting as evidence of a cover-up. It would be exculpatory and convenient for me to remember this meeting and its contents, but the simple truth is that I do not.

So, what was said at this meeting?

I assume, but I cannot be certain, that I went through exactly the same material about the research literature on learned helplessness that I did with Kirk Hubbard and the lawyer and that I also did subsequently at the JPRA meeting in May. On those other occasions, I outlined the procedures for inducing helplessness in the laboratory, the generalization to other laboratory settings, when helplessness is temporary and when it is permanent, how to immunize against helplessness, its neurobiology, and how to do therapy to cure helplessness.

What I am certain of is that they did not mention detainees, interrogation of detainees, or using learned helplessness on our prisoners. If they had mentioned any of these at

any time, I would surely have remembered it, and the meeting would have stood out in my memory. Hubbard and Mitchell testified to Hoffman "*there has never been any discussion with you regarding any aspect of interrogation.*" My conversations with Hubbard and the lawyer in April and at the JPRA meeting were entirely about how the knowledge of learned helplessness could help captured American personnel and not about using learned helplessness on detainees. My motivation was entirely to help captured American personnel.

Here is what the Hoffman Report concluded about my role:

Combining the statements made to us by Seligman, Hubbard, and Mitchell, it appears that Hubbard met with Seligman at his house on two occasions—once along with Mitchell and Jessen, and once along with two other CIA psychologists or attorneys. At these meetings, learned helplessness was discussed (in substantial detail during at least one of the meetings), and Seligman was invited to speak to a SERE conference in San Diego about learned helplessness. Our evidence shows that Mitchell was very interested in the application of the learned helplessness theory to interrogations of uncooperative detainees. Hubbard and Mitchell say that they never discussed interrogations with Seligman and did not provide him information about the interrogation program. Seligman agrees and says he thought their interest in learned helplessness related to its insights for captured US personnel who are trained through the SERE program to resist providing information in interrogations." Hoffman et al. (2015) Report to the American Psychological Association. (pp. 48–49)

There is an important falsehood in the Hoffman Report that needs unambiguous refutation. Here is what Hoffman said:

Critics also allege that the University of Pennsylvania's Positive Psychology Center, founded by Seligman, received a \$31 million sole source contract from DoD in 2010 because of assistance Seligman provided to the government with its counter-terrorism efforts. (p. 164)

This accusation is full of innuendo and based on zero evidence. Here are the facts:

This accusation implies that the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Program delivered by the University of Pennsylvania to the Army beginning in 2009 was some kind of nefarious reward for my allegedly helping construct the enhanced interrogation program. But I did not assist or abet the interrogation program so there could have been no such "reward." Nor was my work on learned helplessness remotely the basis of the enhanced interrogation program as James Mitchell and Harlow (2016) has stated. Since helping the US Army make our soldiers more resilient has been one of the personal and professional high points of my life, I find this accusation unjust, insulting, and made up out of whole cloth.

Here is how the program came about. The University of Pennsylvania received a sole source no-bid US\$31M to train US Army personnel in resilience and positive psychology. This was sole source, no-bid because, beside Penn, there were no other competing entities for this contract. The Chief of Staff of the Army, George Casey, viewed this as very urgent. He was in a rush to get such a program started to help our troops as soon as possible. I believe the Army's decision to sole source the contract was because

1. Penn was the only entity that had done extensive training and published extensive peer-reviewed research on resilience training.
2. Penn was the only entity that had extensive experience in the training of trainers in resilience.
3. The Army could identify no other competing entity.
4. General Casey wanted it expedited.

There were many months of negotiations between Army procurement and Penn and there was never any mention of past work that I might have done with the Defense Intelligence Agency (DOD) or Intelligence (I had not done any such work).

My contacts with the CIA

The only contract I ever held with the CIA or any other relevant group was in the early 1980s analyzing the speeches of world leaders for optimism and pessimism. Other than this, I have never before or since had a contract with any intelligence agency or any other relevant public or private agency. I have never held any security clearance.

On 17 May 2002, I did give the promised 3-hour lecture at the San Diego Naval Base. There were about 100 people in the audience, presumably from the Department of Defense. I spoke in detail about the scientific literature on learned helplessness and about how captured American troops and American personnel might use what was known to resist torture and evade successful interrogation by their captors. I was surprised to find out that I was barred from all other sessions except mine, since I had no security clearance.

My speech in San Diego was *pro bono* but I was reimbursed by the JPRA for my air fare and hotel. Kirk Hubbard was in the audience and I believe Bruce Jessen was. I do not remember seeing James Mitchell there. Hubbard and I and the same lawyer who visited my house had an outdoor lunch at the Hotel Coronado before my speech. Our conversation was about what learned helplessness tells us about how captured American personnel could resist and evade torture and interrogation. There was no mention of detainees.

Tamsin Shaw (2016) wrote a hostile article about me in the *New York Review of Books* (7 April 2016). She said, *The extent of Seligman's further involvement has not been*

established, but in an e-mail sent by Hubbard in 2004, he expressed gratitude for Seligman's help "over the past four years."

Was I involved with the CIA after my speech on 17 May 2002?

This question first arose when James Risen (2015), a well-known *New York Times* reporter, was writing *Pay Any Price*, the book that gave rise to APA's commissioning the Hoffman Report. Risen asked me about the gratitude to me expressed by Kirk Hubbard in an email to Scott Gerwehr. Here is my email exchange with Risen (12 December 2012):

Hi, Mr. Seligman. I am finally finishing up my book that I contacted you about last year. I am doing a chapter about interrogation policy and the mental health professions, and as part of that I've looked into the life of a Rand researcher named Scott Gerwehr who I think you may have known. He died in 2008, and I have obtained many of the emails that he wrote or received while he worked on deception detection research, often on contracts for the CIA and other government agencies. The emails are mostly of interest to me not because of anything Gerwehr did, but because they seem to provide a glimpse into a network of behavioral science professionals who were in and out of the intelligence community during the Bush years. Some of the emails relate to you, and one in particular, caught my eye.

It was an email Kirk Hubbard of the CIA wrote to Gerwehr and other people in March, 2004. In it, he wrote that "My office director would not even reimburse me for circa \$100 bucks for CIA logo t-shirts and ball caps for Marty Seligman's five kids! He's helped out a lot over the past four years so I thought that was the least I could do. But no, has to come out of my own pocket! And people wonder why I am so cynical!"

This is a fairly pedestrian email, but I would like to ask you about Hubbard's suggestion that you had been helping the CIA for the previous few years. I was particularly struck by this since you had previously told me that you had nothing to do with the CIA's interrogation program. So I was wondering if you were working with the agency on other matters.

So I emailed Risen the same day: Here's the text:

I do not have any memory of Mr. Gerwehr. I got no hat or T-shirts for my kids, nor any other token of gratitude from the CIA. The only thing Kirk Hubbard might be referring to was my lecture in May 2002 in San Diego (which was sponsored by SERE, not as far as I know by the CIA). I had lunch with Hubbard, at the Coronado I think. It was friendly and I told him at length about my work on learned helplessness, in the context of our soldiers and diplomats resisting captivity.

Or perhaps he is referring to the meeting at my house in December 2001 (which had nothing to do with interrogation—but with how our global policies could counter Islamic Jihad). He was there as well. All of our conversation was friendly.

You might ask Hubbard what he was referring to. I did no work for the CIA during the Bush era, not on interrogations, not on anything else. Maybe this is naive, but can't you just ask the CIA to verify this?

I emailed Kirk Hubbard the next day and asked him to verify for Risen what is above. Hubbard emailed me back on 12/14/12: Here's the text:

"Yes, the below does conform with my memory. I did not purchase any hats or t-shirts for your children because I was disgusted that the office director would not reimburse me and I was, sadly, too cheap to pay for them myself. The SERE conference in San Diego was not sponsored in any way by the CIA. And I can verify that you were never on contract to do work for the CIA.

So, the answer to Shaw's comment "*The extent of Seligman's further involvement has not been established*" is that there wasn't any. I had no other substantive interactions with Hubbard, Mitchell, Jessen, the female lawyer or the CIA, or any related agency after the 17 May 2002 JPRA meeting in San Diego.

Learned helplessness and interrogation

It was said that Mitchell and Jessen based their program of "enhanced interrogation" on learned helplessness. Mitchell denied this and in an email to me (9 December 2016) referring to his book, *Enhanced Interrogation*, he said, "For the first time the CIA is allowing me to say that I did not base my approach on learned helplessness." My view is that learned helplessness was not relevant to what they did. As described in the press enhanced interrogation involved beatings, sleep deprivation, water-boarding, and a host of cruel techniques. This is old-fashioned brutality, and brutality is not the same thing as learned helplessness. Learned helplessness is about bad (or good) events that continue regardless of what you do; its defining feature is that nothing you do matters. The bad events continue regardless of what you do. In contrast, the implicit bargain in such interrogation is that if the prisoners told the truth, the brutality would stop and this is exactly the bargain that Mitchell described in his book.

Furthermore, and I qualify what I am about to say with the fact that I have never seen an interrogation nor do I know the literature on interrogation, nevertheless, I think that the goal of interrogation is to get at the truth. The interrogator and the subject have a bargain: that if the subject tells the truth, he will get better treatment (or a reduced sentence or better food or sleep). Learned helplessness produces the belief that nothing the subject does matters at all—it does not matter if he tells the truth, or lies, or is silent, or tells the interrogator what the interrogator wants to hear. *So, if enhanced interrogation was intended to*

produce learned helplessness, it made no sense. It would totally undermine the bargain by making the prisoner believe that it does not matter whether he tells the truth. It would make the prisoner more passive and depressed, but it would not lead to the truth. I suspect, but I do not know, that James Mitchell's interest in learned helplessness was not how to produce it but how to avoid producing it for exactly the reason above.

The attacks continue

The irrelevance of learned helplessness aside, Tamsin Shaw suggested that I should have foreseen that the CIA would misuse my information about learned helplessness for ill purposes:

Martin Seligman has repeatedly insisted that he is an opponent of torture. He tells us in his letter that he "strongly disapproves" of it. If he found himself at the very center of the terrible episode in our recent history in which the United States inflicted brutal torture on detainees in the Abu Ghraib prison, the Guantánamo Bay detention camp, and at CIA black sites, this was, he maintains, entirely unwittingly. And yet, since he was at the center of this episode, being in direct contact with the architects of the CIA's torture program at the moment of its devising, there are some clear questions that a declared opponent of torture might have asked in his position.

That I was "at the very center of this terrible episode" is pure Shaw fantasy. As far as I can see, I was barely marginal. But what of the "clear questions" that I, as an opponent of torture, should have asked Mitchell or Jessen in 2002?

I was approached by JPRA and the CIA in early 2002 to tell them what I knew about learned helplessness in order to help train our soldiers and diplomats resist torture and interrogation when they are captured. The entire discussion was about helping Americans. Detainees were never mentioned. Interrogating—to say nothing of torturing—detainees was never mentioned. Hoffman concludes, "*Hubbard confirmed that Mitchell expressed interest in Seligman's theories of learned helplessness and positive psychology, but that they did not speak with Seligman about interrogations directly at any point*" (p. 127).

Needless to say, I wish no wars ever had to be fought and that the brutal business of war and the horrible torture that sometimes accompanies it never happened. But since the world is still a dangerous place, we have to deal with the awful reality that our soldiers might be tortured. That does **not** mean that I believe we should torture our enemies. I most emphatically do not—for reasons both moral and practical. I am, however, a patriotic American, eager to help my country in a time of great need, and I took their questions at face value.

Why should I not have taken their questions at face value? Shaw wants me to have foreseen that these people

might use my information to brutally interrogate and torture detainees. Hoffman also alleged that I somehow must have known: “*On balance, it seems difficult to believe that Seligman did not at least suspect that the CIA was interested in his theories, at least in part, to consider how they could be used in interrogations*” (p. 165). I am not particularly naïve, but this did not occur to me. Nor, do I think, would it have occurred to anyone without 20/20 hindsight coupled with a conspiracy theory about the Department of Defense.

Shaw sees my failure to confront the CIA and refuse them help in early 2002 as a moral failure. She believes that psychologists should better foresee how what they say and what they write might be misused.

The irony of her accusation leads to my concluding remarks about the ongoing struggles within APA.

I have been puzzled about the unrelenting attack on my actions and my character that these events unleashed. Despite repeated investigations, exculpation by Hoffman, and a mass of evidence that I was not complicit, the theory that I helped to design and carry out a program of torture continues. Nothing that is found counts as disconfirmation in the eyes of the attackers.

Here’s why I surmise that the attacks continue.

I was asked right after 9/11 to help captured American soldiers evade and resist torture. Which I gladly did, foreseeing that the likely consequence would be less suffering by our soldiers. But there is an organized cadre of antiwar activists who do not care what the facts were or what my motives were. In Tamsin Shaw’s, Jeffrey Kaye’s, Roy Eidelson’s, Bryant Welch’s, Steven Soldz’s, and their Coalition for an Ethical Psychology’s hands, this presented a capital opportunity. It became the occasion for accusing a prominent scientist (and several former APA Presidents) of aiding and abetting the torture of detainees. A smear campaign, guilt-by-association, quarter-truths notwithstanding, I speculate that they hoped that this case could be exploited to forward their big agenda—undermining psychologists’ willingness to help the US military. While I did not foresee the possibility that some might use my knowledge in truly awful ways, I believe that these antiwar activists foresaw one very likely consequence of their defaming my actions: In the future when young psychologists are asked by legitimate government officials to serve the United States, these young psychologists will be more likely to refuse lest they be similarly defamed should their knowledge be misused.

This same group of antiwar psychologists succeeded on a larger scale in 2015. They staged a coup d’état in an attempt to take over the APA.

For the last 50 years, APA has had three overlapping constituencies. The original and most venerable was the scientists. In the late 1970s, the independent therapists overtook the scientists in numbers, and governance fell to the therapists in the coup d’état staged by the self-named “dirty dozen.” My presidency in 1998 marked a brief

respite and some sharing of power between the practitioners and the scientists.

But there has always been a third, less conspicuous constituency—the social activists. Indeed, many of the therapists and scientists share their ideals. I do as well, particularly on sex and gender issues. The agenda of the social activists, broadly speaking, is “human rights.” Psychologists are left-of-center politically and explaining this in itself would require a whole article that I will not attempt. Suffice it to say that one major factor is the psychologists’ laudable task of helping people in trouble, the downtrodden, people who need advocates and defenders. So, it is no surprise that APA has been conspicuous in affirmative action, woman’s issues, and gay rights and that APA has devoted major resources to these political issues. But the social activists, particularly the far left, antiwar wing, have always taken a back-seat to the therapists and the scientists and even to the moderate social activists.

All this changed in 2015. James Risen’s book, *Pay Any Price*, accused APA of being complicit in the Bush administration’s enhanced interrogation program. It even made the front page of the *New York Times*. *The New York Times*, *mon dieu*, attacking organized psychology! This was the moment and attacking APA as a puppet of the Bush administration became the moral high ground that the antiwar activists used to orchestrate regime change. They declared an emergency and demanded an investigation of APA’s “collusion” with the Bush administration. The board of directors, under President Nadine Kaslow and President-elect Susan McDaniel, acceded. At the cost of four and one-half million dollars, they commissioned the “Hoffman Report,” under David Hoffman, a Democratic prosecutor from Chicago, to carry out an independent investigation. The antiwar activists, but not the accused, were regular consultants for Hoffman and they were given premature access to the report. In July of 2015, the Hoffman Report was prematurely leaked by “unknown” parties to the *New York Times*, before those “named” could defend themselves. Those “named” (I suppose I was not one of them) were never given their promised right of response and correction. The Hoffman Report was interpreted as concluding that APA officials “colluded” with the Department of Defense to sanction torture, and that APA’s “currying favor” was motivated by the desire for contracts and grants from DoD. The governance of APA, along with several past-presidents, was condemned. (To my relief, I seemed to be exculpated by the testimony of Hubbard and Mitchell.) Within days, the high administration of APA was either fired or resigned, and Nadine Kaslow, as President, endorsed the report and issued an apology to the nation:

The actions, policies and the lack of independence from government influence described in the Hoffman Report represented a failure to live up to our core values. We profoundly regret, and apologize for, the behavior and the

consequences that ensued. Our members, our profession and our organization expected, and deserved, better.²

Dr Kaslow promised to clean up APA's act and take human rights more seriously. Psychologists were forever banned from participating in DoD interrogations, and even serving in any capacity at certain locations regardless of how legitimate the request or how desperate the national need.

Epilog

I have not been in the APA loop since 2000, so I have no first-hand knowledge of what actually happened in Washington and what is happening right now. But as a reader of the report and the firestorm of pros and cons that ensued, the takeaway from the report—that APA “colluded” with DoD to sanction torture, motivated by grants—looks flimsy to me. But what is not flimsy is that APA governance moved to the anti-military left. It is no coincidence that the very same people who falsely accused me of aiding and abetting torture, and who also opposed resilience (Comprehensive Soldier Fitness) training for American soldiers, were at the center of the Hoffman episode. As I write, APA and Hoffman have been sued for malicious libel by those named. The plaintiffs allege that Hoffman, Kaslow, and McDaniel actively colluded with Soldz, Reisner, and the antiwar APA left and that they engaged in a campaign of malicious and knowingly false statements to smear the “named.” (<http://thepsychologytimes.com/2018/01/18/hoffman-report-defamation-suit-continues-in-washington-dc-defendants-claim-free-speech-rights-plaintiffs-point-to-leaks-as-actual-malice/>; <http://www.hoffmanreportapa.com/>; <http://www.hoffmanreportapa.com/resources/Update%20on%20Litigation.pdf>)

That Hoffman took his lead from the antiwar left is entirely consistent with his questions to me. I could not avoid the impression that his questions were directly fed to him by the antiwar activists, for example, “Describe all other items of value you received from the government between September 11, 2001 and December 2008. Please include all gifts received from Kirk Hubbard and/or Jim Mitchell, including any vases and CIA-labeled paraphernalia.” Nor could I avoid the sense that the sequence of Hoffman's emailed questions day after day were intended to nail me and that Hoffman was disappointed that he continually came up empty-handed:

... but we do not have enough information to know what Seligman knew or thought at this time. And because we do not see any evidence that this was connected with actions or decisions by or communications with APA officials, we did not spend further time investigating the matter. (p. 49)

The outcome of the coup, the lawsuits, and who will run APA's US\$100M budget and lead its 100,000 members is very much in doubt. As I write, there is debate in APA governance

to rescind the ban that was hastily enacted in 2015 preventing psychologists from working with detainees, even in treatment, and to remove the Hoffman Report from the APA website. I do not have strong opinions about these latest twists.

One thing is not in doubt. The antiwar activists have scared the pants off many APA members. Psychologists—scientists, practitioners, and centrist social activists—have learned that co-operating with the government—particularly with the Department of Defense—is dangerous to one's career. Such co-operation invites a smear campaign from the antiwar activists. Undermining psychologists' helping the government is, I believe, the basic intention of this group.

We cannot know what the future holds, but, unfashionable as it is, I strongly believe that when in doubt we should err on the side of helping our soldiers and our nation.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Notes

1. The Hoffman Report commented on this:

Hubbard also said that he could not recall how he had been invited to this meeting, though he thought that Joseph Matarazzo (a former APA president) had brokered his initial introduction to Seligman. Mitchell said that Hubbard had invited him to the meeting, though he did not know how Hubbard had received an invitation. (p. 180)

2. <http://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2015/07/independent-review-release.aspx>

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