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The '24' Effect: How entertainment media affects the public perception of torture

Honors Thesis

Submitted

in Partial Fulfillment

of the

Requirement of HON 420

Fall 2019

By

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Mentor

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## Abstract

The '24' Effect: How entertainment media affects the public perception of torture

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This thesis highlights how entertainment media perpetuates the public perception that the use of torture is an effective method to gain valuable and actionable intelligence from enemy combatants. This poses a significant problem to society because torture does not work, and if society continues to believe this misperception, it may lead to the erosion of societal morals for future generations. A possible explanation for entertainment media's role in the continuation of this misperception could be related to the mere exposure effect due to frequency of torture being seen on television. In order to see how entertainment media perpetuates this misperception, three television shows, *24*, *Chicago P.D.*, and *Homeland*, were chosen to be screened for the presence of torture in episodes of the shows. For each randomly selected episode, indicators of torture and dialogue were monitored and recorded into a data set that marks the episode and time that the acts occurred. In addition to indicators of torture, the description of the individual being tortured was also recorded. After scanning a third of each show, 55% of the episodes in *24*, 60% of the episodes in *Chicago P.D.*, and 35% of the episodes of *Homeland* depicted torture. From these results, it is argued that it is likely these television shows made a significant impact on the public perception of the effectiveness of torture due to how often they were shown and because who was getting tortured.

*Keywords:* Torture, entertainment media, *24*, *Chicago P.D.*, *Homeland*

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### Acknowledgements

Dr. Victoria Collins for being my mentor and for all the support and guidance during this process. Without your insight, this project would not be what it is now. Thank you for the reassurances and encouragement especially about the oral presentation. Also, thank you for listening to my worries about not hitting the minimum page requirement. Without your help, this research and its presentation would not be possible.

My friends, you all know who you are, who kept me motivated to finish writing this research and who gave me hours of their time to help me prepare for my oral presentation. Thank you for your continued support throughout this process, for convincing me not to quit Honors, and for listening to me gripe about how many more episodes I had to watch and how far behind I was in the writing process

The '24' Effect: How entertainment media affects the public perception of torture

## **Introduction**

“We have a lot of work to do, sort of the dark side, if you will” (U.S. Vice President Cheney). As indicated above, the attacks on September 11, 2001 changed the lives and morals of Americans forever. Americans changed the way they boarded airplanes, the way they looked at Middle-Easterners, and their views on torture. After this horrific event, people were willing to do whatever was necessary to ensure that an attack like that would not happen again. However, the phrase “whatever was necessary” led to a serious disregard for moral responsibility and human life. While this disregard for human life was occurring overseas, the public accepted these actions because they saw them as acceptable (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2016). However, the main question is why? Why would rational Americans believe that torture works when they all know that it is wrong? A main reason may be due to television and the psychological effect called the Mere Exposure Effect (Ip, 2009). However, the issue that arises is that the use of torture in entertainment media is not a new idea. There have been countless movies and television shows that depict graphic torture scenes, and yet the audience feels empathy towards the torturer. Since people see scenes of torture so frequently on popular television shows, it is not outside the realm of possibility that they then begin to believe that it works and that it is necessary to prevent a catastrophic attack on the homeland. However, before providing the theoretical frame and method for this study, the definition and an overview of the criminological literature on the topic should be discussed.

## **What is Torture?**

Historically, torture has been used for several reasons and in different contexts. It has been utilized for the purposes of exercising state power and authority over an individual for the

purposes of acquiring information (Neroni, 2015). Torture, therefore, is commonly used as an interrogational technique, which has been employed throughout history. The main purpose of this technique is to obtain information or a confession. In the context of criminal justice, the information or confession from the torture session can be utilized by the authorities to get a conviction, thwart an attack, or to obtain vital information. However, the common use of this technique changed in 1984, when the United Nations called all nations and held a convention called the “Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment”.

At this convention, members of the United Nations discussed the dignity of the human person and declared that states must take action to prevent the use of torture in any territory under the state’s jurisdiction and to forbid renditions, which means transporting a detainee to a state that allows torture to be tortured. In this convention, torture is defined as

any act by which severe pain or suffering whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation or with the consent...of a public official (Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, 1984).

This definition essentially states that individuals in official capacities may not use physical and mental means or coercion and intimidation to obtain information or a confession from the detainee.



### **Types of Torture**

There are a wide range of acts that can fall under the category of torture. There are physical, mental, and emotional acts of torture, and all are mentioned in the convention (Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, 1984). Common physical acts of torture could include tying the detainee to a chair while the torturer punches the detainee while questioning them, striking the detainee with an object, electrocuting the detainee, breaking bones of the detainee, burning the detainee, waterboarding (which is a technique that simulates drowning), and more. Essentially any method of touching or striking is a form of physical torture. A recent example of physical torture can be seen by the treatment of detained protestors by the Hong Kong Police Department. According to a recent field investigation by Amnesty International, when a detained protestor refused to answer police intake questions, officers did not hesitate to hit the legs of the protestor, flip the individual onto their back, and put their knees on the protestor's chest so he could not breathe. Then the officers proceeded to force open the man's eye and shine a laser pointer into it (Amnesty International: Hong Kong, 2019).

There are various types of torture associated with emotional and psychological/mental torture. Emotional acts of torture are essentially used to play on the emotions of the detainee. Some examples could be consistently telling the detainee that his/her family has forgotten about them, their country has disavowed them, no one cares that they are being detained, that he/she is worthless, and by not allowing the individual to have contact with anyone who speaks his/her language – which is called “linguistic isolation” (Welch, 2017). Mental acts of torture are done to weaken the mind and resolve of the detainee. Examples of mental torture are stress positions,

temperature manipulation, threats, sleep deprivation, sensory bombardment, sexual humiliation, prolonged isolation, sensory deprivation, and more (Allen, Chaffee, & Hashemian, 2007).

Stress positions are painful physical positions that are held for a period of time, it can also be described as having the majority of the detainee's bodyweight being held by one or two muscles. Temperature manipulation is exposing the detainee to extreme heat or cold for a certain period of time. Threats could include placing a gun in the detainee's mouth and threatening to shoot them, threats of rape against the detainee or his/her family, witnessing the death or torture of others, and more. Threatening to incarcerate friends or loved ones also constitutes a form of mental torture, as well as threatening to plant false evidence of a crime on the detainee or their family members that would lead to imprisonment. In general, all threats can be considered emotional or mental torture as it is a statement with the intent to cause harm, pain, or death towards an individual (Definition of a threat | Dictionary.com, n.d.). Sleep deprivation is essentially depriving the detainee of sleep through the use of stress positions, sensory overload, or other techniques. Sensory bombardment/overload includes exposing the detainee to bright lights, flashing lights, and/or loud music for a period of time. Sexual humiliation is forcing the detainee to sexual behavior or sexually humiliating acts in an attempt to create the feeling of guilt or fear in case of publicizing pictures of these acts (Allen, Chaffee, & Hashemian, 2007). An example of mental acts of torture could be forcing an Arabic male to strip in the presence of women, take pictures of the detainee, and threaten to show the pictures to his community. This act would constitute as a mental act of torture because in Arabic culture, it is taboo for a man to be naked in front of a female, and if these pictures were to be seen by their community they would be ostracized (Puar, 2005) .

### **Definitional issues**

Although there is a written definition, some states argue that issues with ambiguity still remain to this day. There are a few words in the definition that can be interpreted in a variety of ways. These different interpretations have led to states finding ways to circumvent the penalties that they may incur if it is found that their government allowed torture (Yoo & Bybee, 2002). In 2002, the Deputy Assistant Attorney General, John Yoo, and the head of the Office of Legal Counsel of the United States Department of Justice, Jay Bybee, wrote several memorandums regarding the use of torture during the War on Terror (Yoo & Bybee, 2002). These memos provided legal counsel to President Bush about the standards of conduct for interrogation for operators in the Middle East. Essentially these memos were written to evade the Geneva Conventions and the United Nations' ban on the use of torture. Members of the Bush administration wrote several memos about how the international and domestic laws that forbid torture do not apply to detainees from the war. In addition, one of the memos advised President Bush to “declare the Taliban and Al Qaeda outside the coverage of the Geneva Conventions” (“A Guide to the Memos on Torture”, 2003) as it would protect Americans from being charged under the federal War Crimes Act. These memos highlight several definitional issues that were not clarified in the Geneva and United Nations Conventions, and how the United States could “legally” circumvent their obligations under the law.

One major issue that has emerged is what *exactly* constitutes “severe pain or suffering” (Yoo & Bybee, 2002) by physical or mental torture? For example, are stress positions physical torture? Standing for long periods of time can be uncomfortable, but can it cause severe physical pain? Can sleep deprivation for a few days cause severe mental pain? Can wearing a black hood for the majority of the day cause mental pain? The Treaty fails to plainly define the word

“severe”, so states must use their own interpretation of the word to judge new interrogation techniques.

According to some states, including the United States of America, those techniques causes pain, but they do not cause *severe* pain. The United States believes that the definition created by the United Nations only prohibits “extreme acts” that leads to “organ failure, impairment of bodily functions, or even death” (Yoo & Bybee, 2002, p. 6). In addition, those acts may cause mental pain, but it does not result in imminent death nor does it inflict pain that would be seen in physical torture. For an act to be labeled as “severe mental pain or suffering” (Yoo & Bybee, 2002, pp. 6-7), there must be proof of persistent mental harm due to the act. The acts stated above are categorized as acts of sensory deprivation, and while these techniques can be considered “cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, they do not produce pain or suffering” that meets the definition of torture (Yoo & Bybee, 2002, p. 2).

The Treaty also states that acts of torture are punishable by criminal penalties. However, countries are finding a way around this issue by claiming that these penalties do not apply to “cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment” (Yoo & Bybee, 2002, p.15). Since these penalties do not apply to cruel or degrading punishment, then acts associated with this phrase does not equate to torture. Some states even go as far as labeling these acts as enhanced interrogation techniques. If these acts are called “enhanced interrogation techniques”, not torture, and the acts are simply cruel or degrading punishment, then those acts could not be torture and thus, not punishable by criminal penalties (Yoo & Bybee, 2002, p. 22). An additional issue is that in Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, it states that nothing shall hinder the right of a state to act in self-defense when attacked. Under this Article, nations, like the United States, argue that torture is legal as it is an act of “self-defense” (United Nations, 1945) . Although, the convention

clearly states in Article 2 that there are no exigent circumstances that would legalize the use of torture, some argue that the two articles contradict one another (Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, 1984).

### **Torture Justified**

Although torture is illegal in many countries, including the United States, many still consider the act justifiable, especially members of the public (Roper Center, 2011). As previously mentioned, some states argue and believe that torture is justified during war, in self-defense, and in extreme circumstances. There are various reasons why many believe that the use of torture is justified. Under the utilitarian viewpoint, torture is justified because the pain and suffering to the individual is worth the increased happiness of the mass public (Bagaric & Clarke, 2007). An additional reason that many use to justify the torture is to argue it is a last resort measure. When members of law enforcement/military are interrogating a suspect, there may be times that no technique works on the suspect and time is running out (either because the suspect has yet to be charged and the time to hold them is coming to an end, or the attack is imminent). In cases like this, the argument is that it is morally acceptable to utilize torture on the detainee. Another reason is presented by Alan Dershowitz, who is an American constitutional lawyer and political commentator. Dershowitz (2002) states that torture is justified due to harm-minimization rationale from the victim's viewpoint. The harm-minimization rationale in this case is the idea that severe harm towards the victim(s) can be avoided by using torture.

However, there is an extremely popular reason that is often cited by various high-ranking individuals to explain why torture should be used, and most of the other justifications feed into this one. This popular reason that is used to justify the use of torture is the ticking bomb scenario (Kovarovic, 2010). The ticking bomb scenario is essentially the idea some event is threatening

the lives of citizens, and the only way to save those lives is to torture the person law enforcement believe to be responsible. An example of this scenario is that a bomb is slowly ticking down somewhere and if it goes off, then there will be mass casualties and massive infrastructural damage. In this same scenario, law enforcement officials have detained the person they know to be responsible for planting the bomb. The *only* way this catastrophe can be prevented is if the detainee is tortured in order for the authorities to obtain the necessary information to disarm the bomb. Once tortured, the detainee will give up all pertinent information so that law enforcement will disarm the bomb and save everyone. Although it is called the “ticking bomb” scenario, this idea can apply to other incidents. This can apply to suicide bombers, snipers killing people at random in a city, murderers, acts of espionage, and any crime imaginable. With this scenario, it is logical to see why some people believe torture to be justified. If hundreds of thousands of lives were at stake, should not law enforcement use every tool and technique at their disposal to ensure that all lives would be saved?

### **Background of the use of torture in the United States**

The use of torture became a widely used tactic by the United States military and officials soon after the attacks on September 11th. After the attacks, the Bush Administration decided to do whatever was necessary to catch the perpetrators of the attack and to glean more information on the group responsible for the attack, Al Qaeda. According to the Senate report in 2014, it was stated that the “CIA was encouraged by political leaders and the public to do whatever it could to prevent another attack” (Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, 2014). Although one can argue that the United States has utilized torture all throughout its history, the use of torture was not brought to the attention of the public until 2004.

In 2004, there were reports of multiple human rights abuses committed at the hands of military personnel from the United States at the Abu Ghraib Prison in Iraq (Fay & Jones, 2004). These reports claimed that military officers were physically and mentally torturing the prisoners at the Abu Ghraib Prison. According to these reports, United States military personnel were taunting naked prisoners, playing loud music at different times throughout the day, forcing prisoners to hold stress positions for an indefinite amount of time, stripping male prisoners to forcing them to be in the presence of others, and other heinous acts. Not only were there first-hand accounts of these abuses, but there was also photographic and video evidence that was found on cell phones taken by the soldiers as these abuses were occurring (Hersh, 2004). These pictures and videos do little to hide the emotional and physical acts of torture committed against these detainees. However, an issue that arose was that the intelligence officers were encouraging this behavior because they were receiving “positive results and information” (Hersh, 2004), and they proposed other ways to “set favorable conditions for subsequent interviews” (Taguba, 2004, p. 11). This is a phrase used by the intelligence officials that really means to destroy the will of detainees to get them to give up vital information. While imprisoned, several detainees died due to the torture they received.

Two years after the Abu Ghraib scandal, the United Nations authorized a report regarding the treatment of detainees held at Guantánamo Bay or GITMO. GITMO is a naval station and prison in Cuba, where over 700 prisoners used to be incarcerated. As of 2018, due to President Obama’s administration, there are still a little over 40 prisoners housed at Guantánamo Bay (CNN, 2019). Here at this prison, there is also evidence of the detainees being tortured for information perpetrated by military officials. According to various medical reports, there were documented bone fractures, lacerations, nerve damage, and exacerbated injuries such as chronic

back pain. In addition, these medical reports showed that the detainees had no prior psychological history, yet during their incarceration many detainees reported having severe depression, anxiety/claustrophobia, hallucinations, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Iacopino & Xenakis, 2011). The detainees at GITMO reported being tortured for months or years while incarcerated. From their attorneys, it was stated that the detainees were tortured by eight approved enhanced interrogation methods and various “unauthorized” enhanced interrogation techniques. The approved techniques included exposing the detainee to extreme temperatures, stress positions, forced nudity, and sleep deprivation. The unauthorized techniques included bone fractures, sexual assault, threat of rape or mock executions, or being choked to unconsciousness (Iacopino & Xenakis, 2011).

The United States also has a history of using extraordinary rendition programs and black sites. Extraordinary rendition is the act of transferring a detainee or detainees to a foreign country where a CIA agent or agent of that country can legally hold and torture the detainee. According to a report from Open Society Justice Initiative, nearly 54 foreign governments have cooperated with the United States in detaining and torturing these individuals. This cooperation can include foreign agents holding and torturing the detainees for the CIA, allowing the CIA to operate a prison, or black sites, on foreign territory, or providing intelligence that will lead to the capture or rendition of an individual. The true number of individuals that were extraordinarily renditioned is unknown as the CIA has classified the majority of the documents pertaining to extraordinary renditions and secret detentions. Although seen as a “vital tool in combating terrorism (Rice, 2005)” (Open Society Justice Initiative, 2013, p. 15), CIA agents frequently abducted and apprehended the wrong individuals, and rarely did any of the detainees provide useful information.



Although extraordinary renditions were used by President Reagan and Clinton, it was not used to the extent that is used now until President Bush's presidency. Under President Bush's presidency, the powers of the CIA for extraordinary renditions were expanded where they no longer had to wait for approval from the White House or the Department of Justice or State. With these new powers, the use of extraordinary renditions became almost common practice. Under President Obama's presidency, he closed all CIA black sites and directed that all detainees in custody of the United States be treated as humanely and be interrogated according to techniques used in the Army Field Manual. Although President Obama made broad strokes to end the use of unethical practices, he did not directly end extraordinary rendition programs. His executive order was written in a way that continued to allow the CIA to detain suspected terrorists and send them to another country for interrogation or trial.

### **Significance of its use today**

Torture remains an issue even today in 2019. Not only are people arguing the legality of the issue, but many believe that torture is an effective method of gathering information. Individuals such as President Trump who promoted the idea that torture is effective throughout his 2016 presidential, and now as president wants to return to past policies of detention and interrogation of suspected terrorists (Schmidt & Sikkink, 2018). The ticking bomb scenario has also been used by many prominent figures in American society. For example, a staunch supporter of the use of torture was Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia. In several interviews, Scalia said several times how nothing in the Constitution would oppose the use of torture, he even goes to support the ticking bomb scenario. Also, during a panel about torture, Scalia was quick to defend the use of torture by stating that agents need "maximum latitude to thwart terrorist attacks" (Ip, 2009). In addition to Scalia and Dershowitz, as mentioned previously, individuals like John Parry

and nearly all the 2008 presidential candidates from the Republican Party supported the use of torture. Also, not only does Alan Dershowitz support the use of torture, he wants to legalize it (Bagaric & Clarke, 2005). Dershowitz claims that since the United States already engages in the use of torture they might as well legalize it to avoid being seen as hypocritical. He also argues that by banning torture, the use of torture increases because the level of accountability goes down, however; if torture is made legal then there would be less torture because of the level of accountability would be heightened (Bagaric & Clarke, 2005). In order to increase the level of accountability, "torture warrants" should be created. The torture warrant would need to be evaluated by a judge prior to the act and the warrant would need to state what techniques of torture will be used in the interrogation.

Putting aside the legality and justification of torture, a big question is "does torture work?" If the answer to this question can be determined, then the future use of torture can be further debated. However, the effectiveness of torture has been known and determined for quite some time. Scientifically, torture cannot work because the amount of stress, pain, and fear hinders the brain's ability to properly function as various medical studies have proven that chronic pain impairs cognitive function (O'Mara, 2015). According to a report created by the United States Senate in 2014, the use of enhanced interrogation techniques yielded either no intelligence or faulty intelligence (Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, 2014). There were several instances where detainees gave false information on critical intelligence issues, such as threats of terrorism, which led to a waste of time, resources, and money. According to, Willie J. Rowell, a retired Army Criminal Investigator Division agent, "[Detainees] will tell you what you want to hear" (Pfiffner, 2010). So, if a country decides to listen to faulty intelligence, not only will it lead to a waste of resources, but it will be a stain on that country's history as an

“intelligence fail”. The most recent example of the idea of an “intelligence fail” can be seen in the invasion of Iraq in 2003. In 2003, the United States decided to invade Iraq based on intelligence reports that Saddam Hussein possessed active weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). Although the intelligence came from a credible source, it was all a lie. In 2002, a man named Ali Muhammed Abdul Aziz al-Fakhiri, also known as Ibn al-Sheikh al-Libi, was detained by the CIA and then Egyptian officials. During his time in captivity, al-Libi was forced into several stress positions for nearly 17 hours in addition to being physically tortured. After this ordeal, his torturers threatened al-Libi with a lengthy list of other torture methods that they would use on him. Thus, to avoid being further tortured he provided information to the CIA that al-Qaeda possessed active WMDs (Open Society Justice Initiative, 2013, p.39). Based on this information, President Bush launched an invasion in Iraq to find these “WMDs”. By the time it was discovered that this detainee had lied, it was too late to stop the invasion.

As there is compelling evidence that torture does not yield actionable intelligence, why do countries continue to utilize this method of interrogation and why does this immoral method continue to garner support from the public? According to a report conducted by Pew Research in 2017, around 48% of the population believes that torture is effective and is an acceptable action (Tyson, 2017). This percentage of people that believe that torture is effective has fluctuated between 40-53% for the past fifteen years (Roper Center, 2011). Even though around 54% of the population believes that torture is wrong and not just “a part of war” (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2016). Why would a population continue to support the use a method of interrogation when they know that it is wrong and ineffective? An explanation could be that so many officials in government believe in its effectiveness, and since these officials are seen as more knowledgeable on this topic many would not try to argue with them. An additional

explanation is that the American people are exposed to the idea that torture is effective so often through entertainment media, that they believe that it is effective in real life as it is in fiction. With this frequent exposure, it does not matter that torture is unethical or that it is actually ineffective. All that is shown on television and movies is that torture is an effective method of obtaining information or a confession, and although the method may be unethical it was done for the greater good, which makes the act ethical since it was done with the intention of saving thousands of lives.

### **Mere Exposure Effect**

The mere exposure effect is the psychological phenomenon where repeat exposure to a stimuli will lead to a positive reaction than new ideas or stimuli (Inoue, Yoshihiko, & Nobuya, 2018). Essentially, the more often an individual observes an idea or object, the more likely that individual will have a positive affect towards that object. Although this psychological phenomenon is often seen in marketing tactics with product placement, this effect can also be seen in television shows. The more frequent a television show or genre portrays a theme, the more likely the audience will believe it to be true. For example, many police action/drama shows portray police officers or detectives participating in shoot-outs almost daily, crimes are easily solved, and the court proceedings for that crime takes a single month. However, for all three examples, this is not the case at all. For majority of police officers, nearly 73% of officers, will go through their entire twenty-year career and not fire a single shot while on duty (Morin, Parker, Stepler, & Mercer, 2017). Also, some crimes are not solved in a timely manner, and the court proceedings can easily take months before a verdict. If the entertainment media can convince the audience of these false perceptions, can they convince the audience that torture is effective?

### **Torture in the media**

Torture in the entertainment media industry is not a recent idea. Torture is present in nearly all common forms of entertainment such as video games, movies, and television shows. However, this is not to say that torture is in all genres of the entertainment industry, but it would be sufficient to say that torture can be a present theme in crime, war, drama/action, and thriller genres. There can be times where the acts of torture are not seen by the audience, but it can be mentioned in a flashback, foreshadowed, or even implied that a detainee is getting tortured off-screen.

In video games, torture is also a common trope seen by the audience. In general, in these games the player is playing as a character who is fighting against terrorist groups around the world. For most video game campaigns, the player is able to watch their character torture the detainee, however; the player cannot control the character. An example of this is can be seen in several of the Call of Duty games. Although, there are some games where the player can take a more active role in torturing the detainee. For example, in Ubisoft's Splinter Cell: Conviction and Grand Theft Auto V, the player is able to control the main character as he tortures several people in the game. The player is able to choose whether or not the detainee is slammed into a mirror or thrown out the window. In general, when the detainee is tortured, he or she yields vital information that the player is able to use to thwart an imminent attack or find out who is responsible for a past attack. The result of torture being present in these games is that those who play these games frequently can begin to not take the act of torture seriously because it was in the game (Payne, 2016).

The idea may not seem usual, but the use of torture is fairly common in old and modern movies. Torture has been seen in movies as old as 1945, but torture was used by those seen as the

enemy. However; a movie that shows torture used by the “good guys” was *Dirty Harry* which was released in 1971 (Flynn & Salek, 2012). The movie follows Inspector “Dirty” Harry Callahan, a San Francisco Police Department Homicide Detective, who is known for his unethical and violent methods. The most notable scene of this movie is when Inspector Callahan shoots the serial killer, who is accused of kidnapping a teenage girl, in his leg then proceeds to step on the wound until the serial killer divulges the location of his hostage. Although the scene was very graphic, the audience resonated more with Inspector Callahan instead of the serial killer because the audience wanted to save the girl. There are various modern movies that also depict torture as effective which include the *Bourne* films, *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*, *The Dark Knight*, *Inglourious Basterds*, *The Avengers: Infinity War*, and more. In most of these movies, torture is seen as effective. A prime, modern-day example is in *The Dark Knight*, when Batman brutally, but effectively, tortures the Joker for the locations of Harvey Dent and Rachel Dawes (Flynn & Salek, 2012).

The use of torture in television shows is a common trope that is used for dramatic purposes or to move along the plot line. Most would not think that torture is used by a wide variety of shows, but according to various human rights groups and the Parents Television Council, which is an organization whose goal is to teach about responsible entertainment for children, the amount of torture scenes on television has increased since 2001. Prior to 2001 (1995-2000), there was on average 11 scenes of torture per year. However, from 2001 to 2005 there was an average of 135.8 scenes of torture per year (Hoover, 2006). In the post-9/11 television world, the amount of torture scenes on television have remained high. There are many television shows on various streaming sites that utilize torture such as: *Blindspot*, *The Blacklist*, *Hawaii 5-O*, *Blue Bloods*, *The Punisher*, *Lost*, *Narcos*, *Game of Thrones*, and more. With the

increased frequency of torture on television, the viewers will begin to believe that torture is an effective method of interrogation.

### **Method**

In order to determine how entertainment media has perpetuated the effectiveness of torture, examples of popular action television shows that are known to depict torture frequently were evaluated. For the purpose of this study, three television shows were chosen based on the amount of torture present in the show. The three shows were chosen grounded in the popularity of the show based on viewership and the number of seasons the television show had/has, and the amount of times the show was mentioned alongside the word "torture" in entertainment articles and scholarly articles. An additional factor that was noted when choosing the television show was how many times a series was recommended by other people when the word "torture" was used to describe the show.

Once the three shows were chosen, it was determined that one third of the series would be observed for scenes of torture due to time constraints. For example, for the series *24*, one third of all the episodes is 64 episodes. Thus, out of eight seasons, eight episodes would be chosen to be observed. Then by using a random number generator on Microsoft Excel, the episode that corresponds with the output number is chosen. Each series chosen has different amounts of episodes as both *Chicago P.D.* and *Homeland* debuted after *24*, so the number of episodes chosen for each season differs. The reason why episodes were randomly chosen is to show the idea that the theme of torture is so prevalent that it does not matter which episode is viewed as torture will be utilized in the episode.

In order to analyze whether or not torture was utilized in the episode, the definition of torture provided by the United Nations was used. Based on this definition, each randomly

selected episode was screened for interrogation scenes or indicators or an interrogation scene that is about to begin. Typically, in an interrogation scene, there are two chairs, an individual seated in one of the chairs, a table, and all the pieces of furniture are in a small dark windowless room. This individual (from this point on 'detainee') is either handcuffed/tied up with their arms behind their back or each wrist is handcuffed to each arm of the chair. While the detainee is restrained, another individual will enter through the door and will either sit across from the detainee or will stand in a corner or against the two-way glass window, and glare at the detainee. During these interrogation scenes, indicators of physical and mental torture will be marked in an excel sheet. Indicators of torture could be blood, red marks (from striking), as well as key phrases in the dialogue. Key phrases that were monitored were instances where the interrogator issued threats or attempted to intimidate the detainee into giving a confession or information. However, if any of these indicators or key phrases were mentioned or seen in the "Previously on ..." introduction, it was not included in the data. The reasoning behind this is because the torture scene was in the prior episode and not technically in the current episode being screened. The excel sheet lists: all the episodes chosen, the time or times that torture was on screen, the act of torture, the dialogue, and whether or not the torture was effective (meaning from the interrogation was a confession or useful information obtained). By analyzing these scenes of torture if the pattern that torture is effective emerges, then it will support the idea that the entertainment media industry creates a "torture effect".

#### 24

This was a popular action drama television show that was on television from late 2001 to 2008, it was also revived for a mini-series in 2014. This show won twenty Emmy's, was nominated for 68 Emmy's, and was frequently called one of the best shows on air. When season



eight ended in 2010, the show was still so popular that due with the help of the fan base the television show returned on air for season nine, or as many refer it as a mini-series, called *24: Live Another Day*. This television show was chosen because of its repeated use as evidence for the effectiveness of torture by policymakers and for its high ratings on popular television/movie reviewer sites (Fox, n.d.). Although the show technically has nine seasons, only eight seasons were considered for this study as many in the *24* community refer to the ninth season as a mini-season or simply *24: Live Another Day (LAD)*. Thus, since there was this argument over the categorization of this “season”, *24: Live Another Day* was not considered. In addition, this mini season aired on television in 2010 and since there was already a show that accounted for that year (*Homeland*) it did not feel necessary to include this addendum.

This show followed members of the Counter-Terrorism Unit (CTU), which is a branch of the Central Intelligence Agency, based in Los Angeles where they are tasked with preventing terror attacks on the country. The main character of the show was Jack Bauer, who was a highly skilled agent with the mindset of “the ends justify the means”, meaning he utilized torture methods regularly. Each episode represents one hour, so each season represents a single day. Throughout the show, Bauer and his coworkers did not only torture males or only Middle-Easterners, although; the show was criticized for their repeated harsh treatment of Muslims.

#### *Chicago P.D.*

This is a police drama television show that premiered on NBC in 2014 and is currently on its seventh season. This show, or actors of the show, were nominated for six awards, and it won two. The average overall viewership is two million behind *24*'s average overall viewership, but it is steadily increasing. Reviews for this show is mixed, but generally positive. This television was chosen because of the continuing theme of “police violence works”, and the similarities it has

with the real Chicago Police Department. The real Chicago Police Department is alleged to have utilized torture methods in order to obtain confessions and information between 1972-1991, but there are more allegations that these tactics continue today (Cantú, 2014).

This show follows members of the elite Intelligence Unit of the Chicago Police Department. This unit investigates a variety of high-profile crimes – such as organized crime, drug trafficking, sex trafficking, murders of high-ranking individuals, and more, committed in Chicago. The main individual that engages in torture tactics is Sergeant Hank Voight who is also known for having a “ends justify the means” mindset, but there are several episodes where other members of the unit will engage in torture techniques in order to gain information (NBC, n.d.). In the show, there are a variety of people that are tortured. There is not a specific race or gender that is purposefully tortured the most.

### *Homeland*

This show is known as an American spy thriller that debuted in 2011 and is currently on its eighth, and final, season. This series has been nominated and won several prominent awards, sometimes for consecutive years. The first and second seasons of *Homeland* was almost given a perfect score from Metacritic as many enjoyed the lead female character aspect, and how the storylines were an unpredictable puzzle. However, from the third season on the critics have found the show less favorable than what it was previously rated. In the most recent seasons, many news outlets such as the *New York Post* and *The Washington Post*, describe it “the most bigoted show on television” (Durkay, 2014) due to the show’s portrayal of Islamophobic stereotypes and a variety of errors about Middle Easterners and Islam. Also, many believed the storylines were too farfetched and could not be taken seriously.

*Homeland* follows bipolar Central Intelligence Officer Carrie Mathison as she works to thwart terrorist attacks on the United States. In the first and second season, the series revolves around Mathison trying to prove that a captured American marine was radicalized and is now working for the enemy. Throughout the series, Muslims are the primary group that are frequently tortured. In addition, most of the acts of torture are mental or emotional acts of torture. Rarely are the acts of torture physical acts (Homeland: About the Series, n.d.).

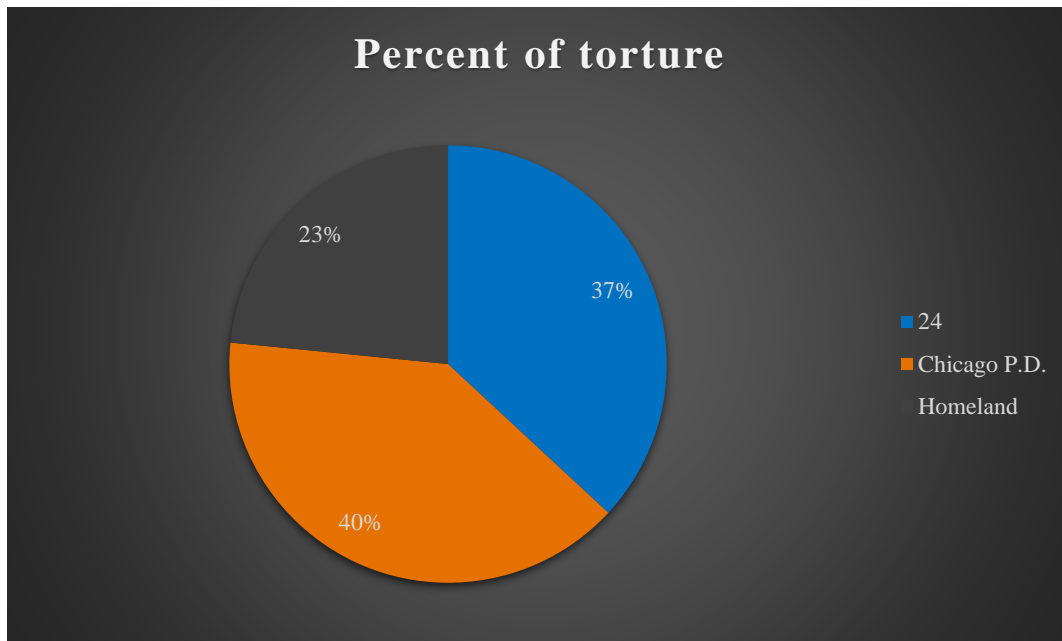
## Data

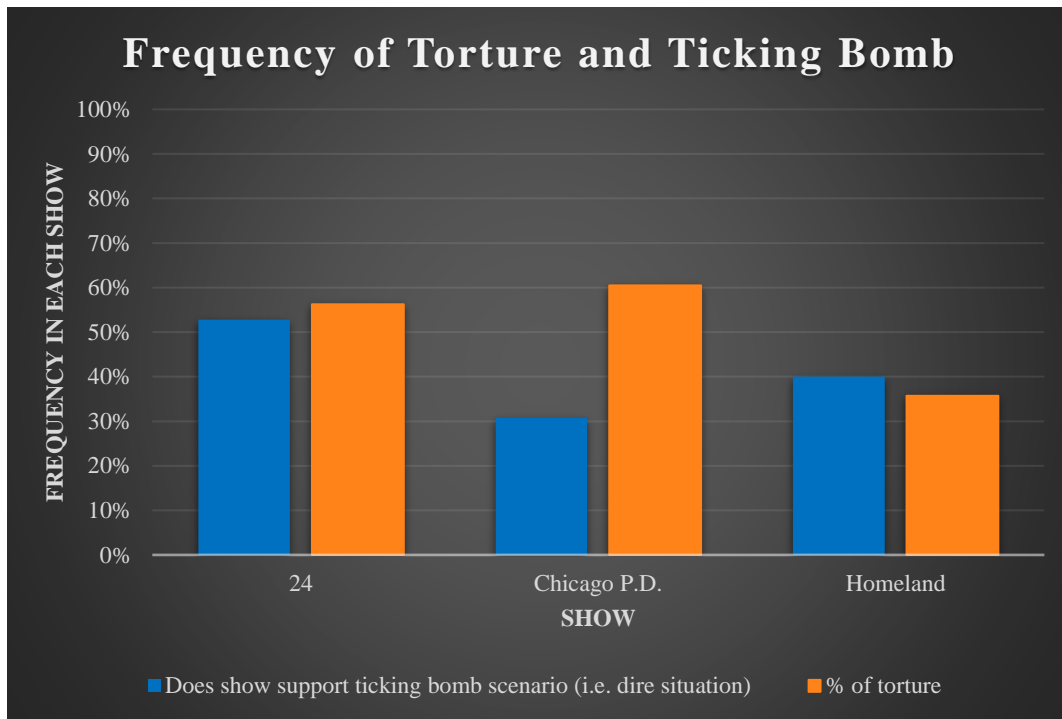
### Frequency and presence of ticking bomb scenario

The frequency of torture was most prevalent in Chicago P.D. (with 60.47%), then 24 (with 56.25%), and *Homeland* (35.71%) had the least amount of torture present. However, the frequency of the ticking bomb scenario was the least frequent in Chicago P.D. According to many proponents of torture, the use of torture as a method of interrogation should only be utilized in a ticking bomb scenario or a situation where hundreds or thousands of lives are at stake. However, from the data it can be inferred that for the majority of cases in Chicago P.D., torture was utilized more often than there were instances where the situation was so dire that necessitated torture. By showing a lack of dire situations and high frequency of torture, this could be how the entertainment media is showcasing police brutality. The opposite is seen in *Homeland*. According to the data, the ticking bomb scenario was seen more often than torture was utilized, which could mean that the characters on *Homeland* used other interrogational means to obtain information or a confession.

The amount of torture present in Chicago P.D. and lack of it in *Homeland* could be an indication in the societal shift of people worrying about corruption at the federal level to corruption at the local level. When the abuses at the Abu Ghraib Prison were exposed in 2004,

many were wary of federal agents, specifically those in the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). It did not take too long for many to associate unethical practices with CIA agents. However, between 2004 and 2013 there was a shift in what people were suspicious about. In 2013, the Black Lives Matter movement was founded. The Black Lives Matter movement more or less highlighted the unethical practices of various police departments across the nation. Some of these unethical practices were false arrests, police brutality, racial profiling, unwarranted searches and seizures, and the use of torture (Williamson, Trump, & Einstein, 2018). Could Chicago P.D. be used to showcase these unethical police practices? However, an issue that arises is that the characters that are utilizing these tactics are the “good guys”. So, could the frequency of torture used by police officers be used to show the audience that these corrupt practices are done with the sole intent to do good?

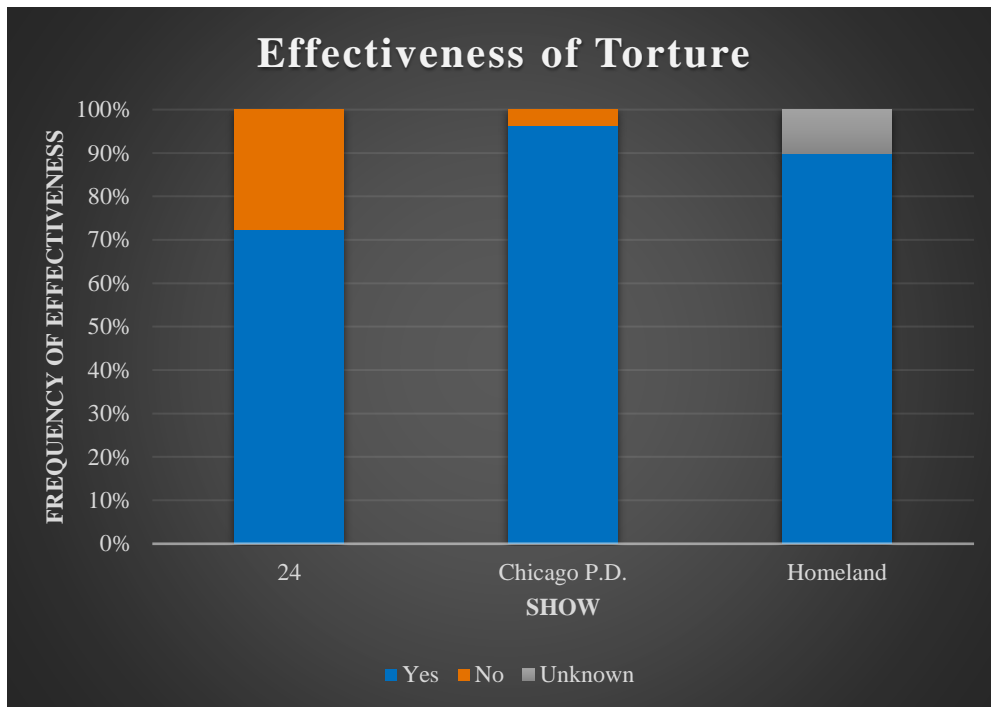




### Effectiveness of torture

From averaging the data from all three shows, torture was seen as effective 86% of the times it was used. In the case of *24*, it was seen as ineffective 28% of the time, meaning in ten instances it was seen as ineffective. In the ten instances (28%) of times where torture was deemed ineffective, for six out of the ten cases the individual getting tortured was either Jack Bauer himself or a close associate of his. This could be a way to show that agents of the United States are immune to being tortured. Two of the ten cases were instances where torture did not work on the detainees because they were innocent and had no information, and in the final two cases torture was legitimately ineffective. Legitimately ineffective in this case means that the individuals getting tortured had vital information but did not divulge this information to their torturers even though they were getting tortured. This essentially means that rarely are innocent people detained and tortured for information or for a confession, and torture is only truly ineffective 5.6% of the time. In *Homeland*, there was a case where the effectiveness of torture

was unknown as the scene was never referenced again and the audience never saw or found that torture was effective.



### Common victims of torture

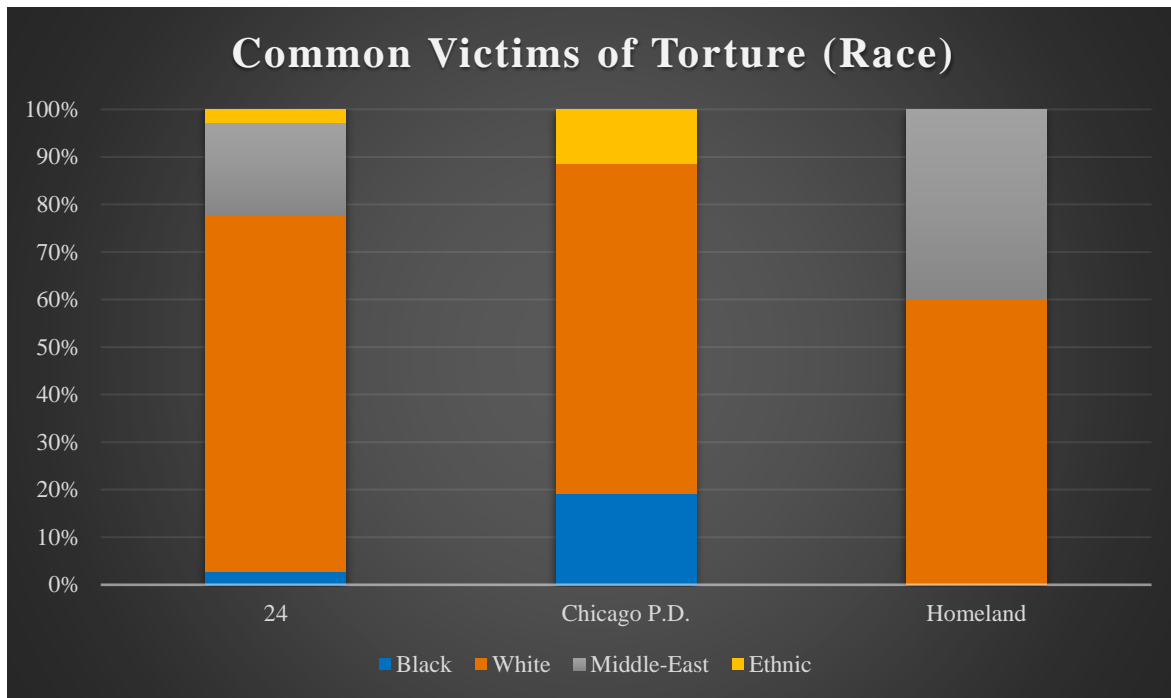
#### *Race*

The most common race for victims of torture for all three shows were white people. In *24*, White people were tortured the most frequently at 75%, then Middle Eastern at 19%, ethnic people were tortured the most after Middle Eastern people at 11%, and African American people were tortured the least at 3%. For *Chicago P.D.*, whites were tortured the most at 69%, then African Americans at 19%, and ethnically ambiguous people were least tortured at 12%. In *Homeland*, whites were tortured the most at 60% and Middle Eastern people were the only other group that were tortured at 40%.

For *24* and *Homeland*, it was expected that the race or ethnicity of the characters most frequently depicted as being tortured would be people from the Middle East, due to the focus of

the shows. As *24* debuted two months after 9/11, it was assumed that Middle Eastern people would be the target for this show. After 9/11, a fear or distrust of Middle Eastern people was created in the United States (Bilici, 2011). With this Islamophobia across the entire nation, it would be logical that the entertainment media would attempt to capitalize on this fear by targeting Middle Eastern people and to show those with Islamophobia that their fears were justified in some way. This idea can be applied to *Homeland* as well. Although *Homeland* debuted ten years after the events of 9/11, the effects of the terrorist attack and how the United States Intelligence Community missed the signs still echoes in the show. However, the data shows something completely unexpected. Not many people would expect whites to be the most frequently depicted race for torture.

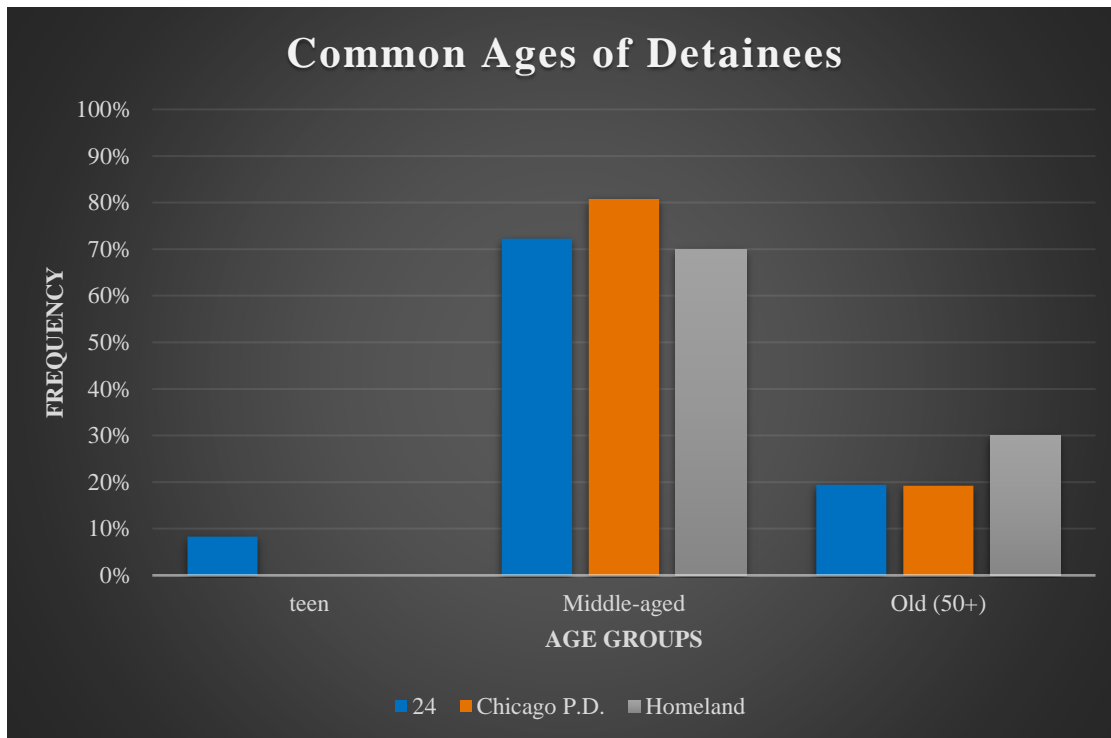
Many police departments are known for using racial profiling, especially against the African American population (Davis, Whyde, & Langton, 2018). There is significant evidence that shows disproportionate police actions against the African American population and minority population (Davis, Whyde, & Langton, 2018). With this in mind, the predicted victims of torture in *Chicago P.D.* were African Americans. However, like *24* and *Homeland*, the data showed something completely different than the expected results. A reason may be to not bring attention to such a hot topic in the United States, or perhaps the show writers were keen to reflect the fact that there are far more white people living in the United States than any other race. Many people watch television shows to escape from the issues in the real world. Using this idea, perhaps the producers did not want to lose viewers by portraying controversial current event issues by frequently torturing Middle Easterners or African Americans.



### Age

The most common age of detainees for all three shows were middle-aged individuals, those ranging from 25 to 45 years in age. For this category, there were three groups: teens/young, middle-aged, and older. Teens were individuals who were still considered a teenager. The middle-aged category has the widest range as it entails those between the ages of around 25-45. The older category included individuals who were roughly 50 years old and older. For nearly all the cases, age was an uncertain factor as the television show did not mention the age of the detainee. The only detainee where the age was more certain than the rest was a detainee in *24*. The show mentioned that the individual was a teen, about to enter college. As this was the only teen tortured in all three shows, this category did not need to have requirements. However, the age range for the other detainees could be roughly estimated by several indicators (i.e. characters appearance such as having wrinkles, slight greying of the hair, or age of children). Individuals were considered in the “older” category if the show mentioned the detainee having grandchildren or from the features mentioned previously (i.e. the characters appearance).



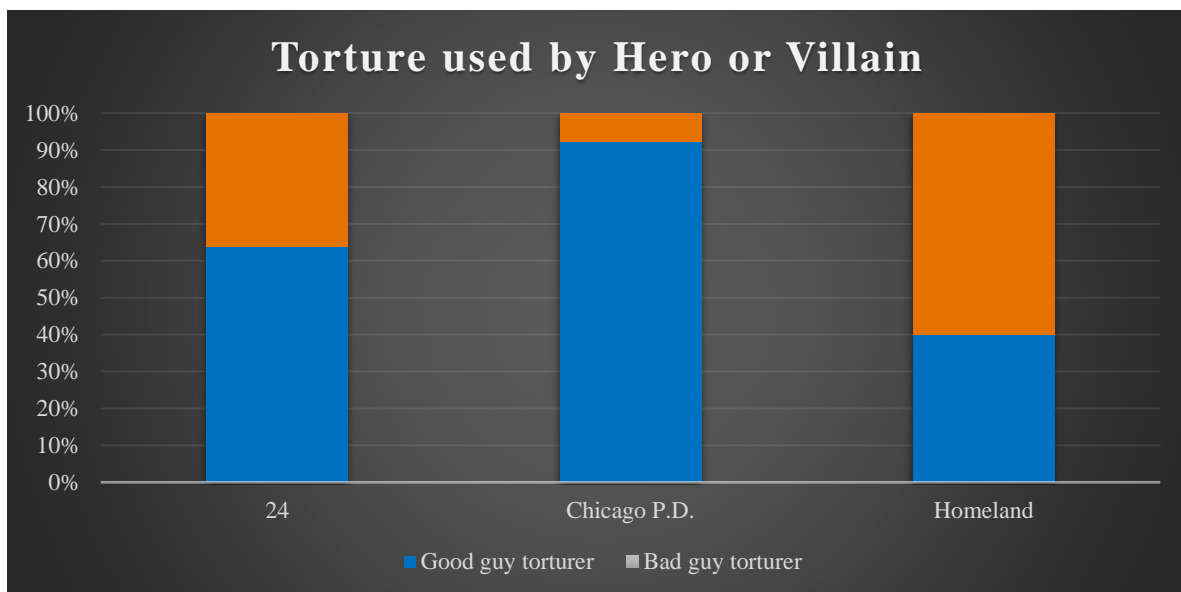


### Torturer

The protagonists of the show were more likely to utilize torture methods. On average, the heroes utilized torture 65% of the time whereas the villains utilized it 35% of the time. In *Chicago P.D.*, the most likely group of people that utilized torture were the police department at 92%. Only 64% of the time did the heroes on *24* use torture methods. *Homeland*, however, showed the opposite as the villains were the most likely group to employ torture at 60% of the time. Not only did *Chicago P.D.* have the most torture scenes and highest effectiveness rate, the most common torturer were law enforcement officials and that it is a common practice for police in the United States. These three figures could indicate that torture is more common in local law enforcement agencies than in intelligence agencies like the CIA.

Interestingly enough the findings from *Homeland* are in the opposition to the findings from both *24* and *Chicago P.D.* Instead of allowing the audience to believe that torture is a tool primarily used by the “good guys”, the show indicates that torture is a tool more often utilized by

the “bad guys”. This suggest that the series is attempting to show that the use of torture is primarily used by terrorists. In addition, if the other variables for this show are analyzed with this variable it would show that there are more dire situations that could potentially call for the use of torture and that the use of torture is incredibly high, however; the heroes of the show rarely torture and prefer to use other interrogational means. *Homeland* is attempting to prove the idea that their portrayal of the CIA is how CIA agents genuinely operate. The show is attempting to convey to the audience that the CIA is an ethical agency and that one scandal does not define the agency.



### ***Gender***

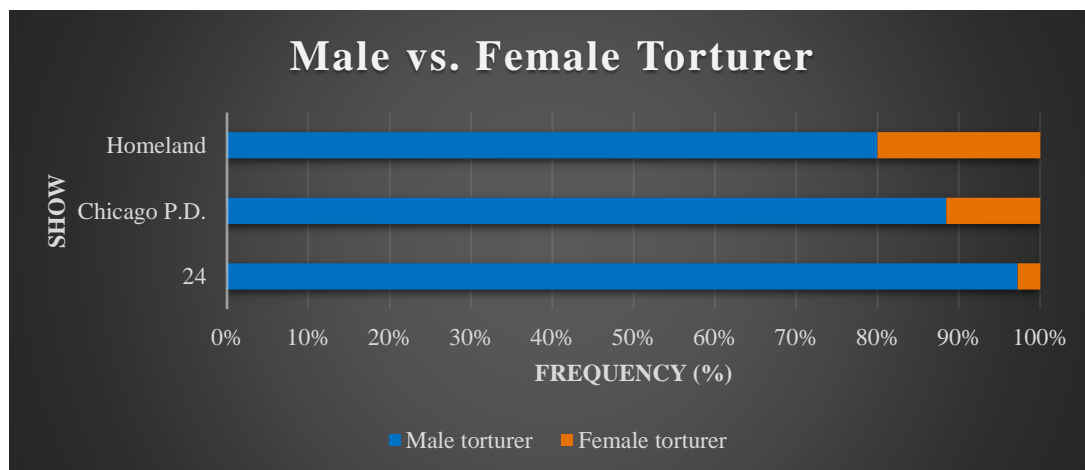
The most common gender of the characters portrayed to utilize torture were male. On average, 89% of all scenes of torture a male were utilizing torture methods. This is unsurprising considering in popular culture when someone mentions the names of popular characters such as “Jack Bauer” or “Hank Voight” to a group of people, they are strongly associated and recognized as being representatives of these types of shows. These two names are almost synonymous with the theme of torture in television. However, this is not to say that women were not depicted as

being capable of torturing detainees. According to the data, there was an average of 11% of depicted torture scenes where the torturer was a singular woman, or the person that applying the torture techniques was female. However, the frequency of scenes depicting torture committed by the woman were significantly smaller than those containing men. The frequency of a woman character torturer in *24* was 3%, in *Chicago P.D.* it was 12%, and *Homeland* had the highest frequency at 20%.

This variable was interesting in that when the women utilized torture methods, they were severely criticized by their peers and superiors. For example, in *24* when a female agent from the Federal Bureau of Investigation cuts off the air from the ventilation machine of to a patient while questioning him. Afterwards she is almost immediately caught and reprimanded by her superior and by the Attorney General. However, in an episode prior Jack Bauer choked a detainee almost to unconsciousness, and yet none of the agents in charge scolded him nor did the Attorney General send someone down to talk to him. In *Chicago P.D.* there is a similar event. In season four episode 22, Detective Erin Lindsay handcuffs the detainee to the rail in the room where she proceeds to strike the detainee with her firearm. She then put her firearm into the detainee's mouth and then on the side of his neck when he refused to answer her questions. Although the detainee did eventually give up the information, Detective Lindsay was caught in the act by her commander and she was sent to the chiefs of the department to review her actions. The chiefs ultimately decided that Detective Lindsay was at fault, however; before they could officially terminate her, Detective Lindsay quit and went to work for the FBI.

In both instances, the females were harshly criticized for their actions, and yet in episodes prior and after the male character tortures people. Which begs the question if both of the females were males would they have been as severely criticized or terminated? It is ridiculous that for the

majority of the series their male colleagues have tortured countless individuals and received no repercussions. There were several episodes in *24* where Jack Bauer defied a direct order from the President of the United States, yet after torturing the detainee the president quickly forgot that he told Bauer to not torture the detainee. In *Chicago P.D.* the police department decided to take Sergeant Voight out of prison because they needed someone like him in order to take down major criminals in Chicago. Is this a message from the entertainment industry that tells society that only males are allowed to torture with little to no repercussions for their actions? That this type of unethical behavior is approved only for men even though in both cases the female agent/detective was able to obtain actionable intelligence. That is likely associated with dominant understandings of gender in society where femininity is associated with being weak, delicate, small, and passive. In contrast, masculinity is associated with being aggressive, physical, strong, and powerful. When women engage in more traditionally male behaviors, such as aggression or torture, they are not only committing harmful and violent behaviors, but they are violating generally accepted gender norms – violating broader societal understandings of acceptable behavior for women. This may explain the pattern of reprimanding women characters that engage in torture, as a way to correct behaviors that are “unbecoming” of a woman and ignoring or even celebrating the same behaviors in men.



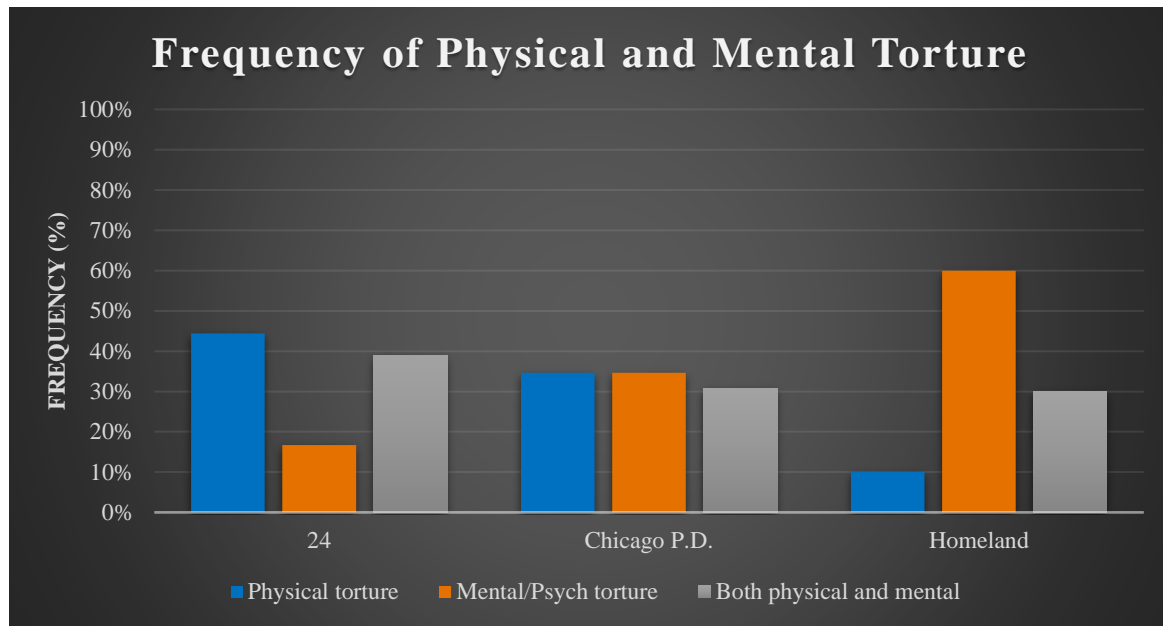
### **Means of Torture**

All three shows utilized three different types of torture, which are: physical, mental/emotional, or a combination of both physical and mental/emotional means. Purely physical means of torture could be any form of striking with objects, punching, kicking, electrocutions, whippings, and more. However, the line of questioning remains the same with no threats or intimidation. For example, in season six of *Chicago P.D.*, Sergeant Voight's line of questioning is calm and monotone while he chokes the detainee with a piece of rope. The use of only mental/emotional means of torture include threats, intimidation, coercion, stress positions, and sensory deprivations. The main difference between these two methods of torture is that with mental/emotional means of torture, the torturer does not lay a hand on the detainee nor does the torturer use any object to harm the detainee. However, the torturer can force the detainee to stand or squat for long periods of time. The torturer can also imprison the detainee in a room with no windows or a room with extreme temperatures. An example of mental/emotional torture can be seen in *Homeland*. In the first season, the CIA strips the detainee of his clothes and locks him in a room with a notebook and pen in hopes that he will write down the names of people in a terrorist organization. While in the room, the CIA sporadically turned off the main lights and turned on strobe lights, and when the strobe lights were on the CIA played loud metal music. This went on for almost a whole afternoon. An example of using threats or intimidation as a way of mental/psychological torture can be seen in *24* when Jack Bauer threatens to kill the wife and son of the detainee unless the location of the bomb is given up.

The most common form of torture was mental/psychological torture, then the combination of both physical and mental/psychological, and purely physical torture was the least frequent. In *24*, the most common method of torture was physical means, followed by a

combination of the two methods, and lastly pure mental/psychological means. For *Chicago P.D.*, all three forms of torture were nearly evenly split between the three categories. The most common form of torture in *Homeland* was purely mental/psychological means at a 60% frequency, the least common form was only physical torture at a 10% frequency.

When many contemplate torture, physical means come to mind so it is not odd that physical means of torture would be the most common method shown in *24* and *Chicago P.D.* However, it is odd that the most common form of torture in *Homeland* was emotional/psychological means. This form of torture has the highest frequency in all the categories for *Homeland* and none of the other data points from the other three shows come close to this. Which poses the question as to why *Homeland* would opt to choose this method so frequently over the others? One explanation could be that after the Abu Ghraib scandal in 2004, the entertainment industry did not want people to believe the allegations against the United States, specifically the CIA or that the CIA are always physically aggressive. An alternative explanation could be that the entertainment industry wanted to highlight that after the Abu Ghraib scandal the CIA transitioned from using physical methods to mental/psychological means. This would make logical sense because in all instances that involve physical torture, the detainee is left with observable scars. However, with emotional/psychological means of torture there are no visible scars because unlike physical torture, psychological torture aims to soften the mind of the detainee in hopes to “[break] the detainees’ resistance so as to make them ‘talk’” (Reyes, 2007, para. 2). However, as torture is still a theme in the show, it can be deduced that the suggestion remains that CIA agents continue to torture their detainees, but they are more careful about it as there will be less evidence of the ordeal left behind.



## Conclusion

From the data collected, the idea that people believe torture to be an effective method of interrogation due to entertainment media is a certainly plausible explanation behind this belief.

After analyzing three popular television shows in a span of 18 years, the data of these shows contained an average of 50.81% frequency of torture with an average of 86% effectiveness. With a 50.81% frequency of torture, this means that every other episode contained at least one scene of torture and the majority of the time torture was used it yielded information or a confession.

The data supports the mere exposure effect in that the entertainment media continued to promote the idea that by using torture, law enforcement officials could obtain useful information or obtain a confession even though there is an overabundance of scholarly literature that proves that torture is ineffective. It also suggests that the use of torture is so normalized that it is not only practiced by government officials at the federal level, both officially and through the utilization of covert agents, but it is more often used as a technique by everyday local law enforcement. It serves to reinforce the common understanding of the states as being good or the protector of the people, minimizing how such portrayals legitimize state violence as a vehicle for greater good.

The effectiveness of torture continues to be debated, which may be due to the Trump administration proposing for its use against current terrorist groups. Although there is a plethora of evidence and literature from scholars that disprove the efficacy of torture, this false perception will remain an issue until influential officials, like the president or Supreme Court Justices, realize tortures ineffectiveness and until the entertainment industry terminates the use of the torture trope in movies and television shows. It is vital for the entertainment industry to know of their impact on their viewers.

### **Future Implications**

The belief that torture is effective needs to end because the future implications could be drastic. One of the future consequences is the erosion of the morals in society. The use of torturous methods on another individual is reprehensible and completely immoral. Although there is a debate over what universal morals are, a moral that many can agree on is to not purposely hurt another or kill for unjust reasons. If the use of torture continues into the future, the most basic principles of humanity would be compromised.

In connection with the future erosion of the morals of society, individuals at the entrance level of law enforcement or the military may begin to adopt this immoral practice because they believe in its efficacy. Though it may appear improbable that this scenario could occur in real life, unfortunately, this scenario has already been seen by various instructors at West Point. In 2006, Brigadier General Patrick Finnegan, the dean of West Point, and Gary Solis, a retired Marine, both noted that their cadets adopted the mindset of being “willing to do whatever was necessary to save American lives” (Ip, 2009, p. 75) like Jack Bauer. Both instructors noted that it was extremely difficult to not only convince the cadets to take the moral high ground when interrogating suspects, but to convince these cadets that torture is not effective.



An additional consequence is that torture brings immense harm to all parties involved. Not only will the victim be permanently damaged, but the torturer and the institution (or government) will be as well. From the detainee's viewpoint, if he or she survives the ordeal, they are going to live with visible scars and possible permanent bodily disfigurement, in addition to various psychological illnesses such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression, and more (de Williams & van der Merwe, 2013). However, it would be remiss to say that only the victim is harmed, as those that inflict torture will also be forever changed. According to soldiers that were involved in the interrogation at the Abu Ghraib Prison, when they came home the soldiers found that their actions caused them to "[lose] their 'sense of compassion'" (Burk, 2013, p. 161). In addition, they "felt a sense of betrayal, confusion, alimentionation, and shame" (Burk, 2013, p. 161) because of their actions. Due to their actions, these soldiers were not able to explain the reasoning for their suffering nor could they admit to the cruel actions they committed. Although not physically harmed, the emotional and mental state of these soldiers are almost as damaged as the individuals they tortured.

The government is also at risk of being harmed when torture is made a part of the system. The two major harms that poses a threat to a government are that the institutions that are embedded in the government are weakened, and the country's reputation will be severely damaged, severity depends on how involved the country was. In regard to saying that an institution in the government is weakened, it means that the core ethics of that institution are betrayed. For example, one of the torturers in the Abu Ghraib Prison was a medical professional. One of the core ethics of those in the medical field is "do no harm" (Bjelica, 2019), which means that a medical professional should not purposefully bring harm or injury to another human being. Despite having this core value engrained in his mind, the medic participated in the physical

torturing of detainees. In addition to this medic, several members in the medical field helped the military interrogators create and apply harsher interrogation techniques at GITMO and various other black sites. These acts betrayed the core ethics vital to medicine, which helped weaken the medical institution in the government.

The country's reputation can also be damaged if torture is made a part of the system. For the United States, the use of torture is extremely detrimental to the values that the United States stands for. The United States enjoys the title "the Champions of Human Rights", and for being known as a "defender of the international laws of war" (Burk, 2013, p. 166) for all. However, the United States does not deserve this title if detainees are tortured in custody. If agents of the United States continue this ineffective method, then what separates them from the people trying to harm this country? How is the United States any better than the people they are fighting against?

### **Further Research**

With this study there were many limitations and there are many different ways that this topic can be further explored. One of the limitations was that due to time constraints, this project only covered one third of each show. Since only one third of each show was covered, it would be impossible to assume that every avenue of this topic in each show was researched. In addition, since only one third of the show was analyzed, it is deduced that these shows promote the effectiveness of torture. However, it is plausible that when the show is analyzed in its entirety, the data could depict a different result. An additional limitation was that this study only counted if an episode contained one scene of torture. However, there were various episodes that contained more than one scene of torture. Multiple instances of torture were not included in this research because there was no way to measure a "scene" or "scenes". Also, there were some

instances where nearly 75% of the episode was about torturing an individual so it was unknown whether or not to count that episode as one instance of torture or multiple instances of torture. Thus, it is reasonable to believe that the frequency of torture for each show could be much higher.

A way that this project can be expanded on would be to analyze the frequency of torture in other genres. This project only focused on television series that revolved around law enforcement at the federal and local level. It would be interesting to see if television shows from different genres contained the same frequency of torture as the police dramas or political thrillers. In addition, it would be interesting to see if other genres, that were not police dramas or political thrillers, also presented the effectiveness of torture. There is evidence that the theme of torture is present in other shows such as *Outlander*, *Battlestar Galactica*, *Game of Thrones*, and more.

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