

“I’M LOOKING FOR JACK BAUER AT THAT TIME”: 24, TORTURE, & GETTING
YOUR HANDS DIRTY IN THE NAME OF IDEOLOGY

By

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To the Faculty of Washington State University:

The members of the Committee appointed to examine the thesis of RYAN JAMES THOMAS find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

Chair

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Abstract

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The popular and critically acclaimed television show *24* has, since its debut in October 2001, paralleled the course of the Bush administration, dealing with the same volatile issues as the politicians and national security agents in “real life” have had to contend with. One prominent issue is torture, which is the focus of this study, and is an area that has led to *24* be the subject of much media scrutiny. This thesis takes a critical stance, informed heavily by critical theory and cultural studies work on ideology, in its analysis of *24*. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) of the show’s fourth season is deployed in order to examine the dominant ideologies that *24* portrays in relation to torture.

This study determined that the show utilizes the controversial “ticking time bomb” theory, as chiefly espoused by Alan Dershowitz, whereby torture is normalized as an ethical course of action as a means of halting a major terrorist threat and saving innocent lives. This is supported by four prominent themes that illuminate this: ignorance of the law, the need to “get your hands dirty,” the expendability of human life, and devotion to a cause.

This study also suggests, informed by a postmodernist stance that the boundaries between fiction and reality have been increasingly eroded, that communication research needs to address

fictional television formats in the post-9/11 era, given the disparity of research in this area as compared to research on traditional news media.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
a. Rationale for study.....	2
b. About <i>24</i>	3
c. Criticisms of <i>24</i>	5
d. Why <i>24</i> ?.....	6
2. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	7
a. Contextual framework.....	8
i. September 11, 2001.....	8
ii. The political climate post-9/11.....	9
iii. Torture.....	12
iv. State torture.....	12
v. The ethics of torture.....	13
vi. The “ticking time bomb” argument.....	14
vii. Torture and the United States.....	15
viii. Abu Ghraib.....	16
ix. Reaction of the Bush administration.....	19
x. The media climate post-9/11.....	19
b. Theoretical framework.....	24

i. Critical theory.....	24
ii. Epistemological assumptions.....	25
iii. Ideology.....	27
iv. Hegemony.....	28
v. Narrative.....	29
vi. Ideology: Normalizing and naturalizing.....	30
vii. Television as an ideological instrument.....	31
viii. Constructing reality.....	34
ix. Fact versus fiction.....	35
x. The hybridization of news and fiction.....	36
xi. The journalist and the scriptwriter.....	37
xii. Media scholarship post-9/11.....	38
xiii. Research question.....	39
3. METHODOLOGY.....	40
a. Qualitative textual analysis.....	40
b. Discourse analysis & ideological criticism.....	40
c. Critical discourse analysis.....	41
d. Cautions.....	42
e. Process of analysis.....	43
f. Coding and categorization.....	45
4. RESULTS.....	46
a. Plot summary.....	46
b. Instances of torture.....	48

i.	Tomas Sherek.....	48
ii.	Richard Heller.....	49
iii.	Sarah Gavin.....	57
iv.	Dina Araz.....	64
v.	Paul Raines.....	66
vi.	Behrooz Araz.....	75
vii.	Joe Prado.....	79
c.	Themes at the macro-level.....	88
d.	The ticking time bomb: A framework for understanding.....	89
e.	Categories.....	90
i.	The law doesn't matter.....	92
ii.	Getting your hands dirty.....	98
iii.	Human life is expendable.....	102
iv.	Loyalty to a cause.....	105
f.	Arguments against torture.....	109
g.	The consequences of torture.....	110
h.	Parallels with reality.....	119
5.	DISCUSSION.....	122
a.	Purpose of study.....	122
b.	Findings.....	122
c.	A quintessential post-9/11 television drama.....	123
d.	Theoretical implications.....	125
e.	Directions for future research.....	128

f. Conclusion.....	130
6. REFERENCES.....	131
7. DATA.....	158

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

On May 15, 2007, during a televised debate between the prospective Republican candidates for president, moderator Brit Hume illustrated “a fictional but we think plausible scenario involving terrorism and the response to it,” describing a situation in which the United States has come under terrorist attack and a further attack “has been averted when the attackers were captured... and taken to Guantanamo [Bay],” while “U.S. intelligence believes that another, larger attack is planned.” Hume then posed the question: “How aggressively would you interrogate the captured suspects?” (Brooks, 2007). The question, which seemed like it had been snatched from the script of a Hollywood thriller, elicited fascinating responses from the candidates, from former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani calling for the use of “every method [interrogators] can think of,” to California Representative Duncan Hunter’s call for “very high-pressure techniques,” to Massachusetts Senator Mitt Romney’s demand to “double Guantanamo [Bay]” and use “enhanced interrogation techniques” (Brooks, 2007). Yet one of the most startling responses came from Colorado Representative Tom Tancredo, who replied: “I’m looking for Jack Bauer at that time, let me tell you... [the U.S. should take actions that] make the bad guy fearful” (Brooks, 2007). The response drew laughter and applause from a studio audience amused at the mention of Bauer, the main character in the television series *24*.

Following the debate, Tancredo’s comment attracted much attention from the media, with commentators pointing out the controversial nature of some of *24*’s plotlines, where torture is apparently routinely deployed as a method of interrogation (Brooks, 2007; Doyle, 2007; Greenhill, 2007). As Greenhill (2007) comments,

Intentionally or not... fiction can play a real role in the construction of political reality.

Amid the global War on Terror, those in Hollywood and those in Washington would do well to take heed of this fact about fiction (¶14).

This blurring of the lines between reality and fiction brings to light a number of issues of interest to communication scholars, not least because of the site of this blurring: the issue of torture, a prominent and contentious issue in contemporary American society.

Rationale for study

24, broadcast on the Fox network¹, has been one of the most popular and critically acclaimed yet controversial television dramas of recent years. Since its premiere on October 29, 2001, six seasons of *24* have aired, with a seventh scheduled for transmission in January 2009 and an eighth commissioned for the following year (Schneider, 2007)². The show and its cast have also won numerous industry awards, Emmys, Golden Globes, and Screen Actors Guild Awards among them (Amdur, 2006). Yet despite audience and industry acclaim, the show has also attracted considerable controversy, with an undercurrent of dissent in media coverage of the show steadily growing. A number of journalists have suggested that the show adopts a politically conservative ideology in its portrayal of counter-terrorism, with particular concern being expressed about its depiction of torture (Aaronovitch, 2004; Amdur, 2006; Feeney, 2004; Freedland, 2005; Klein, 2006; Mayer, 2007; Miller, 2007; Rich, 2005). Torture has been one of the major issues of the post-9/11 era, as a result of human rights violations such as those that occurred at Abu Ghraib detention facility (Aaronovitch, 2004; Allen, 2005; Avelar, 2004; Caton,

¹ The association with Fox, which has already been the subject of much scrutiny by media scholars and the press for having a perceived conservative bias (Aday, Livingstone, & Hebert, 2005; Hart, 2004; Lewis, 2005; Morris, 2005, 2007; Turner, 2007), has had implications for the way *24* has been critically received, in light of the ideological issues it brings to the screen (Klein, 2006).

² The seventh season of the show was scheduled for January 2008, but was a victim of the writer's strike, thus necessitating its delay until January 2009 (de Moraes, 2008; Levin, 2008).

2006; Cohen & Corrado, 2005; Davis, 2005; Giroux, 2004; Gordon, 2006; Ignatieff, 2004; Silverglate, 2003; Steel, 2004). Given that torture is an issue that *24* deals with on a regular basis, and taking into consideration the criticisms of the show from journalists, this is a fruitful site for critical-cultural research. The Tancredo comment provides an interesting doorway into an examination of a fictional portrayal of an issue that has become increasingly controversial in contemporary American society. That a prospective candidate for President cites the character of a popular television show in a debate on the ethics of torture is not inconsequential. At this point, I will provide an overview of the origins, basic premise, and popularity of *24*, as well as discuss the journalistic criticisms of the show. This will be useful in providing a contextualized understanding of *24* and will inform the discussion that is to follow.

About 24

In a somewhat eerie coincidence, before 9/11, television networks had scheduled three shows with a counter-terrorism theme – *24*, *The Agency*, and *Alias* – to air in late September and early October of 2001 (Hark, 2004). Of these, it is, according to Hark, *24* that “had on the surface the most disquieting convergences with the events of September 11,” dubbing the first season of the show a “mirror narrative” of 9/11 (p. 121). Airing on October 29, 2001, the pilot episode contained an explosion on a passenger aircraft, killing its occupants. These scenes were cut out of the broadcast for the episode premiere, though the over-arching plot remained unchanged, with characters referencing the explosion (Hark, 2004; Weinraub, 2002).

The show pivots around counter-terrorism agent Jack Bauer (Kiefer Sutherland) and his colleagues at the Los Angeles Counter Terrorist Unit (CTU). Each of the show’s six seasons transmitted to date revolves around a common theme: the fight against terrorism. Bauer is central to the plot and Sutherland remains the only cast member to have appeared in every episode of

every season (Birk & Birk, 2005; Hark, 2004). In the years since the show's debut, it has, both chronologically and thematically, spanned the course of the Bush administration, dealing with the same issues of terrorism and counter-terrorism. The show follows the attempts of Bauer and his colleagues to foil attacks on American soil, and explores the decisions they are forced to make to ensure American security, the use of torture among them.

The show has been heralded for the dramatic and narratological innovations it has deployed. Allrath, Gymnich, and Surkamp (2005) write that *24* "claims to turn viewers into witnesses who see everything that is going on" (p. 39). One of the most innovative premises of the show is its setting in "real-time," the events of the show following a 24-hour clock, spanning a day in the lives of the protagonists³. Another noted innovation is the use of a split screen so that the audience can see the action unfold across two separate plotlines, watch the same scene from the perspective of different characters, or watch a telephone conversation between two characters take place without the need for rapid shot changeovers (Birk & Birk, 2005).

Taking Bourdieu's (1986) stance that the values of the product are inextricably linked with the values of its author/auteur, it is worthwhile to cast a brief look at those who work behind the scenes, for as Allrath, Gymnich, and Surkamp (2005) observe, "The creator and the producer are the most influential figures among the various 'authors' of a series" (p. 7). *24* was created by Joel Surnow and Robert Cochran. Surnow has established himself as a character of some repute in Hollywood as a longtime friend of conservative pundit Rush Limbaugh, an avowed supporter of President George W. Bush, and a financial contributor to the Republican Party (Mayer, 2007). Surnow has been quoted as saying: "People in the [Bush] administration love the series... It's a patriotic show. They should love it" (as cited in Mayer, 2007, ¶1). Given Surnow's political

³ That said, some creative license must be used to allow for commercial breaks; thus, *24* cannot be said to truly occur in real-time, rather the viewer must accept that for those three to five minutes while the commercials are airing, there is nothing consequential happening that will move the plot forward (Birk & Birk, 2005).

views and the frequent depictions of torture within the show – according to the Parents Television Council, *24* depicted 67 scenes of torture in its first five seasons (Miller, 2007) – it is perhaps unsurprising that the show has been the subject of much scrutiny in the mass media, with some journalists arguing that it has been a mouthpiece for the Bush administration (Aaronovitch, 2004; Freedland, 2005; Klein, 2006; Rich, 2005)⁴.

Criticisms of 24

The combination of suspenseful thrills and the parallels with the political and social context from which the show is born is undoubtedly one of the reasons behind the show's success, yet also a cause for concern among many commentators. Torture in *24*, says Feeney (2004), “occurs with astonishing regularity” (§1). Bauer and his colleagues are continually presented with situations in which national security is at risk necessitating tough decisions, thus the rationale being offered that torture is acceptable if the potential for loss of innocent life is halted. “By creating a context of suffering and violence,” Feeney (2004) writes, “the writers instill in viewers a strong presumption that *24* is grounded in the starkest exigencies of the real world” (§2). This has led some critics to suggest that *24* has a conservative bias. Broe (2004) argues that the show plays a part in creating a climate of fear in the American populace, just “as George Bush's war came under more domestic scrutiny” (p. 101). Broe describes Jack Bauer as “the sympathetic vigilante,” ignorant of the law and “[speeding] rapidly ahead in his battle to save humanity... with humanity here reduced to the United States only” (p. 101). The rule of law appears to be secondary to the need for resolution to the threat. The show, says Rich (2005), “does not moralize about the use of abuse and torture by Americans interrogating terrorists” (p. 1). The danger is that *24*'s portrayal of torture will normalize viewers into believing that torture

⁴ Indeed, *24* has been adopted by conservative newspapers such as *The Washington Times* and *National Review*, who have both celebrated its realistic portrayal of the War on Terror, and is a favorite television show of Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff and conservative pundit Rush Limbaugh, among others (Cusac, 2005).

is an acceptable course of action. Freedland (2005) addresses the impact the narrative of *24* can have on the unsuspecting viewer, claiming, “As we watch, our nerves taut, there is no ethical corner we don't want Bauer to cut, if that's what he has to do to prevent murder and mayhem” (p. 19). The show demands that those entrusted with protecting us be empowered to deal with the threat by whatever means necessary.

Why 24?

I take the stance of Thornham and Purvis (2005), who argue that television drama is “a key site for exploring the usefulness of contemporary theories of identity, cultural change, and representation” (p. ix). It is, as Newcomb (1976) states, a “crucially important” area of study, as “it brings its massive audience into a direct relationship with particular sets of values and attitudes” (p. 274). Therefore, it is important to examine the kinds of stories being told and the “values and attitudes” contained within media texts. More specifically, it is vital to remember that *24* takes place in the post-9/11 era, its pilot episode airing on October 29, 2001. As a burgeoning show, *24* addressed a nation shaken to its foundation by the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Crucially, *24* is a show whose central issue is national security, and it airs in a time when national security is one of the foremost issues in political and social discourse in American society. Also important is some consideration of the sheer reach of the show. To date, six seasons of *24* have aired since the show's premiere on November 6, 2001. *24* is broadcast in 38 countries around the world⁵ and is ranked 39th in Nielsen ratings among viewers aged between 18 and 49 (Battaglia, 2002). The show's gender demographic, according to Fox research, reveals that 53 percent of *24*'s audience is male, 47 percent female (Amdur, 2006). It is no exaggeration then, to state that *24* addresses mainstream America. The popularity and acclaim that *24* attracts, therefore, mandates that its storylines and depictions warrant scholarly scrutiny.

⁵ www.fox.com/24

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

I wish to construct a contextual and a theoretical framework from which analysis will build. The theoretical framework will provide the backbone for the research questions that will follow, for it is theory that “provide[s] a basis for practical application” (Infante, Rancer, & Womack, 2003, p. 5). This study takes a critical-cultural studies approach to analyze *24*. In the theoretical framework, I will discuss the epistemological assumptions one adopts as a result of taking such a position, as well as conduct a full review of relevant literature that will provide justification for this study’s research questions. However, I wish to turn first to a discussion of context. Given that a firm contextual grounding is necessary for critical-cultural studies analyses (Grossberg, 1992, 1993), this first framework will be pivotal for understanding the sociopolitical and sociocultural atmosphere within which the text is situated, grounding this study in the context of the aftermath of 9/11. Doing so will allow for a richer understanding of the analysis that follows, for if we are to truly understand a text we must also examine the larger context and those forces that contribute to a text’s creation and contextual underpinnings. Goldman (1975) suggests that cultural products (texts) express the ideals of a society. Thus, through close reading of the text, we can infer or deduce the ideology of the wider culture. We cannot consider media texts in a vacuum but as products of a wider culture. Thus, it is only through an understanding of the cultural context that has given birth to *24* that we can begin to understand (and then analyze) *24* as a text itself. In relation to this point, Fiske and Hartley (1978) write,

The world of television is clearly different from our real social world, but just as clearly related to it... We might clarify this relationship by saying that television does not

represent the manifest actuality of our society, but rather reflects, symbolically, the structure of values and relationships beneath the surface (p. 24).

Understanding the “structure of values and relationships” that Fiske and Hartley refer to is the chief reason why a contextual framework is necessary for this study.

Contextual Framework

By constructing a contextual framework, I am attempting to illuminate the political and social environment, or “culture” that the show is a part and product of. Culture, as Williams (1976) points out, is “one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language” (p. 87). I adopt here Yep’s (2001) definition of culture as reflecting “a particular social, political, and historical context” (p. 231). The goal of this contextual framework, therefore, is to illuminate the culture – the “particular social, political, and historical context” – that *24* inhabits and is a product of. Here, I will briefly discuss the events of 9/11, and the political climate of the post-9/11 era. I will also discuss the issue that is key to the thrust of this study, torture, including arguments related to the ethics of torture. I will then discuss the Abu Ghraib prison controversy, which brought torture into the public consciousness. Finally, I will situate *24* within the post-9/11 media climate, highlighting the media culture that surrounds the show.

September 11, 2001

The United States has constructed its identity around a number of themes – morality, humanity, peace, justice, opportunity, innovation, democracy, freedom, and liberty (Coe, Domke, Graham, John, & Pickard, 2004; Edwards, 2004; Lazar & Lazar, 2004; Leuder, Marsland, & Nekvapil, 2004; Said, 1978). However, this was to change on September 11, 2001, when four planes were commandeered by terrorists and used as weapons; two attacking the twin

towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, a third used to attack the Pentagon, home of the United States military, and a fourth being downed over Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, apparently as a result of an attempt by passengers and crew to regain control of the aircraft. The attacks represented an assault on the ideals the United States had built itself upon and profoundly altered the cultural landscape (Dixon, 2004; Freda, 2004; Lewis, 2005; Schneider, 2004; Sterritt, 2004). Dixon (2004) writes of 9/11, “In this bleak landscape of personal loss, paranoia, and political cynicism, American culture has been forever changed” (p. 3)⁶. The attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City were particularly significant, with Baudrillard (2002) and Zizek (2001) suggesting they were symbolic of New York’s (and the United States’) financial might, symbols of “virtual capitalism, of financial speculations disconnected from the sphere of material production” (Zizek, 2001, ¶10). Moreover, the twin towers of the World Trade Center were the “architectural signifiers of a city and of a country that until September 11 had little to fear from outside its borders and believed personal safety, though never guaranteed, was at least assessable and a reasonable bet” (Schneider, 2004, pp. 34-35). The terrorist attacks saw a nation transformed. For Sterritt (2004), “Everything has changed since the terrorist attacks... and nothing will be quite the same again” (p. 64). And so it came to pass that this new era in American history would also usher in a greatly different political climate, with President George W. Bush at the forefront.

The political climate post-9/11

Harvey (1989) argues that at times of insecurity and fragmentation the longing for stable values leads to a heightened emphasis on the authority of basic institutions. The political culture of post-9/11 America has explicitly highlighted this. During George W. Bush’s State of the

⁶ Indeed, the numeric 9/11 has entered the popular imaginary as a signifier for the attacks on American soil on that day, defined by date rather than by location, as has been the norm (for example, “Pearl Harbor” or “Waco”).

Union Address on January 29, 2002, the President of the United States declared, “America is embracing a new ethic and a new creed” (Bush, 2002a). The urgency of war provided the President with “a teachable moment” (Coles, 2002, p. 589) to assert his political agenda. Thus after 9/11, “Americans became students, newly schooled in strategic geography” (Silberstein, 2002, p. xi). Bush, whose approval ratings shot up by 35 percentage points within one month of 9/11 (Dunham, 2001), promised to keep the American people safe from future terrorist attacks. However, he has been criticized in many quarters for the climate of fear his administration has fostered following the 9/11 attacks (Altheide, 2002; Clarke & Hoggett, 2004; Coles, 2002; Davis, 2005; Feldman, 2005; Kellner, 2005; Merskin, 2004, 2006; Rampton & Stauber, 2003; Silberstein, 2002; Soyinka, 2004).

The threat of another terrorist attack galvanized the Bush administration into legitimizing itself as the protector of American national security, using “fear tactics to advance its political agenda” (Kellner, 2005, p. 35), allowing for the expansion of executive power (Freda, 2004; Rampton & Stauber, 2003). This is not necessarily new: Schlesinger (1974) introduced the concept of “the imperial presidency,” the expansion of executive power because of a perceived need for decisive action in the face of looming threats to national security. It is not hard to see parallels with George W. Bush. For Bush, it seems, to perpetuate crisis is to sustain power, the crisis allowing for action outside the law as civil society defines it (Freda, 2004; Rampton & Stauber, 2003). As Freda (2004) points out, “Civil liberties are the first to fall before this rush to relinquish responsibility to the chief executive and the military-security apparatus” (p. 231). Such erosion, combined with the climate of fear created by the Bush administration in the aftermath of 9/11, has led Clarke and Hoggett (2004) to dub the United States an “Empire of fear” (p. 89) characterized by a “culture of paranoia” (p. 92).

Theorists have established that the “othering” of foreign figures serves as a resource for identity construction, allowing for the diversion of attention and aggression toward a common threat (Campbell, 1998; Keen, 1986; Said, 1978, 1997; Schafer, 1999; Spillman & Spillman, 1997; Takaki, 1993). This was manifested in the post-9/11 culture, with an atmosphere of insecurity caused by the looming threat of the other in the form of the Arab terrorist, with Americans united against a common enemy that served as an embodiment of evil, functioning as “a hegemonic device [to] distract attention and divert aggression and energy toward a common threat” (Merskin, 2004, p. 158). As Feldman (2005) points out, “the state cannot legitimize itself as the protector of the nation without the idea of a threat” (p. 221). After 9/11, the figure of the terrorist was used to “[mobilize] collective fears in ways that recapitulate and consolidate previous ideologies of the national enemy” (Davis, 2005, p. 119).

The threats to American national security were made tangible when the United States launched its successful invasion of Afghanistan to topple the terrorist-sponsoring Taliban regime and further developed as the United States occupied Iraq and toppled its dictator, Saddam Hussein. Saddam’s fall was symbolic of an extension of democracy by the United States, which could now shape the world according to its own interests and values (Giroux, 2004; Steel, 2004). Both occupations were considered part of the broader “War on Terror,” with “terror” (vaguely defined) the singular major threat to American national security. Bush himself summed up the mood of uncertainty with a maxim that saw him grasping for moral absolutes: “I don’t believe there’s many shades of gray in this war. You are either with us or against us; you’re either evil or you’re good” (Bush, 2002b). However, shades of gray would plague Bush throughout the War on Terror, through one of the most distressing issues raised during his administration – torture, one of the most divisive and controversial issues of recent years due to the events at Abu Ghraib

detention facility. Discussion of these transgressions will follow, but an understanding of key terms is fundamental toward providing a frame of reference.

Torture

The origins of the word “torture” lie in ancient Greece, devolving from the term “touchstone that tests gold,” which broadly equates as “a test which defines whether something is genuine or real” (DuBois, 1991, p. 21). The United Nations Convention of December 10, 1984, defines torture 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 of another person acting in an official capacity (as cited in Elsass, 1997, p. 10).

A further definition is provided by Amnesty International, an organization that draws attention to human rights abuses and campaigns for compliance with international standards (Amnesty International, n.d.). They define torture as “a systematic activity with rational purpose” (Amnesty International, 1984, p. 30). Torture is generally regarded as an act of subjugation and humiliation (Allen, 2005; Honneth, 1995; Margalit, 1996). Having defined the broad notion of torture, I now turn to how states have institutionalized torture at the state level.

State torture

State torture is a systematic method of governing that creates an infrastructure of torture as policy, complete with detention centers that practice torture, including trained torturers and

torture chambers with standard operating procedures (Herman, 1982). Exertions of state power are characterized by the use of psychological and physical violence to enhance disciplinary control (Boyle, 1977; Rodriguez, 2003; Scraton, Sim, & Skidmore, 1992; Zdenkowski & Brown, 1982). Since the end of the Second World War, methods of state torture have included brutal assault (Abbott, 1981; Boyle, 1977), strip-searching and cell extractions (Minogue, 2005), sexual humiliation and sleep deprivation, sensory deprivation, behavioral modification, and the use of psychotropic drugs (Gordon, 2006; Rhodes, 2004; Ryan, 1992). The United States has served as a global leader in the export of such techniques due to the use of many of these techniques in civil prisons within the United States (Gordon, 2006; Ryan, 1992). As Gordon (2006) writes, “Torture, humiliation, degradation, sexual assault, assault with weapons and dogs, extortion, and blood sport have always been a part of U.S. prison culture and behavior” (p. 48). The danger of state torture, as Bauman (1989) recognizes, is that through the institutionalization of such methods, the goals behind their use are no longer open to question and personal responsibility is divided and diffused. Thus, moral resistance to abuses is much less likely to occur and torture will become naturalized as normal.

The ethics of torture

The ethics of torture have been the subject of much debate among scholars. Several theorists and philosophers have argued that torture is an inhuman and evil activity that has no place in a civilized society. Allen (2005), for example, describes torture as “an extreme evil” (p. 3), arguing, “Killing *sometimes* involves humiliation. Torture *always* does” (p. 9, emphasis in original). According to Ignatieff (2004), torture “expresses the state’s ultimate view that human beings are expendable” (p. 143). Others have argued that torture, much like slavery, is simply not debatable, and should not even be discussed for fear that justifications could be made for it

(Hampshire, 1989; Waldron, 1999). This is not to say that it has been a one-sided debate. One of the most prominent scholars who has argued that torture is ethical under certain circumstances is Alan Dershowitz, a noted civil rights lawyer and professor of law at Harvard University.

The “ticking time bomb” argument

Alan Dershowitz has been a prominent advocate of the use of torture by law enforcement officials in the post-9/11 era. He is known as one of the chief proponents of the “ticking time bomb” argument, which I shall outline below. Dershowitz has attracted considerable notoriety and criticism for his views, though the notion of “getting one’s hands dirty” – i.e., engaging in torture – in order to avoid catastrophe has been developed by Walzer (1974), who suggested that the use of torture may, under certain circumstances, be excusable⁷. However, Walzer made clear that even when torture is *excusable*, the perpetrator would still be guilty of *wrongdoing*.

Walzer’s theory was adapted by Dershowitz (2002, 2003a, 2003b) argues that torture is justified under certain circumstances, and, in divergence from Walzer, that the wrongdoing of the torture is “cancelled out,” so to speak, by the lives saved as a result of doing so. Dershowitz (2003b) asks, “Would torturing one guilty terrorist to prevent the deaths of thousands of innocent civilians shock the conscience of all decent people?” (p. 173). Dershowitz uses the now infamous example of the “ticking time bomb” case, “the situation in which a captured terrorist who knows of an imminent large-scale threat refuses to disclose it” (2003b, p. 173). Dershowitz poses a moral gambit by asking if it would be unethical to torture the captive if it meant savings hundreds or thousands of lives. He says that it would not, and that the *ethical* answer is to permit the torture of the captive, thus allowing the interrogator to obtain information that can be used to save innocent lives.

⁷ Though I credit Walzer (1974) here with the development or articulation of this notion, it is admittedly an ancient concept of ends justifying means.

Though Dershowitz claims to approach the topic from an anti-torture perspective, motivated by a desire to lower actual instances of torture, and reserve its use for only the direst of circumstances in which its use can prevent the loss of untold lives, his argument is nonetheless flawed, pivoting as it does around the logical fallacy that his question presumes absolute and accurate knowledge on the part of the authorities regarding both the likelihood and magnitude of catastrophe to occur and also on the knowledge of the captive. Dershowitz's argument, therefore, is contingent on a number of different factors that make such a scenario unlikely (Cohen, 2005)⁸. The scenario described and advocated by Dershowitz is also, as scholars have noted, constitutionally illegal (Allen, 2005; Ignatieff, 2004; Kreimer, 2003). This brings me to my next point, the relationship between torture and the United States.

Torture and the United States

While torture has been common practice in autocratic dictatorships (Avelar, 2004; Basso, 1979; Radtke, 1979), it is not typical for torture to be overtly sanctioned by democratic nations (Corrado, 1992). This brings us neatly (and ironically, as it turns out) to the United States, where torture is prohibited under the Eighth Amendment, which states, in no uncertain terms, that “no cruel or unusual punishments [shall be] inflicted”⁹. Recent events place the Eighth Amendment in a wholly new context, raising the question of whether the Eighth Amendment has been violated. In the post-9/11 era, writes Silverglate (2003),

the [Supreme] Court might now rule that it is neither cruel nor unusual to torture a convict, a prisoner, or even a mere suspect, if the information that *might* be wrung from that person *could* save thousands of innocent lives (p. 186, emphasis added).

⁸ Though, to bring us back to the opening passages of this study, this does not necessarily prevent such fallacies from being deployed in nationally televised Presidential debates!

⁹ http://www.law.cornell.edu/anncon/html/amdt8_user.html

This justification sounds eerily similar to Dershowitz's "ticking bomb" scenario. As Avelar (2004) notes, the War on Terror has "revived debates that one thought were definitively buried in Western democracies" (p. 25) and has eroded the taboo over the use of torture (Allen, 2005; Avelar, 2004; Ignatieff, 2004; Silverglate, 2003). Torture has been brought to the forefront of political discourse as a result of controversies arising at Abu Ghraib, a U.S.-run detention facility. The controversy surrounding Abu Ghraib has blurred the lines of right and wrong, creating a moral gray area. Here, I will give an overview of the controversy, which will provide insight into the current debate regarding ethics of torture.

Abu Ghraib

Abu Ghraib prison was built by British contractors in the 1960s and achieved notoriety under Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath government, where, modeled on Stalin's gulags (Aburish, 1999; Blumenthal, 2004; Cohen & Corrado, 2005; Giroux, 2004), it became the site of the torture and execution of political dissidents and opponents to Hussein (Aburish, 1999; Cohen & Corrado, 2005). Following the toppling of Hussein's regime, it fell under the control of the American military as a detention facility for suspected and confirmed terrorists. Following the removal of Hussein, President Bush made a point of stating that torture would no longer be found in Iraq (Hajjar, 2004), but events would see Bush proved dramatically wrong, as since then Abu Ghraib has come to function as a legal black hole, isolating prisoners from family, community, and legal counsel (Roussett, 2005). Parallels have been drawn between Abu Ghraib and the U.S. civil prison system (Carlton, 2006; Giroux, 2004; Gordon, 2006; Greene, 2004; Ratner & Ray, 2005; Reid, 2005), an unsurprising comparison, perhaps, given that officials running the prison were handpicked from correction facilities across the United States (Gordon, 2006; Greene, 2004).

In late 2003 and early 2004, the Red Cross began to make vocal its dissatisfaction with the manner in which the facility was run (Caton, 2006; Giroux, 2004), but it wasn't until April, 29, 2004, that the Abu Ghraib scandal became public knowledge. The scandal was revealed in a special report by CBS News (Giroux, 2004), followed by articles in the *New Yorker* on May 1 and the *Washington Post* on May 6 that alleged that torture had been used by American military personnel at Abu Ghraib (Danner, 2004; Hersch, 2004a, 2004b; Lewis, 2004). The scandal broke when dozens of photographs depicting prisoners in inhumane and degrading situations, often accompanied by guards taunting and mocking them, were leaked to the media. The depictions in the photographs caused great concern, with Caton (2006) commenting, "The pornographic and sadomasochistic nature of these images is only too obvious" (p. 120). Danner (2004) writes of the number of degrading and violent acts committed at Abu Ghraib captured on celluloid.

"Punishments" included:

isolation and solitary confinement; hooding used to prevent seeing, disorient, and limit the ability to breathe; repeated and frequent beatings; the tightened use of flexi-cuffs for extended periods, causing lesions, and, in some cases, long-term nerve damage, handcuffing for extended periods to bars in the cells, often while naked and in stress positions; extended exposure to loud noise or sun while hooded; being paraded naked before detainees; and other forms of humiliation, including being forced to simulate sexual acts, wear women's underwear, and drink urine (pp. 46-47).

Male detainees reported being sodomized by female officers, terrorized by screams of women being raped, stripped of their clothes, photographed in degrading positions, ridiculed, and forced to simulate sexual acts such as masturbating in full view of officers (Roussett, 2005). One detainee, Abu Mann, reported:

If they came and found me asleep, they'd piss in a bottle and either pour it on me or tie me up and make me drink it. What has information got to do with making you drink urine? What has information got to do with not giving you medicine for diarrhea and leaving you in the cold? (as cited in Roussett, 2005).

The photographs documenting these appalling goings-on - “an odd mix of pornography and snapshots in the tradition of tourist photography” (Caton, 2006, p. 119) – demonstrate what Gordon (2006) calls the “normalcy of exceptional brutality” (p. 45). The human beings being tortured become “abstract objects of forms of torture that *were* considered anathema to democracy” (Davis, 2005, p. 80, emphasis added), “colonized bodies” (Salaita, 2006, p. 199) whose treatment seems almost incomprehensible¹⁰.

Given that the United States saw its role in Iraq as a “civilizing mission” (Giroux, 2004; Steel, 2004), the ironies of Abu Ghraib speak for themselves. As Giroux (2004) writes,

The fight for Iraqi hearts and minds was now irreparably damaged as the War on Terror appeared to reproduce only more terror, mimicking the very crimes it claimed to have eliminated... Restoring one of Saddam Hussein's infamous torture chambers to its original use reinforced the image of the USA as a dangerous, rogue state with despicable imperial ambitions (pp. 781-782).

The photographs caught media and scholarly attention as a breach of human rights and general decency. The photographs that capture the events at Abu Ghraib detention facility have come to

¹⁰ In the immediate aftermath and media furor, the guards involved stressed high-pressure conditions, along with lack of training (Gordon, 2006), though Parenti (2004) cites prison guard Corporal Charles A. Graner Jr. as stating to a colleague before the photographs were leaked to the media that “the Christian in me says it's wrong, but the prison officer in me likes to see a grown man piss himself” (p. 141). Graner was one of the guards responsible for a now infamous photograph, where around a dozen prisoners were stripped naked and forced to kneel on each others backs in a “human pyramid” position, though Graner claimed that the pyramid was used as a means of controlling a riot (Reid, 2005).

symbolize a trauma done to the nation (Davis, 2005). As Caton (2006) eloquently puts it, through the Abu Ghraib pictures, “we felt the brush of the devil’s leathery wing” (p. 122).

Reaction of the Bush administration

The official reaction of the Bush administration has been to distance itself from the events at the prison. The initial response from the White House seemed to suggest the events of Abu Ghraib were the actions of “aberrant individuals” (Davis, 2005, p. 52). President Bush stated that what happened was nothing more than “disgraceful conduct by a few American troops” (Bush, 2004). The reaction was one of disassociation, treating the events at Abu Ghraib as isolated incidents, the actions of specific individuals rather than part of a larger trend or policy (Carlton, 2006; Davis, 2005; Moniz & Squitieri, 2004). However, the paper trail behind Abu Ghraib has since been traced to then-Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld (Hersch, 2004a, 2004b). Cole (2006) cites a CNN report from June 2004 discussing a United States government classified document indicating that the detainment of al-Qaida and Taliban suspects was not covered by the Geneva Convention regarding torture, demonstrating that the administration was well aware of this fact. Government reaction has sought to suppress discussion that the United States condones torture, with President George W. Bush declaring “The United States is committed to the worldwide elimination of torture and we are leading this fight by example” (as cited in Brasch, 2005, p. 27). Despite such assertions, some commentators have suggested that the Bush administration, allied with the mass media, have sought to purposefully obscure the horrors of Abu Ghraib and other goings-on in Iraq from the public (Rampton & Stauber, 2003).

The media climate post-9/11

Having provided a background to the political context of the show and the issues that are the subject of examination in this study, it is relevant to further situate the show, this time within

the context of the media climate following 9/11. In her review of television culture following 9/11, Spigel (2004) writes, “After the attacks of September 11, traditional forms of entertainment had to reinvent their place in U.S. life and culture” (p. 235). The aftershocks of 9/11 were felt throughout the American social fabric. Through an analysis of mass media and movie industry reaction and output, we can begin to illuminate the notion of a post-9/11 culture.

In a prescient observation, Doane (1990) argued that television’s temporal flow and central narrational agency are disrupted to the point of collapse in times of crisis and catastrophe. This was certainly the case in the aftermath of 9/11. Spigel (2004) writes that “on September 11, the everydayness of television itself was suddenly disrupted by news of something completely ‘alien’ to the usual patterns of domestic TV viewing” (p. 237). Television seemed to repeat the horrendous images of the planes striking the towers ad nauseum, to the point where they became abstract images (Dixon, 2004; Pomerance, 2004). When this endless repetition ceased, it was replaced with countless memorials emphasizing “human interest” stories over reportage on why the attacks occurred (Hark, 2004; Stasi, 2002).

Following 9/11, people turned to television for comfort and solidarity (Gitlin, 2001, p. 6), while the mass media stressed the moral imperative of unity, making a concerted effort to be more sensitive to their audiences (Cali, 2002). Journalists became fearful of questioning the administration, for fear that they would be accused of being unpatriotic or un-American, thus abandoning all attempt at objectivity (Freda, 2004). Meanwhile, television comedy struggled to deal with the ultra-sensitive political and social climate following the attacks, as shows such as *Saturday Night Live*, *The Late Show with David Letterman* and *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*, normally bastions of political satire, dealt with the aftershock of the attacks with a melancholy sobriety (Spigel, 2004).

The movie industry was also dramatically affected by the terrorist attacks. Industry leaders were forced to make decisions on what was in the “public interest,” striking a balance between being the “public servant” and catering to the public taste. This delicate balancing act was abandoned when, just a week after the attacks, the entertainment industry moved to align itself with the Bush administration and present entertainment as patriotic discourse, as Jack Valenti, president and CEO of the Motion Picture Association of America, proudly stated: “The country needs what we create” (as cited in Spigel, 2004, p. 238). The movie industry thus discursively repositioned itself as a player in “the war effort.” Just six days after the attacks, Valenti wrote, “For a time, during this mourning period, we need to be sensitive to how we tell a story” (as cited in Spigel, 2004, p. 238). Representatives of the Bush administration, including Karl Rove, met with Hollywood executives and moguls, Valenti among them, to discuss Hollywood’s response to 9/11, making it clear that the administration wished to use Hollywood as a tool for managing the cultural side of the War on Terror (Dixon, 2004; Hoberman, 2002; Lewis, 2005; Massing, 2002; Roberts, 2002; Sterritt, 2004). That Hollywood had “rallied around the flag,” so to speak, is unsurprising, given that Hollywood has, in times of crisis, seen itself as part of the war effort and toed the party line, from the patriotic representations of military figures during World War One (DeBauche, 1997; Isenberg, 1975) and World War Two (Doherty, 1993; Shindler, 1979), to the Vietnam War being vicariously re-fought on the big screen during the Reagan era (Hellmann, 1986; Jeffords, 1986, 1989, 1994; Kellner, 1991), to contemporary representations of American imperialism as seen in movies such as *Independence Day* and *Three Kings* (Davies, 2005).

At first, 9/11 caused ripples of change throughout the entertainment media, with movies such as *Lethal Weapon* (1987), *Carrie* (1976) and, somewhat bizarrely, *Superman* (1978) being

yanked from schedules due to their violent content (Meeuf, 2006; Spigel, 2004; Trend, 2007). However, there was great confusion within the industry regarding what the public actually wanted to see, as while movies with violent content and/or dealing with the issue of terrorism were hastily removed from schedules, video stores reported a dramatic rise in films of this nature (Spigel, 2004; Trend, 2007). Meanwhile, movies that were in production or post-production at the time of the attacks on the World Trade Center that contained scenes including the iconic twin towers were quickly edited before release to remove the offending items from the New York skyline, for fear that audiences might find their inclusion offensive or upsetting¹¹. Responding to why shots of the twin towers were removed from the romantic comedy *Serendipity* (2001), Miramax publicist Matthew Hiltzik stated, “Since we’re still only a few weeks from the tragedy, we’d rather err on the side of sensitivity” (as cited in Rice, 2001, ¶4). Further, Miramax co-chairman Harvey Weinstein, in an interview with the British *Guardian* newspaper, stated, “what people are feeling is this: We don’t want to be reminded in our entertainment of the disaster we went through” (as cited in Rice, 2001, ¶37).

While at first there was an effort to be sensitive in the kinds of stories that Hollywood could tell (resulting in a number of projects being delayed or suffering heavy cuts), with the emphasis being firmly on family fare (a means of escapism from the terrors of 9/11), the trend quickly swung to the polar opposite, with movies such as *Black Hawk Down* (2001), *Collateral Damage* (2002), and *We Were Soldiers* (2002) bringing conflict back into cinemas (Dixon, 2004; Trend, 2007), representing “a renewed audience appetite for narratives of conflict” (Dixon, 2004, p. 1). These movies conveyed the notion of the “just war,” so as to tacitly signify their support for the ideology behind the Iraq War, and thus their support for the Bush administration. Of these

¹¹ Though let us not forget the strategic benefit that this had to the Bush administration, who, as discussed earlier, met with industry officials in an effort to manage the cultural side of the War on Terror (Dixon, 2004; Hoberman, 2002; Lewis, 2005; Massing, 2002; Roberts, 2002; Sterritt, 2004).

movies, Baudrillard (2002) comments, “The countless disaster movies bear witness to this fantasy, which they clearly attempt to exorcise with images, drowning out the whole thing with special effects” (p. 7). It was almost as though the War on Terror was being fought on the big screen in a socially constructed conflict where the victor was assured. As Dixon (2004) writes, “we are assured by the very act of entering a movie theater, the public domain of visual fiction, that what we are about to see is entirely a construct” (p. 8). These movies became, as Baudrillard suggests, an “exorcism,” a way of numbing the pain.

On a more sinister tone, such movies were also rhetorical mouthpieces for the Bush administration. *Black Hawk Down* (2001) was the subject of much praise from Bush administration officials, including Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz (Hoberman, 2002; Massing; 2002; Roberts, 2002). *The Sum of All Fears* (2002) has also been subject of critique for how it “urges audiences to accept the practice of spying, deception, assassination, and invasion of privacy as beneficial states of affairs” (Bell-Metereau, 2004, p. 159). This representation, which takes an ideological position in its depiction of “spying, deception, assassination, and invasion of privacy,” is applicable to this study, as one must wonder if the same can be said of *24* and its depiction of torture. I shall go into greater depth on this issue shortly.

It is in this cultural climate that we locate *24*. It is clear that Hollywood experienced some uncertainty of its role in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 before it launched into unabashed support of the Bush administration through a number of movies with patriotic flavors. Having contextualized the show, we now move into the second framework for this study, the theoretical, to establish theory that will drive the research questions and methods of this study.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts a critical-cultural position in its analysis of *24*. In the following theoretical framework I will outline the foundations and premises of taking such a position, as well as the epistemological assumptions one adopts when one does. I will also outline the concepts of ideology and hegemony, as they will inform the media-specific discussion that will follow it. I will then shift my focus towards a discussion of media, looking at the importance and power of narrative, and how ideology theory applies to the media, where television is seen as an ideological device with the capability of creating social reality for viewers (Fiske, 1991, 1994; Gitlin, 2000, 2001; Goodenough, 1971; Hall, 1977; Kellner, 1995; Real, 1996), which serves to support the dominant ideology (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1993; Artz & Ortega Murphy, 2000; Fiske, 1983, 1986, 1987, 1991; Gitlin, 2000; Kellner, 1982, 1995; Morley, 1980; Newcomb, 1984; Radway, 1986; Thompson, 1990). At that juncture, I wish to move the discussion to a different issue, but one that has pertinence to this study, the “hybridization” (Brown, 2003, p. 53) of news and fiction, as part of a call for more research into television drama and the ideologies it transmits, and consideration will be given to the parallel roles adopted by the journalist and the scriptwriter. I will then take a narrower focus to look at media scholarship after 9/11.

Critical theory

The origins of critical-cultural theory lie in the works of Karl Marx, whose work both individually and with Frederich Engels has provided the base for the critical tradition in communication research (Craig, 1999; Vande Berg, Wenner, & Gronbeck, 2004). Marxist theory states that the system of economic relationships in a society (the base) was the single most powerful shaper of all other social structures and institutions (the superstructure) in a society. For Marx, the relationship between a society’s economic structure and its social institutions and

practices was fundamental and inextricable, the economics of a society becoming crucial to an understanding of how society functions at all levels, including at the level of ideology (Marx & Engels, 1964, 1974). For Marx, society was divided into “two great hostile camps” (Marx, 1964, p. 201). Those individuals who controlled or owned the means of production (the bourgeoisie) became the ruling class, whose profit was made by the workers (the proletariat), two camps who made up the haves and the have-nots in society. Marx and Engels argued, “The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling *material* force of a society, is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force” (Marx & Engels, 1974, p. 64, emphasis in original). The proletariat, according to Marx, is seduced into accepting as normal and ordinary the existing political, economic, and social inequalities while the bourgeoisie are similarly seduced into believing that their roles are deserved.

Marx’s theories were taken up in the twentieth century by members of the Institute for Social Research (commonly referred to as the Frankfurt School), who included the likes of Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, and Max Horkheimer in their number. The Frankfurt School developed critical theory and helped focus scholarly attention on the role of the mass media in society and provided the foundation for ideological criticism of the mass media (Thompson, 1990). They argued that classical Marxism placed too much emphasis on class as the only means of domination and subjugation, arguing that other factors, such as race and gender, should be taken into greater consideration. The theories of the Frankfurt School, which underpin much contemporary critical-cultural theory – form the basis of a discussion of critical-cultural enquiry’s epistemological assumptions.

Epistemological assumptions

Values are inherent to critical-cultural inquiry, with theorists believing their work matters and can make a difference in people's lives (Cloud, 1994; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Vande Berg, Wenner, & Gronbeck, 2004). Ethics are "intrinsic" to the critical paradigm "as implied by the intent to erode ignorance and misapprehensions and to take full account of values and historical situatedness in the inquiry process" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 115). For critical-cultural scholars, fact cannot be separated from value and the sociopsychological tradition's emphasis on objectivity is flawed due to its "blindness to [its] own ideological presuppositions and... false pretensions to political neutrality" (Craig, 1999, p. 149). Therefore, a key assumption of this position is "that knowledge is value mediated and hence value dependent" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 111). If knowledge is value dependent then this places importance on the role of the critical scholar, concerned with social justice, reform, and highlighting areas of oppression and injustice. Furthermore, analysis is interpretive: the process is laden with researchers' attitudes and beliefs as well as the assumption that there is no ultimately "correct" interpretation of texts (Wodak, 1999). So, I must recognize that I bring my own attitudes, beliefs, and values to bear in this analysis, being sensitive to my belief that torture is fundamentally wrong and a violation of human rights. Put simply, I share Allen's (2005) view that torture is "an extreme evil" (p. 3) and is unethical no matter the scenario. Vande Berg, Wenner, and Gronbeck (2004) warn, "Because cultural criticism ends in judgment, it's very tempting to start with the judgment and then work more or less backward. *Resist that temptation*" (p. 405, emphasis in original). While I cannot separate myself from my views on torture, and while I assume that objectivity is impossible, I must also agree with Vande Berg, Wenner, and Gronbeck and reserve judgment on the media text in question until analysis has been undertaken.

Cultural studies is a field that examines the relationship between culture and power (Bennett, 1998; Vande Berg, Wenner, & Gronbeck, 2004), and is committed to the study of the entire range of a society's arts, beliefs, institutions, and communicative practices, taking as one of its foundations the blurring of the lines between "high" and "low" culture (Grossberg, Nelson, & Treichler, 1992; Vande Berg, Wenner, & Gronbeck, 2004). Mass media and popular culture are, according to Hall (1980), sites of struggle over meaning and the power of representation. Within a media studies context, then, the role of the critical scholar is to draw attention to the ideologies and power contestations that are at play in media texts, so that audiences can become aware of these messages. In order for us better to understand the application of critical-cultural theory to the study of media, we must examine two pivotal components: ideology and hegemony.

Ideology

For Marx, ideology was the set of ideas shared by the ruling political and economic classes that seduced members of society into a "false consciousness" that made them unaware of their own oppression and subjugation. Ideology refers to those "ideas, meanings, and practices which, while they purport to be universal truths, are maps of meaning which support the power of particular social groups" (Barker, 2000, p. 59), or, as Thompson (1990) puts it, "meaning in the service of power" (p. 7). Ideology works to maintain existing power relations through ideological state apparatuses such as the media that institutionalize the dominant ideology (Althusser, 1970). Due to its institutionalization, ideology is thus a representation of ideas, beliefs, values, and morals that members of a society learn are the given and accepted "way things are." Althusser's focus, as Stevenson (1995) explains, was the ways in which "the cultural transmission of traditions through institutions, like mass communications... [help] form a

dominant consensus in contemporary society” (p. 17). Ideology thus works “to create common sense out of dominant sense” (Fiske, 1991, p. 447), a means of coercion by consent.

Hegemony

Gramsci (1971, 1985) saw ideology as a vital component of our day-to-day lives, forming an understanding of how we are to conduct ourselves in society. Gramsci answers the question of why the working classes did not revolt against their domination. He developed the concept of hegemony, which is characterized by

the combination of force and consent, which balance each other reciprocally without force predominating over consent. Indeed, the attempt is always to ensure that force would appear to be based on the consent of the majority expressed by the so-called organs of public opinion – newspapers and associations (1971, p. 80).

Raymond Williams (1979), a key figure in the development of cultural studies, expands upon Gramsci’s work, defining hegemony as

...not only the articulate upper level of “ideology,” nor are its forms of control only those ordinarily seen as “manipulation” or “indoctrination.” It is a whole body of practices and expectations, over the whole of our living: our senses, our assignments of energy, our shaping perceptions of ourselves and our world. It is a lived system of meaning and values – constitutive and constituting – which as they are experienced as practices appear as reciprocally confirming (p. 110).

Hegemony is thus domination without the awareness of being dominated, where “elites maintain social and ideological control through hegemonic consensus rather than confrontation” (Vande Berg, Wenner, & Gronbeck, 2004, p. 260). Thus the masses accept that things are “the way they are” because that is the natural order of things, or common sense (Gramsci, 1971, 1985; Hall,

1977; Hebdige, 1979; Williams, 1979) It serves to shape the socio-cultural landscape so as to make members of a society unable to determine what governs their most basic thoughts and actions. Hegemony thus allows for the minimization of dissent and the maintenance of the status quo, to the benefit of the ruling classes in society.

Narrative

I want to move now to sharpen the focus of my discussion toward the media text at hand, beginning with a discussion of the importance of narrative. As we are a society “defined by stories” (de Certeau, 1984, p. 186), it is important at this point, to recognize the importance that narrative has. Narratives surround us; from the stories we relate to each other of the events of the day, to the book or magazine we read in our spare time, to the television we watch. Brooks (1984) writes, “Our lives are ceaselessly intertwined with narrative... we are immersed in narrative” (p. 3). Fisher (1984, 1987) has even suggested that we are *homo narrans*, arguing that it is our story-telling ability that defines us as sentient beings. Narratives work by using a series of codes that control how information is shared and received (Barthes, 1975), pressing us to “define and create our own moral agency” (Gregory, 1998, p. 213). Abbott (2002) writes that we perceive information to be more believable when it is presented as narrative: “You could argue... that our need for narrative is so strong that we don’t really believe something is true unless we can see it as a story” (p. 40). Thus narratives are capable of enforcing a dominant reality, and truth can be distorted “in the name of storytelling” (Cowan, 1998, p. 155). Narratives teach us how things are related to each other, allow for the complexity of public problems to be understood, and help us make sense of the world (Throgmorton, 1993). Thus they become “a powerful way of teaching people lessons and transmitting ideas” (Berger, 1997, p. x), and for *ideas* we can substitute *ideologies*.

Ideology: Normalizing and naturalizing

This brings us neatly to ideology. Significant scholarship has been conducted on how the mass media serve as ideological tools that serve the interests of the elite. For Fiske (1991), “Television is the prime circulator of meanings and pleasures in our society” (p. 445). Television texts “have to serve the economic interests of their producers and distributors, and, as these are capitalistic institutions, their economic interests must be aligned with capitalistic... ideology” (p. 445). Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer have argued that American media convey a particular ideology in support of the status quo, eliminating any potential for societal change by offering individuated solutions to social problems. They argue that the media should be fulfilling a more uplifting role, encouraging people to rebel against the system, but instead serve the interests of the elites, naturalizing and normalizing the power of social, economic, educational, religious, and political institutions (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1993).

Theorists have established that film and television work symbolically to establish dominant ideological messages (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1993; Artz & Ortega Murphy, 2000; Fiske, 1983, 1986, 1987, 1991; Gitlin, 2000; Kellner, 1982, 1995; Morley, 1980; Newcomb, 1984; Radway, 1986; Thompson, 1990), acting as an agent of social control by discouraging change. Fiske (1991) writes of how the media serve as an ideologue that privileges elites while maintaining the oppression of the disenfranchised. The ideologies contained within media texts, he writes, “[work] to naturalize the meanings of the social world that serve the interests of the dominant; it works to create *common* sense out of the *dominant* sense” (pp. 445-447, emphasis in original). Television thus has the power to normalize and naturalize (Barthes, 1973).

Naturalization is defined as the process of “exnomination,” where a “naturalized” subject “present[s] itself as common sense, as an objective, innocent reflection of the real” (Fiske, 1987,

p. 42). The process involves taking a concept and presenting it as a normal, everyday part of social reality, and thus it inculcates the audience into believing that such behavior is normal and even expected of them, and it simply becomes part of “the way things are,” thus maintaining the power of the hegemonic elite. Barthes (1972, 1973) sees the process of naturalization as inextricably linked to notions of myth. Myths are stories set in the past (yet perpetuated in the present), with virtuous and villainous characters whose actions have either good or bad morals; that is to say that they teach us how to behave in our own world (Barthes, 1972, 1973; Jewett & Lawrence, 1977; Kellner, 1982). These myths are “organized into a coherence that we might call a mythology or an ideology” (Fiske & Hartley, 1978, p. 46). Again, we are brought back to ideology.

Television as an ideological instrument

Great attention has been paid within cultural studies to the ways that media have naturalized meanings “which serve the dominant ideology,” paying attention to how media naturalize dominant ideological messages regarding gender (Byars & Meehan, 2000; D’Acci, 2000; Dow, 1990; Harwood, 1997; MacKinnon, 2004; Mulvey, 1975; Rabinowitz, 1989; Schwichtenberg, 1981, 1983, 1987; Spiegel, 1992, 2000) and race (Downing, 1988; Ely, 1991; Fiske, 1987, 1994; Gray, 1986, 1994, 1995, 2000; Hall, 1981, 1982, 1990, 1997; Jhally & Lewis, 1992; MacDonald, 1983; Merskin, 2001; Orbe, 1998; Rivero, 2007). Media institutions and texts thus can be said to serve the “vested interests of the prevalent power structure and its privileged beneficiaries” (Thompson, 1990, p. 7). Artz and Ortega Murphy (2000) go even further, and describe television programs as “frames and images promoted by a handful of agents authorized by hegemonic institutions” (p. 63).

Cultural studies opened up avenues of inquiry into popular culture, spawning a body of scholarship that has examined the ideological dimensions of popular culture texts; Kellner (1995) writes that

Ideological texts put on display both the significant dreams and nightmares of a culture and the ways that culture is attempting to channel them to maintain its present relations of power and determination... Certain media cultural texts advance *specific ideological positions* which can be ascertained by relating the texts to the political discourses and debates of their era, to other artifacts concerned with similar themes, and to ideological motifs in the culture that are active in a given text (p. 93, emphasis added).

This study, then, is concerned with the specific ideological positions that *24* may advance in relation to torture. There has been a rich vein of scholarship within critical-cultural studies on the ideological positions taken by media texts. For example, attention has been paid to how the James Bond series serve as ideological texts reflecting British imperialism and hierarchical elitism (Bennett & Woollacott, 1987; Berger, 1992). Harwood (1997) found that movies of the 1980s such as *Fatal Attraction* (1987) and *Total Recall* (1990) reinforced notions of female dependency on men. Other movies of the 1980s, such as the Rambo, Terminator, and Indiana Jones series have been found to reinforce masculine heroism and pursuit of adventure (Jeffords, 1989, 1994; Lupton & Barclay, 1997), while also having political undertones in support of popular conservative ideology (Jeffords, 1986, 1989, 1994; Kellner, 1991).

Turning specifically to television, Gitlin (2000) argues that prime time television series are “performances that rehearse social fixity” (p. 578). There have been numerous analyses of specific television shows and the ideological dimensions these shows have. I will shed light upon a small handful to illuminate this point further. Medical dramas, for instance, have been the

subject of analysis among media scholars, with Gandy (1982) arguing that primetime medical dramas reinforce dominant medical ideologies, stressing a victim-blaming approach to sources of cancer rather than an industry-centered approach, while Alley (1977) found that medical dramas inculcate trust in the professionalism, ability, and competency of those in the medical field. Other scholars have looked at specific television shows and the ideologies contained within. *The Love Boat* (1977-1986), for example, was seen as an ideological text packaging and selling the heterosexual ideal and the nuclear family (Schwichtenberg, 1987), while *All in the Family* (1971-1979) was seen as potentially reinforcing bigotry through the evocation of myth and “the way things were” (Chesebro & Hamsher, 1976; Vidmar & Rokeach, 1974; Wander, 1976), while myth was also deployed in *The Waltons* (1972-1981), reinforcing stereotypical, idyllic notions of a mythic America (Alley, 1977, 1979; Newcomb, 1976; Roiphe, 1976) a critique also leveled at popular Western movies (McVeigh, 2007; Merlman, 1976; Slotkin, 1973; Wright, 1975).

Other television texts suggested ideological notions about American imperialism and potential threats to it. Alley (1977) suggests that the police show *Hawaii Five-O* (1968-1980) emphasized the values of Americanism such as the Puritan work ethic, while Berger (1976) writes lucidly of *Mission Impossible* (1966-1973, 1988-1990) and the American sense of mission of responsibility and spreading democracy, easing fears about foreign nations. Berger (1990) has also argued that *Star Trek* (1966-1969) is a morality play about the spread of American values and ideology and the fear of contamination by aliens (symbolizing foreigners and/or Communists). Jewett and Lawrence (1977) discuss the manifestation of what they call “the American monomyth” in a plethora of popular culture texts, from *Star Trek* to *Death Wish* (1974) to *Little House on the Prairie* (1974-1983), seemingly disparate cultural items bound together by the theme of the paradisaal community threatened by evil.

Fictional narrative has also endorsed and propagated ideological conservatism, as Loeb (1990) found in his analysis of the prime time serial drama *thirtysomething* (1987-1991). It has helped normalize and idealize the white, middle-class, nuclear family, with television shows in the 1950s reinforcing the convention of the mythic “ideal American family,” a nuclear family consisting of a married, white, heterosexual male and female raising their biological children in a happy, safe environment (Chambers, 2000; Coontz, 1992).

Constructing reality

As a result of the ideological dimensions of media (both in its fictional and non-fictional forms), many theorists have argued that television has the capacity to construct a sense of reality for viewers (Fiske, 1991, 1994; Gitlin, 2000, 2001; Goodenough, 1971; Hall, 1977; Kellner, 1995; Real, 1996). Television works to “actively rule in and rule out certain realities” (Hall, 1977, p. 342). Herein lies the danger of the naturalizing and normalizing of dominant ideologies, as the information and messages contained within a media text become assimilated into a particular worldview and compressed into categories of understanding that are consistent with widespread social norms (Hall, 1997; Merskin, 2001; Spyrou, 2002). Television works to inculcate attitudes, ideologies, and values in the viewership, reifying “standards for deciding what is, standards for deciding what can be, standards for deciding how one feels about it, standards for deciding what to do about it, and standards for deciding how to go about doing it” (Goodenough, 1971, p. 22). When the ideologies at stake regard something such as torture then the stakes are undeniably high.

Mediated messages such as those on television can thus drastically distort our perceptions of social reality (Gitlin, 2001). The realistic imagery of television carries a rhetorical force, leaving the impression that “what it depicts is the case” (Carroll, 1998, p. 139). The distinction

between electronic mediation and reality has become blurred, to the point where media are constructing social reality for members of society. This has the potential to create a false consciousness that can be used to maintain the status quo and thus minimize change in society through non-representation of marginalized voices such as the poor, ethnic and religious minorities, homosexuals, the disabled, and the elderly. Because we come to identify with television shows, television characters “tend to become familiar figures, loved, or excused with a tolerance that is quite remarkable” (Ellis, 1982, p. 139). So, when the character is Jack Bauer and the act being perpetrated is torture, again the stakes are high.

For the critical theorist then, our role is to “debunk” these myths and work towards highlighting the interests being served by having these normalizing and naturalizing messages transmitted in mass media. Fiske (1989) writes,

To present a critical view of the social order, it would be necessary to take it out of the realm of the taken for granted, to “nominate” it, to represent it directly and critically, and thus to demythologize it (p. 140).

For *24*, one must speculate about the dangers of normalizing the viewing audience to torture, so that torture becomes less of a last resort and more of an everyday part of “the way things are,” an acceptable means of combating terrorism. This takes on added urgency when we consider the wider political context within which the show is situated.

At this point, I want to move the discussion to another issue pertinent to this study. I want to develop a concurrent point here that greater consideration needs to be afforded within communication research to television drama and the ideologies it transmits.

Fact versus fiction

It has become apparent that we live in a world where the lines between fact and fiction are becoming increasingly blurred. Postmodernism has eroded the boundaries between art and everyday life (Featherstone, 1991), yet communication research has continually sought to make distinctions between the two, creating arbitrary boundaries that have hindered a vast reserve of research from being tapped¹². Television drama mandates greater academic consideration as a means through which ideologies can be inculcated within society. The success of the television drama lies in its ability to reflect and exploit what Williams (1974) defines as the “flow” of the televisual image (pp. 86-96). The drama weaves in and out of the lives of its viewers, playing around with viewers’ sense of time. Additionally, “Techniques such as background music, camera angles, and close ups act as dramatic cues. They have the ability to raise viewers’ emotional responses, engaging them more fully in the narrative” (Wardle & Gans-Boriskin, 2004, p. 85). I wish to turn now to a related issue, that of the hybridization of news and fiction.

The hybridization of news and fiction

Brown (2003) suggests, “It is the televisual which has above all reduced the apparent gap between ‘news’ and ‘fiction’ in its generic cross-dressing...This is a multifaceted phenomenon as the ‘news’ and ‘fiction’ undergo a rapidly accelerating process of hybridization” (p. 53). Thus, within academia divisions between fiction and non-fiction that formerly divided research about political socialization have come to be viewed as arbitrary and socially constructed (Delli Carpini & Williams, 1994, 2001). Delli Carpini and Williams (2001), for example, write: “The structural walling off of news from non-news reified what was an essentially socially constructed distinction” (p. 165). While it would be an overstatement to suggest the extreme alternative, that

¹² Possible reasons for this are twofold. First, it is possible that factual news is somehow seen as more “highbrow” than fiction (Wardle & Gans-Boriskin, 2004, p. 73), and thus the study of factual news has come to be seen as more “highbrow” than the study of televised fictional drama. An alternative explanation is that there has been greater interest in communication research to advocacy communication than to narratives (Green & Brock, 2000).

news media and fictional media are exactly the same (there are manifest differences – in both form and content – between the two) it is increasingly apparent that these distinctions are not necessarily unyielding, and we can start to tie them together once we reconcile ourselves with the socially constructed boundaries. This tying together, or “hybridization,” as Brown (2003, p. 53) dubs it, is realized when we look at the roles of, and similarities between, the journalist and the fiction scriptwriter.

The journalist and the scriptwriter

Journalists, like all members of society, are subject to the influences of the culture they inhabit, with their stories reflecting, intentionally or otherwise, their own values and assumptions (Kieran, 1998; Tuchman, 1978). Journalists, as members of society, individually interpret and apply societal frames onto media content. The socially formed attitudes and behaviors of journalists affect media content by creating media ideologies. In this sense, the frame of certain issues in the media highly depends upon journalists’ or reporters’ values and opinions. Wardle and Gans-Boriskin (2004) argue that this is also true of scriptwriters, who, “like journalists, are part of a given culture, and are influenced by that culture” (p. 70). Therefore, “scripts can be read in the same way as a newspaper editorial, opinion piece, or feature article. They reflect cultural beliefs, positions, and attitudes about different social issues” (p. 70). So, does it not follow that if scripts “reflect cultural beliefs, positions, and attitudes about different social issues,” as Wardle and Gans-Boriskin suggest, then those same scripts can be used as ideological texts with a political agenda?

Let me clarify my point. Within the contextual framework for this study, I discussed the notoriety of *24*’s executive producer, Joel Surnow. If we assume that objectivity is impossible – and as a critical researcher, this is one of my most *fundamental* epistemological assumptions –

then it becomes apparent that the script is an ideological document influenced by the beliefs and attitudes of its creator, for as Booth (1998) writes, “I can think of no published story that does not exhibit its author’s implied judgments about how to live and what to believe about how to live” (p. 353). Earlier, I discussed how media texts can normalize and naturalize a particular behavior or attitude. If we agree with Booth that every text carries an author’s judgments about “how to live what to believe about what to live,” and if we then consider that television has the power to normalize and naturalize, is this not of great concern when the matter in question is torture?

Media scholarship post-9/11

Media scholarship has tended to focus on the coverage by news media of the events of 9/11 and subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Such research has encompassed topics such as the way news media have reported the Iraq War (Bennett, 2003), how national identity has been articulated through war (Coles, 2002; Hutcheson, Domke, Billeaudeau, & Garland, 2004), the coverage of minority groups in conflicted communities (Avraham, 2003), and the role of the media in establishing international security regimes (Naveh, 2005). This research is valuable, yet Spiegel (2004) writes “Despite its significant achievements, however, the scholarly focus on news underestimates (indeed, it barely considers) the way the “reality” of 9/11 was communicated across the flow of television’s genres, including its so-called entertainment genres” (p. 238). As Berger (1990) once argued,

We must look at particular texts instead of media in general – texts that are representative of the dominant program types or genres in a given medium and texts that are very popular and, quite likely, have a considerable impact on society (p. 156).

This study does not presumptuously proclaim to “fill the gap,” but help, in some small way, towards a leveling of the playing field, so to speak. Naturally, any expression of disappointment at the lack of scholarship on “entertainment genres,” as Spigel (2004) puts it is, a result of my own personal interests and biases, and what I feel is important. Yet the argument must be made that scholarship has nonetheless neglected the way fictional media have “covered” the War on Terror and the sociocultural environment within which the War on Terror is located.

Research question

As a result of the above theoretical framework, the research question for this study is:

RQ1: What ideologies are apparent in *24*'s depiction of torture?

This study is concerned with the ideologies contained within a media text and thus a qualitative textual analysis is appropriate to determine this. In the next section, I will discuss this process in general terms, before specifically focusing on a particular approach congenial to cultural studies analyses and epistemology, critical discourse analysis (CDA).

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

In the following section I will initially outline the general approach that I am using for this study (qualitative textual analysis). This will be followed by a discussion of discourse analysis and ideological criticism, which will lead into a discussion of the specific approach to discourse analysis that I am adopting for this study, critical discourse analysis (CDA). I will offer some cautions for CDA use, before discussing the process of analysis that my study will take.

Qualitative textual analysis

This study is concerned with issues of power and ideology, and thus employs qualitative textual analysis to determine the ideologies at work. Qualitative textual analysis allows for a nuanced understanding of the media text (Gans-Boriskin & Wardle, 2005), allowing for an examination of the discursive ideologies that present themselves in the text, given that “discursive analyses examine ideology at the level of ideas” (Vande Berg, Wenner, & Gronbeck, 2004, p. 299). They focus on identifying the ways in which “ideological hegemony is embedded in format and formula; genre; setting and character type; slant; and solution” (Gitlin, 2000, p. 577). Qualitative discourse analysis “relies on close readings of the dataset to identify the most important themes, issues, and examples of dialogue, combined with more systematic analysis of selected passages that represent the identified themes” (Gans-Boriskin & Wardle, 2005, p. 32).

Discourse analysis & ideological criticism

Fiske (1991) writes that discourse is “an ideological way of thinking about and representing an important topic area in social experience” (p. 447). Ideological criticism focuses on media as a form of domination (Fiske, 1991; Hall, 1990; Kervin, 1991; Orbe, 1998; Scott, 1998), and thus “has as its goal the identification and critique of media institutions, texts, and

discursive practices that promote or sustain forms of oppression and domination” (Vande Berg, Wenner, & Gronbeck, 2004, p. 298). Discursive ideological critiques focus on the ways in which social practices and power structures “are given meaning or ‘brought into view’ by language”; that is, on the way in which they are “discursively formed” (Barker, 2000, p. 78). Having illuminated these interests, ideological criticism thus seeks to empower viewers/readers to make informed judgments and choices, and sees critique as a means of stimulating change in society (Cloud, 1994; Hall, 1990; Kellner, 1995; Sillars & Gronbeck, 2001). However, a cautionary warning is provided by Vande Berg, Wenner, and Gronbeck (2004): “Although critical methods can be defined in pure forms... critical studies should be guided by the questions you ask, not the methods you want to use” (p. 43).

Critical discourse analysis

Taking Vande Berg, Wenner, and Gronbeck’s (2004) words of caution into account, it is evident that an appropriate method is critical discourse analysis (CDA). CDA has its roots in critical linguistics (Fowler, Hodge, Kress, & Trew, 1979; Kress & Hodge, 1979; van Dijk, 1993) and is founded on the idea that language is intricately related to beliefs, opinions and ideologies (van Dijk, 1998; Wodak, 2006; Wodak & Weiss, 2004). Broadly, CDA is an approach to the study of discourse that views “language as a form of social practice” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 20). CDA is rooted in sociocultural practice and therefore does not (and cannot) divorce a text from its wider context (Wodak, 2000). CDA is also built on a Habermasian notion of language as an ideological device. According to Habermas (1967), “Language is... a medium of domination and social force. It serves to legitimize relations of organized power. Insofar as the legitimizations of power relations... are not articulated... language is also ideological” (p. 259). CDA, then, is concerned chiefly with the way discourse can serve as an agent of oppression and domination,

creating a social and political reality (Fairclough, 1989; Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; van Dijk, 1997a).

CDA aims to reveal power relations and fictions or “ideologies” (van Dijk, 1997b) by investigating linguistic strategies that attempt to make ideological discourses into commonsense, everyday statements (van Dijk, 1993). CDA is thus a manner of highlighting the need for social change and reform (Chiapello & Fairclough, 2002; Fairclough, 1992, 1995, 2000, 2006). For Wodak, being “critical” means “not taking things for granted, opening up complexity, challenging reductionism, dogmatism and dichotomies, being self-reflective in my research, and through these processes, making opaque structures of power relations and ideologies manifest” (as cited in Kendall, 2007, p. 3). CDA is often mistaken as a methodology or a “type” of discourse analysis when it is the opinion of CDA scholars that any form of discourse study can come under the umbrella of CDA if it demonstrates concern for, and insight into, the way discourse reproduces social and political inequalities, oppression, or domination, thus turning the mistaken analogy of CDA as a methodology within discourse analysis on its head, perhaps (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Kendall, 2007; Wodak & Meyer, 2001). As a result, CDA does not limit its analysis to specific texts, but rather relates these texts to the social structure that has shaped the text and the sociopolitical, sociocultural, and historical context that surrounds it. Taking this into consideration, and given my earlier discussion of cultural studies, it should be of no surprise that CDA has great utility for cultural studies analyses. Indeed, Barker and Galasinski (2001) call for greater usage of CDA within the cultural studies field, given that both share an interest in power and the politics of change. Both cultural studies and CDA are concerned with the relationship between culture and power (Barker & Galasinski, 2001; Fairclough, 1989, 1992).

Cautions

Some cautionary words are best heeded with this kind of research. Theorists who use CDA should avoid easy, dichotomous explanations of the phenomena being studied (Wodak, 1999). Rather, analysis should aim to uncover contradictions or dilemmas underpinning social life which is inherently complex. I discussed earlier the issue of objectivity to the critical researcher, and here I return momentarily to this thought, as this is pertinent to my method of analysis. Barker and Galasinski (2001) write that when theorists use CDA we must recognize that our analysis is self-reflective: “we realize that it is impossible to avoid bringing into research our own values and evaluations” (p. 64). CDA researchers must be aware of the analytic choices they make, especially with regard to the backgrounds we invoke in our investigations (Blommaert, 1997; Verschueren, 1999). Earlier, I discussed how as a critical researcher one of my most fundamental assumptions is that objectivity is impossible. To that end, I must recognize that I cannot separate myself as a researcher from my values or my view of torture as unethical and “an extreme evil” (Allen, 2005, p. 3), and must be sensitive to this realization during and after analysis. Thus, as I stated earlier, while I cannot separate myself from my views on torture, and while I assume that objectivity is impossible, I must also reserve judgment on the media text in question until analysis has been completed. This is not to say that I am consciously striving for objectivity: my epistemological assumptions declare such an attempt to be null and void, but rather that I have a sense of awareness of the choices I make and the values I bring to the project, from which I cannot be divorced.

Process of analysis

I conducted a critical discourse analysis of one season of *24*. A season contains 24 episodes and each episode is an hour in length (not taking commercial breaks into account), with each episode representing one hour within one day. I elected to analyze a whole season rather

than individual episodes based on the sensible criteria outlined by Birk and Birk (2005), whose narratological analysis of *24* is one of the few scholarly works produced to date on this particular show. From their position as scholars of narrative, they argue,

the defining idea of the show – strict unity of time – demands that the 24 hours of [a season] constitute a single narrative. In *24* it is thus clearly the season that should be regarded as the basic unit of... analysis (p. 48).

This is a more sensible method than selecting arbitrary episodes, and is more useful, I would contend, to the media scholar in providing context for the text under analysis.

The Abu Ghraib controversy came to the attention of the public in April and May of 2004 through a combination of leaks and media exposes, and torture has since rocketed into the public's imagination, becoming one of the major issues in contemporary American society, something highlighted by the comment from the Republican Colorado Representative Tom Tancredo mentioned at the very outset of this study. When the Abu Ghraib scandal broke into the public sphere, the third season of the show was still airing. Rather than use the third season as a unit of analysis, it was much more salient to choose the fourth season, the season immediately following the Abu Ghraib scandal, for analysis. Thus it is the fourth season of *24*, which aired from January 9, 2005, to May 23, 2005, that is the season being analyzed by this study.

Transcripts for the show were obtained from www.tvtwiz.com, a website affiliated with *TV Guide* that enables access to scripts of prime-time television series' for free. I began analysis by examining the transcripts of the 24 episodes under scrutiny in this study. In this initial analysis, I looked for depictions and discussions of torture as well as noting any other data relevant to this study. Once all 24 transcripts had been analyzed, I watched the episodes *without* the transcripts, again noting themes, trends, depictions, and discussions relevant to this study. I

felt that as the show is obviously a visual medium, it was important to examine it isolated and unfettered by the transcripts, at least initially. All aspects of the show were examined: spoken-word, actions/visuals, on-screen text, and score. In order to synchronize analysis, I followed this up by a repeated viewing of the whole season once again, this time with the television text and the transcript text side-by-side, looking at them in juxtaposition. This solidified the themes that were apparent. Finally, I revisited the transcripts once more for a final examination. The process of data analysis took approximately three weeks from the first examination of the transcripts to the last.

Coding and categorization

Throughout the analysis process, open coding was undertaken as part of a thorough reading and rereading of the text(s). Initially, I had not yet “decided the range of categories or how the categories (were) defined,” and had not yet “unitized the coding procedure” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 219). Significant and/or recurring themes, issues, trends, and depictions were marked with a comment about why this was noteworthy. By the time I had completed my final analysis of the transcripts, I was able to determine the most significant and salient themes pertinent to this study. Using the transcripts as a basis, and as part of the process of “comparing each incident to other incidents in order to decide in which categories they belong” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 219), the most common and significant trends were color-coded, which allowed me to connect the themes that arose during the discourse analysis process.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

In the following section I will first offer a brief summary of the plot of the fourth season of *24*. This will aid in providing context for the reporting of the results that will follow, familiarizing the reader with the events of the “day in the life” of the protagonists. Following the plot summary, I will highlight seven key characters and incidents that occur to them that I feel best exemplify the ideologies that are apparent in the show’s depictions of torture, as posed by the research question for this study. Thick description will be used to support my points in the manner of examples from the media text. Aside from these key incidents there are a number of broader themes that relate to the ideologies of torture that *24* exhibits that need to be tackled, which will be attended to after my in-depth discussion of the seven key characters. I wish to move from a micro to a macro focus as the description of the instances provided initially will provide a richer context and depth of understanding for the broader, macro-level themes that will follow it. In that section, I will discuss the process by which I categorized my findings, which will then be followed by an in-depth discussion of each of the four prominent ideological themes I found to be apparent in regard to the show’s portrayal of torture, anchoring them to Dershowitz’s (2002, 2003a, 2003b) notion of the “ticking time bomb.”

Plot Summary

The fourth season of *24* deals with a “day in the life” of those who work to protect national security and those who work to undermine it. The central protagonist of the show, around whom much of the narrative revolves, is Jack Bauer (Kiefer Sutherland), who was recently fired from his job at the Los Angeles Counter Terrorist Unit (CTU) by CTU’s director, Erin Driscoll (Alberta Watson) due an addiction to heroin he incurred whilst working undercover

for the unit¹³. He now has a desk job in the Department of Defense, working for Secretary of Defense James Heller (William Devane), alongside his new love Audrey Raines (Kim Raver), who is also Heller's daughter and senior policy advisor. As the day progresses, Jack returns to action with CTU as he and his colleagues counter an elaborate terrorist plot that lurches the United States from crisis to crisis.

The season begins with the bombing of a commuter train and the tension continues from there. The bombing of the train allows the theft of a device which has the capability to commandeer all of the 104 nuclear power plants in the United States. However, before CTU can deal with that, they must first deal with the kidnapping and threatened execution of Secretary of Defense James Heller and his daughter, streamed live on the Internet. Jack manages to mount a solo rescue effort and successfully retrieves Heller and Audrey from the clutches of the terrorists. As one crisis is resolved, another lurches into play; this time, the device stolen after the train bombing is used to cause a meltdown in the San Gabriel Island nuclear reactor. Other reactors are hijacked but CTU manages to prevent them from melting down. The next issue to present itself is a direct attack on the President of the United States, who is in Air Force One, by a terrorist who has stolen a stealth fighter, causing severe injuries to President John Keeler (Geoff Pierson), necessitating the elevation of Vice-President Charles Logan (Gregory Itzin) to the Presidency under the terms of the 25th Amendment¹⁴. The crash provokes the next catastrophe to plague homeland security, the theft of the controls to the United States' nuclear arsenal from the crash site. This leads into the final "act" of the season, the theft of a nuclear warhead, which is fired at Los Angeles, and is deactivated in the final "hour" of the season/day. The show focuses

¹³ His firing takes place off-screen, between the end of season three and the beginning of season four.

¹⁴ The 25th Amendment clarifies the issues of succession to the presidency, establishing procedure in the event of the death, resignation, or incapacity of the President, where the Vice President assumes the office of the President in the event of such an event occurring (http://www.law.cornell.edu/anncon/html/amdt25_user.html#amdt25_hd1).

on the efforts of Jack and his colleagues to foil the above catastrophes, and the actions they take in order to protect national security.

Instances of torture

I wish to focus here on seven instances of torture that I feel best exemplify the ideologies that *24* exhibits in relation to torture. These instances relate to the torture (or threat of it) of seven characters that play a role in the show's fourth season. These characters, and the episode in which the incidents occur, are: Tomas Sherek (episode one), Richard Heller (episodes three, four, six, seven, and twenty-two), Sarah Gavin (episodes eight and thirteen), Dina Araz (episodes nine and eleven), Paul Raines (episodes eleven and twenty), Behrooz Araz (episode fifteen), and Joe Prado (episode eighteen). In the following section, I will discuss these instances at length and relate these to the research question of what ideologies are apparent in *24*'s depiction of torture, using thick description from the media text.

Tomas Sherek. Tomas Sherek (Faran Tahir) is introduced as a terrorist who played a role in the train bombing that opens the season. He is tracked down by CTU and brought in for questioning in the first episode. Jack Bauer happens to be at CTU on an administrative errand for Secretary Heller at the time, and when he learns that Sherek has been brought in, he attempts to explain to Erin Driscoll that a terrorist of Sherek's profile would not take the chance of blowing his cover for an operation as relatively minor as a train bombing. Driscoll dismisses his concerns, claiming that she and her staff have the situation under control. Shortly afterwards, when Driscoll and CTU agent Ronnie Lobell (Shawn Doyle) are unsuccessful in their attempts to question Sherek, Jack manages to gain access to the interrogation room (by knocking out a CTU security guard and locking Driscoll and Lobell out of the room) and demands information of the suspect. When Sherek will not comply, Jack, without hesitation, shoots him just above the knee.

Sherek cries out in agony and immediately divulges the information that Jack wants to know. Jack learns that there is going to be a kidnap attempt of Secretary of Defense James Heller. Driscoll and Lobell's by-the-book methods are portrayed as weak and ultimately ineffective; Jack, on the other hand, gets results. The scenario is set up such that had Jack not shot Sherek, CTU would not have procured the information that they need. However, the information comes too late, and Secretary Heller and Audrey have already been kidnapped and their guard detail killed. The dominant ideology here is that had Jack been allowed to torture Sherek sooner, or had Driscoll and Lobell resorted to more ruthless measures in their interrogation of Sherek, then the kidnapping would have been averted. The ideology here, therefore, is that torture works as opposed to other methods.

Richard Heller. At the end of the first episode of the season, Secretary of Defense James Heller, along with his daughter Audrey, is kidnapped by terrorists while visiting Heller's son Richard (Logan Marshall-Green). CTU suspect foul play, as the only people who knew about the visit were Heller, his children, and the Secret Service agents guarding them, who were all killed in the attack. Richard Heller is brought in for questioning. After he fails a polygraph test, Erin Driscoll authorizes her deputy, Curtis Manning (Roger Cross) to use extreme measures in order to obtain the information CTU need from him:

Driscoll: It'll take days to go through his phone records. I want you to see if you can get the name out of him another way.

Curtis: What do you mean?

Driscoll: You know what I mean.

Curtis: Erin, we're not even sure he's guilty of anything.

Driscoll: This is how we'll find out. Get started.

This instance occurs after Jack's torture of Tomas Sherek, which provided CTU with the information they needed. Again, we see evidence that Driscoll has realized the benefits of taking extreme measures and is now willing to take these measures to get the information she needs, disregarding the fact that she is authorizing the torture of the son of the Secretary of Defense. Furthermore, as Curtis points out, CTU are not even sure of Richard being complicit in the kidnap, and Driscoll suggests that torture will be the way they will ascertain his innocence or guilt. Torture here is presented as not the way to find hidden information, but a way of determining innocence or guilt; a way of finding out *if* the suspect has any information in the first place. Driscoll's authorization of Richard's torture prompts the following scenario between Curtis, Richard, and CTU interrogation specialist Darren Richards (Butch Klein).

Richard: What the hell are you doing? Get your hands off me!

Curtis: Who else knew your father would be at your house this morning?

Richard: I told you, no one.

[Darren gets a syringe out of his briefcase.]

Richard: What are you, crazy?

Curtis: It works on a neurotransmitter level. It makes every nerve ending within your body feel like it's on fire.

Richard: You're bluffing. I know you can't get away with this.

Curtis: By the time you're released, the mark on your arm will be gone. It'll be just your word against mine.

Richard: My father's the Secretary of Defense, for God's sake!

Curtis: I thought you hated him. Now he's "dear old dad"?

Richard: Help me! Stop! Please! Help me! Help!

Curtis cuts off the interrogation when he feels that it is inappropriate to torture Richard when they have no grounds to, but is ordered to continue by Driscoll. Curtis then follows a different interrogation technique: sensory deprivation, where Richard is deprived of sight and has intense, uncomfortable noises played through headphones into his ears. When Richard protests at his treatment after thirty minutes of sensory deprivation (which he says feels like three hours have passed), exclaiming “This isn’t legal. You can’t keep me here,” Curtis calmly replies “You’ll be here until you tell me what I need to know” and resumes the sensory deprivation. Torture can take on a number of different forms and certainly sensory deprivation, given the discomfort and disorientation it evidently causes Richard Heller in this instance, falls under the banner of torturous acts. Moreover, Curtis’s statement that “You’ll be here until you tell me what I need to know” suggests that he is aware of the illegality of what he is doing, as Richard points out to him, but the ends (the information Richard may provide) justify the means, and Curtis is willing to prolong Richard’s suffering until he reveals the information he is holding.

One would think that the Secretary of Defense would be outraged at the use of torture on his own son. That, however, is not the case on 24. When Secretary Heller is rescued and wants to meet up with his son, he is told by Erin Driscoll that his son has been subjected to non-invasive interrogation methods as he was a suspect. At first, Heller is more than mildly annoyed, but when he meets with his son and finds that he refuses to cooperate with CTU’s interrogation, he takes a different view:

Richard: Dad!

[Richard hugs his father.]

Richard: They said you were OK and Audrey too. Thank God. I said some awful things before. I was afraid I’d never get a chance to apologize.

Heller: I said some pretty harsh things myself. But no matter what we said, you're still my son, and I will always love you.

Richard: Me too, dad.

Heller: They said they were using some interrogation techniques.

Richard: Totally out of line. I'm gonna sue them blind.

Heller: I think it'll be a little more effective if you let me deal with it. I promise you, if they were out of line, heads will roll.

Richard: What do you mean, "if?"

Heller: Why did they think you were holding something back from them?

Richard: I don't know!

Heller: Richard, if you know something that would shed some light on what happened to me...

Richard: Wait, you don't think I would tell them if I thought it was relevant?

Heller: So there is something?

Richard: Now *you're* giving me the third degree?

Heller: Son, do you have any idea what your sister just went through? If you know anything that would help us find the people behind this, tell me now!

Richard: Dad, I'm glad you're alive, I really am, but I am not going to tell these people things about my private life that they don't need to know.

Heller: That you don't *think* they need to know. Richard, these people were trying to save our lives!

Richard: These people can't be trusted! What they did to me is proof.

Heller: [Turning away from Richard.] Agent Manning, could you come in here please?

[Curtis comes inside the interrogation room.]

Heller: Agent Manning, I am authorizing you to do whatever you feel is necessary to get this information out of my son.

Richard: Dad...

Heller: I love you, son. But I have a duty to my country.

Richard: You can't be serious.

[Heller goes towards the door.]

Richard: Dad!

The “duty to my country” is a theme that I will discuss at greater length in the themes I will present later in this study, but here it is sufficient to note that duty to country comes before duty to family. Heller is willing for his own son to be tortured in order to gain information that may be vital to national security. Because Heller is portrayed as an upright man with a strong sense of integrity and who is saluted throughout the show as a patriot, we are to assume, as viewers, that because he *says* it is justified for his son to continue to be tortured, it is so. The use of torture is also accepted as part-and-parcel of the national security regimen, as Heller explains that “these people were trying to save our lives.” Interrogating Richard was part of the process of piecing together information that would have aided in retrieving Heller and his daughter from the clutches of the terrorists, and Secretary Heller seems dumbfounded that his son does not realize this. For the elder Heller, the question is not of what the CTU agents have been doing to his son; rather, the question is why is his son not cooperating with the CTU agents, and, furthermore, what information does he have that they need in the first place? Thus, even family ties take a backseat to matters of national security.

Having authorized Curtis to do as he pleases with Richard, Heller leaves. He returns some time later to find that Richard has not yielded after a long period undergoing further intense sensory deprivation, and authorizes his release:

Curtis: Your son was in sensory disorientation for a total of two and a half hours.

Heller: What did he say when you took him off it?

Curtis: Nothing.

Heller: You tortured my son for almost three hours and ended up yielding nothing?

Curtis: You gave the order, sir.

Here, sensory deprivation is recognized as a form of torture, if there had been any doubt beforehand. Furthermore, Heller's surprise that there were no results yielded from the torture indicates that he would have expected the information to have been divulged by now, a subtle indication that he believes in torture as a method of obtaining information (indeed, the fact that he will authorize the torture of his own son is perhaps even more damning proof of this). In this exchange, the relationship between father and son is (perhaps unsurprisingly) frosty:

Heller: I'm sorry this had to happen, Richard, but we had to make sure that you weren't withholding anything from us.

Richard: I hate you. I never wanna see you again.

Heller: Please understand that I am responsible for the lives of millions of people.

Richard: You torture me, and now you want me to forgive you? It just confirms everything I always knew about you. Am I free to leave?

Heller: Yes.

Secretary Heller's apology seems somewhat halfhearted, to say the least. Just as with Erin Driscoll suggesting that torture was a way of determining *if* Richard Heller even had

information, the Secretary here makes the same recognition. Torture was not an ethical outrage but a way of making sure. The justification for the torture of Richard is that Secretary Heller, his father, is “responsible for the lives of millions of people.” For Secretary Heller, the torture of his son is an acceptable sacrifice – or, rather, a necessity – if it means safeguarding the lives of innocent people. Unfortunately, Richard did not divulge any useful information, and his torture is passed off as a way of making sure. It does not take much imagination to ponder the consequences of using torture just to “make sure” in reality.

Though we think this is the last we will see of Richard Heller, in episode twenty-two, he is brought back into CTU for further questioning when it is revealed that a call had been made from his cell phone to Habib Marwan (Arnold Vosloo), the mastermind behind the day’s catastrophic events. Audrey Raines objects to Jack torturing her brother for information:

Audrey: You are not gonna do this. You are not gonna torture my brother.

Jack: I’ll be right in there. I don’t wanna hurt Richard, but we’re out of time. He knows something, and I’m gonna find out what it is.

Audrey: And what if he doesn’t?

Jack: You’re aware that he called Marwan. It came up on his cell phone.

Audrey: There has gotta be an explanation for that. Let me talk to him.

Important here is Jack’s statement that “I don’t wanna hurt Richard, but we’re out of time.” Time is obviously a huge factor in the show, emphasized prominently by the fact that it is set in a twenty-four hour day, the ticking clock that appears on the screen reminding us that Jack and his colleagues do not have much time left to solve the latest catastrophe befalling the United States of America. Time is of the essence, as the old saying goes, and when there is a shortage of time then desperate measures must be resorted to, and Richard now has to be “hurt.” When Audrey is

allowed to interrogate Richard, she warns her brother of the threat that waits outside the interrogation room (namely, Jack):

Audrey: Richard... Richey, I am begging you to talk to me, all right? If you don't, there is a man who will come in here and he will get the information from you. I saw him torture someone today. It's what he's trained to do. He won't stop hurting you until you tell him the truth. Please!

However, her attempts to get information out of Richard are unsuccessful, and Secretary Heller enters the interrogation room, exclaiming:

Heller: Richard, this has gone far enough. Either you tell us what we wanna know, or I will let them use every piece of equipment they have to drag it out of you. You understand that?

Heller then presses for answers from his son. Richard finally explains that he didn't want to tell CTU about the information he had because it was a matter to do with his private life. A stooge of the terrorists, Gary (Jake Muxworthy) had slept with Richard to get the information about the meeting between him and his father, and Richard did not want to tell CTU for fear that his hitherto secret sexuality would meet with disapproval from his father. However, his father chooses to admonish his son not for his lifestyle choices, but for how his unwillingness to cooperate with his interrogation led to the loss of innocent lives, lives that could have been saved had he come clean with the truth earlier in the day:

Richard: So now you know. I suppose you're even more disgusted with me, huh, dad?

Heller: This is not about how you choose to live your life, son. This is about how you've put this country in jeopardy. If you had told us this information yesterday, maybe these terrorist attacks would not have occurred.

Richard: No, don't you put that on me, dad. 'Cause yesterday I didn't know that that night had anything to do with these attacks.

Heller: You should have told us everything.

Ultimately, Richard Heller's character reinforces the ideology that we should cooperate with those entrusted in protecting national security. Had Richard told the CTU agents of his liaison with Gary the first time he was brought in for questioning, then lives would have been saved and disasters averted¹⁵. Ultimately, Richard Heller's decision to withhold information from CTU is portrayed as the wrong one. Meanwhile, his father's decisions are painted in a manner consistent of an American patriot, concerned for his country and putting everything else secondary to his duties as a public servant.

Sarah Gavin. Sarah Gavin is an analyst at CTU Los Angeles, working under the authority of Erin Driscoll. It appears that she has a good working relationship with her superior, as she is asked by Driscoll to spy on her co-workers for her, particularly Chloe O'Brian (Mary Lynn Rajsakub), who is loyal to Jack Bauer. However, later in the day she makes an enemy of her CTU colleague Marianne Taylor (Aisha Tyler), who is secretly a "mole" within CTU and is in the employ of the terrorists. When her colleagues start to get suspicious, Marianne seeks to ward off attention to her actions by framing Sarah for leaking classified information to the terrorists. Sarah is hauled off for questioning and Marianne manages to dodge suspicion. Sarah continually pleads her innocence during her questioning, which only serves to frustrate Driscoll and force her to resort to torture as a means of getting the information from Sarah, and as a result Sarah is tortured for information she cannot possibly provide, as she is guilty of no crime. The following excerpt is from episode eight, where Sarah is being questioned by Driscoll and then tortured by a CTU interrogation specialist:

¹⁵ Though admittedly, this would have brought the season to a very premature closure...

Sarah: Please, Ms. Driscoll. I promise you there's been some kind of mistake.

Driscoll: How could there be a mistake? Your system was isolated. The message was sent from it, while you were there.

Sarah: Somebody set me up! It's the only explanation I can think of.

Driscoll: Tell me how that's possible.

Sarah: Someone hacked into my system through the subnet... planted something.

Driscoll: That's the first thing we checked. None of them were compromised. Let's stop playing games. Thousands of people's lives are at stake. Where are the people who control the override?

Sarah: I don't know! That's what I was working on.

Driscoll: Who did you send the message about Jack to?

Sarah: I didn't! Ms. Driscoll, I would never betray our country or endanger people's lives. You know that.

Driscoll: Is it the same contact who coordinated the attempt on Jack and Audrey's life at Felsted Security?

Sarah: I don't know. It's wasn't me.

Driscoll: I learned my lesson today with Sherek, and I am no longer going to err on the side of caution in these interrogations, do you get my meaning?

It is clear that witnessing Jack Bauer successfully get information from Tomas Sherek has proved to be a turning point for Erin Driscoll. The apparent epiphany that occurs for Driscoll suggests that she has not only come to appreciate Jack's methods but that she is aware that they work, and that the time constraints placed upon her and her unit necessitate the use of extreme action sooner rather than later, as a first resort rather than a last. She says that she will no longer

err on the side of caution and this indicates that the cautious way is therefore the wrong way; the ruthless way is what gets results. Unfortunately for Driscoll (and certainly also for Sarah Gavin), she is wrong in this instance, as Gavin is innocent:

Sarah: I don't know what to say.

[Torture specialist Eric Richards comes in with his tools.]

Sarah: Eric, no. Please, don't do this. Eric! Ms. Driscoll!

[Eric tasers Sarah.]

Sarah: Please stop!

Driscoll: If you want it to stop, you tell me where the Dobson override is, and who has it.

Sarah: I swear I don't know anything!

[Driscoll signals Eric to taser Sarah again.]

Sarah: Wait... There's got to be an explanation for this... You've got to give me some time to think...

[Eric tasers Sarah again.]

Driscoll: Talk to me, Sarah. Talk to me.

Sarah: [crying] Ms. Driscoll, I'm not a spy. I'm not! Please, believe me!

[Driscoll walks out of the interrogation room, leaving Sarah with Eric, who keeps torturing her.]

Sarah: [crying] Ms. Driscoll, please!

The torture of Sarah Gavin is one of the most uncomfortable scenes in the whole season, as viewers are aware of Gavin's innocence, yet she is treated like a criminal and given no scope for explaining her innocence. Instead, a "torture first, ask questions later" mentality is adopted, where her guilt is presumed and she has no opportunity to argue otherwise. Witnessing Gavin

repeatedly tasered to the point where she is sobbing for mercy is unpleasant to say the least. Her supervisor (and, up until that point, somebody who had seen Sarah as one of her closest allies) refuses to believe her innocence and, since the incident with Tomas Sherek, is unwilling to take any chances in future interrogation efforts. Sarah Gavin is unfortunately a victim of this epiphany.

When her colleague Edgar Stiles (Louis Lombardi) realizes that Sarah is innocent and that she has been framed by Marianne, the torture stops and a dazed Sarah is asked to go back to work:

Driscoll: You understand, Sarah, I had no choice. You were identified as a threat to security and I acted accordingly.

Sarah: I would have hoped you had more faith in me.

Driscoll: Personally, I do. But the evidence was brought to me by the Secretary of Defense and I couldn't very well ignore it.

This conversation reveals that Driscoll did indeed have trust in Sarah but went along with the evidence presented to her, thus going against her instinct and permitting the torture of her previously trusted colleague.

Sarah: So what happens now?

Driscoll: You can go home and rest. No one will blame you if you did. But if you're up to it, I could use you on the floor. The San Gabriel Island reactor went into meltdown less than an hour ago. The five remaining plants are critical. I need my best people in play.

Sarah: I'll go back to work.

Driscoll: Thank you, Sarah.

Sarah resumes her duties, assisting in the prevention of a nuclear meltdown. However, the relationship between Driscoll and Sarah is now significantly frostier than when the day began. Later in the day, when Driscoll starts to feel marginalized by the presence of Secretary Heller at CTU, along with Bauer and Tony Almeida (Carlos Bernard), both former directors of CTU, she turns to Sarah for help in keeping tabs on Almeida, which prompts an icy response from the colleague whose torture she authorized:

Sarah: I'm beginning to see how things work around here, Ms. Driscoll.

Driscoll: How do things work around here?

Sarah: You couldn't care less about me being falsely accused and tortured. You're beginning to feel squeezed out and you need allies. That's why you were so nice to me before.

Driscoll: We're facing a crisis today, Sarah, and our first priority is to deal with this successfully. Is that a problem for you?

Sarah: Not at all, but after what I went through today, if you want my help, I need something too.

Driscoll: And what's that?

Sarah: I want my arrest expunged. Not explained by an official letter in my file – expunged. And I want a promotion – two pay grades.

Driscoll: Done.

A reasonable request for being tortured in the name of national security, perhaps. However, Sarah's payback for her torture at the hands of her colleagues is ultimately not what she would have expected. Not long after making her deal with Sarah, Driscoll is plunged into a crisis of her own when her schizophrenic teenage daughter Maya (Angela Goethals) commits suicide,

prompting Driscoll's resignation. CTU then gets a new director in the form of Michelle Dessler (Reiko Aylesworth). Shortly after Michelle has taken office, Sarah approaches her to discuss the deal she made with Driscoll:

Sarah: Can I speak to you for a moment? It's important.

Michelle: Okay. I don't have much time.

Sarah: You're aware I was falsely accused of leaking information earlier today?

Michelle: Yes, I saw the report.

Sarah: Erin Driscoll didn't talk to you about it or leave a memo?

Michelle: Her daughter died today. I think she has other things on her mind.

Sarah: I understand, but there are some things that still need to be handled.

Michelle: What things?

Sarah: Well, she promised the accusation would be expunged from my record, and I'd be bumped up two pay grades as compensation, so I just want to make sure that will still happen.

Michelle: I'll look into it, but not today.

Sarah: What happened to me was an outrage! If you don't do something to resolve it right now, I'll go directly to Secretary Heller.

Michelle: Secretary Heller doesn't run CTU. I do. And I am ordering you to go back to work.

Sarah: Not until you assure me the false accusation will be expunged and my pay grade changed.

[Michelle picks up the phone and calls security.]

Michelle: I need security to station 1.

Sarah: Security? What for?

Michelle: I need people whose minds are on their jobs. Yours isn't.

Sarah: Oh, so you're firing me? You can't do that. You need me. I'm juggling active protocols.

Michelle: We'll manage. Please escort Miss Gavin out of the building. Make sure you get her access card.

Sarah: You'll be sorry for this. I promise you will.

[Sarah is escorted out of CTU.]

This is the last we see of Sarah Gavin, a character who served national security as a CTU agent, was tortured as a result of being framed by a colleague, and who ultimately gets fired for her efforts at demanding justice for her treatment.

What is the prevailing ideology here? Firstly, it suggests that human life and worth is expendable to the point where those entrusted to protect national security cannot even trust each other. Second, it suggests that Sarah Gavin should have been a dedicated servant to her job and to her country by taking the fact that she was falsely accused of being a spy and viciously tortured "on the chin," so to speak. It gives the impression that had Sarah Gavin been a true patriot, she would not have complained and demanded a promotion. Instead, by painting Gavin as a self-serving careerist, she is discursively positioned as a callous troublemaker whose mind is still on the treatment she was receiving just five hours ago, rather than on the crisis of the here and now.

I recognize that an argument could be made that the torture of Sarah Gavin suggests that the use of torture is not always right or ethical in 24 and does not necessarily lead to the desired results. Sarah's innocence clearly meant that she could not possibly provide CTU with the

information they needed, and we, as viewers, are aware of that, and are aware that what is being done to her is a gross injustice. However, I would argue that the way the character is dealt with following her torture does not violate the dominant ideology that torture works. Sarah is painted as self-serving, callous, and greedy, someone whom Michelle Dessler clearly cannot trust to have her mind focused on the job at hand in a time of crisis. Though we do not see her again after she is escorted out of CTU by security guards, it is perhaps a logical assumption that she does not receive her pay increase and her arrest is not expunged from her record. However unlikable she may or may not come across as a character, I believe that Sarah Gavin's ultimate treatment only serves to *reinforce*, not challenge, the dominant ideology that torture is an ethical means to an end.

Dina Araz. Dina Araz (Shohreh Aghdashloo) is introduced as a member of the Araz family, along with husband Navi (Nester Serrano) and son Behrooz (Jonathan Ahdout). Dina and Navi are key allies of Habib Marwan and play a role in the series of catastrophes that plague the United States throughout the day. She is presented as a ruthless person, who is willing to kill innocent civilians in the name of her cause, including her son's girlfriend Debbie Pendleton (Leighton Meester), whom she suspects of knowing too much information. However, when Navi arranges for their own son to be killed because he lacks the necessary commitment to their cause, Dina turns against her husband and her cause in order to save her son's life, resulting in a deadly game of cat and mouse as Dina and Behrooz attempt to flee from Navi. After they separate so Behrooz can obtain pain medication for Dina to help with a wound incurred when she was shot in the arm by her husband, she is tracked down by CTU and arrested. Later on in the season, Dina is subject to violent interrogation when CTU discover that she may know more information about Habib Marwan, the instigator of the terrorist plot, than she had first told them:

Tony: So far every name Dina has given us has checked out as a mid-level cell member.

Driscoll: But what's interesting is that Marwan, who she claims to have never met, is connected to everyone on this list. It looks like all roads lead to him.

Tony: This must be his operation, which means she definitely knows more than she's telling us.

Driscoll: What do you wanna do to make her talk?

Tony: I just need you to give me a little bit of rope.

Driscoll: Do it.

[Tony enters the interrogation room.]

Tony: Why don't you tell me about Habib Marwan?

Dina: I already told you.

Tony: No. You told me you never met him.

Dina: I haven't.

Tony: Danny, could you come in here, please?

[Danny comes in the interrogation room.]

Tony: I'm gonna need all video and audio monitoring of this room disconnected. Thank you.

Dina: I'm not a stupid woman. What are you trying to prove with this?

Tony: I'm not trying to prove anything. I just don't want what I am about to say to be recorded.

[Danny disconnects the video and audio in the interrogation room.]

Dina: I don't believe you.

[Tony grabs Dina.]

Tony: Open the door!

[Tony physically pushes Dina into the observation room.]

Tony: Everybody out. Get out, now! Everyone, Erin.

[Dina witnesses all the staff and Erin Driscoll as they leave the room. Tony takes Dina back to the interrogation room and pushes her against the wall.]

Tony: Unless you tell me the whole truth right now, that deal you made to save your son is over and he goes to prison for murder and treason!

Dina: You can't do that. The President signed an agreement.

Tony: If that deal gets in the way of protecting this country, you think the President's gonna stand behind it? He's gonna tear it up, and your son goes to prison for the rest of his life. And I'll tell you a little something about prison and based on the conditions of his confinement I'll tell you right now – I give Behrooz about three months before he commits suicide. And by the way, I'm gonna make it my personal mission to make sure you'll never hear word-one about what happens to him. Ever.

[Tony lets go of Dina and starts to leave.]

Unsurprisingly, given the violent way in which she is treated and the threat Almeida makes against her son, Dina then confesses the rest of the information that she knows about Marwan. As with Sherek earlier, the dominant ideology, quite basically, is that torture works. Almeida manages to get information out of Dina Araz that CTU did not previously know, and it is this information that helps them further their search for Marwan. In its torture of the “bad guys,” 24 exhibits a very simple formula: torture = success = lives saved.

Paul Raines. Paul Raines (James Frain) is Audrey Raines' estranged husband, who reappears when Audrey is kidnapped alongside her father, expressing concern for her safety even

though they are separated. When Audrey is rescued, Paul reveals that he wants another go at their marriage, and Audrey reveals that she is in love with somebody else, namely Jack. In the eleventh episode, Paul is thrust back into the narrative when Sarah Gavin discovers Paul's name on the lease of the building where the terrorist attacks occurring that day had been planned. Jack suspects that Paul is involved with the terrorists and, with Audrey watching, interrogates Paul in his hotel room, torturing him with wires torn from a lamp. The following is an excerpt from the aforementioned scene:

Jack: [To Audrey] I think it would be better if you left the room while I question your husband. You can wait just outside with the backup team.

Audrey: What are you going to do to him?

Jack: Whatever I have to.

Audrey: I'm staying.

Jack: Fine.

[Jack goes to wake the unconscious Paul up.]

Jack: Look at me, Paul. Look at me.

Paul: I've got nothing to say to you.

Jack: Here's what you need to know, Paul: there are five nuclear power plants ready to melt down. All I care about right now is making sure that that doesn't happen. Your name is on a lease in a building in Chatsworth that was used by the terrorists to plan today's attack. That makes you a prime suspect. I'm gonna treat you like one, do you understand that?

Paul: My name is on at least 50 different leases. I own ten different corporations. I don't know anything about some building in Chatsworth.

Jack: I don't believe you. The lease of that building was notarized. There's documentation of your ID. CTU verified your signature. Paul, you need to start talking to me now.

Paul: I've got nothing to say to you.

[Jack isn't sure of the truth, and he cuts the electrical cord from a lamp to shock Paul. Audrey is horrified.]

Audrey: Jack. I don't think that Paul would be a traitor to this country.

Jack: Right now Paul is a prime suspect, and he's not cooperating with me and I don't have time to do this any other way. I need to know for sure.

Here, the shortage of time necessitates Paul's torture. This suggests that in times of crisis (or of potential crisis), when the stakes are high and there is not a lot of time on the clock, torture is the only means of getting results; there is no time "to do this any other way." This is not the time for niceties, and Audrey, who does not work, and never has worked, on the frontlines of national security, is not aware of the decision-making process involved when one does. Jack, on the other hand, is all too familiar with the need for ruthless and quick decisions.

Jack: Paul. This is the last chance you've got to talk to me before I have to hurt you. Tell me about 24878 Alvord Street in Chatsworth. Why's your name on the lease?

Audrey: Jack, please...

Jack: Audrey, don't interfere! If you need to step outside of this room, do it. Why is your name on the lease?

Paul: You're bluffing.

[Jack shocks Paul with the electrical cord.]

Jack: I need that information, Paul. I need it now. Come on, Paul, just tell me what's your connection to the terrorists.

Audrey: Jack, please don't...

[Jack shocks Paul with the electrical cord again.]

Paul: I don't... I don't know the specific building you're talking about. I... I can find out.

Jack: How?

Paul: The corporate records are still in my laptop. If... If that address is under my name, then... then it'll come up. Maybe there's someone else involved I don't know about.

Jack: What's your user ID and login number?

Paul: It... It'll be much quicker if I just do it. Please.

Jack: You want me to believe that you're not involved in this, Paul? You better show me who is.

[Jack frees Paul.]

As with the torture of Sarah Gavin, the torture of Paul Raines with the electrical cords torn from a lamp is uncomfortable viewing. Unlike Gavin, we are not entirely assured of Paul's innocence and must wait to see what Jack can get out of Paul in order to ascertain Paul's innocence (or guilt) for ourselves. As it turns out, Jack discovers the information that he needs and makes the realization that Paul is innocent and has been duped by the villain of the season, Habib Marwan. Instead of apologizing to Paul, however, instead it is Paul who is profusely apologetic to Jack and Audrey for his stupidity at allowing Marwan to fool him. His savage handling at Jack's hands is almost forgotten as the narrative drives us forward into the next part of the saga. Yet again, however, we see that torture works. Thanks to the information procured by Paul's torture, Jack and Curtis Manning are able to track Marwan down, and recover a nuclear override that

Marwan was using to cause nuclear reactors across the United States to melt down. The result is the saving of millions of lives across the nation. Jack's comment that "There are five nuclear power plants ready to melt down. All I care about right now is making sure that that doesn't happen" reveals how driven he is to protect national security: he will do anything to safeguard the United States from a terrorist attack – law and protocol are secondary concerns.

From that point onward, Paul and Jack work closely together, developing an awkward truce. The suggestion, perhaps, is that being tortured has shocked Paul into action and serving the cause of national security. Before Jack and Paul embark on a mission together, Audrey leaves them with a somewhat eerie warning:

Audrey: Take care of Paul. He's not like you. Please, Jack, promise me that you will look after him.

Paul is a civilian and is not a CTU agent with combat training like Jack – that is quite obvious. But what this line of dialogue is getting at is that Paul is not a torturer. He does not have the ruthless streak in him that Jack has that enables Jack to switch off his compassion when he sees that he is inflicting pain, allowing him to inflict suffering upon terror suspects in the name of national security. Remember, this conversation takes place after Audrey has witnessed Jack torture her estranged husband for information. Audrey, of course, belongs to Paul's world, even though Jack is her present beau. She is not an active soldier on the frontline in the War on Terror, so she is discursively positioned such that she cannot understand how and why Jack does what he does. His methods are alien to her, and this causes a wedge between the couple which will only grow larger as the day progresses.

The character of Paul Raines is an interesting cipher for some important developments relevant to this study. Though he is not subject to CTU torture once again, events transpire that

bring the same kind of ideological issues to the foreground. This begins when Paul aids Jack in the retrieval of computer data from the offices of McLennan-Forster, the defense contractors who manufactured the nuclear override device, but is gunned down by hit men working for McLennan-Forster, who want to prevent any scandal from affecting their business. Paul is rushed into surgery and for a while his condition seems to improve, but he then, several episodes later, takes a turn for the worse and is brought in for emergency surgery. Unfortunately, at the same time, Jack rushes into the CTU clinic with a suspect, Lee Jong (Peter Chin), who was accidentally shot during Jack's retrieval of him in an illegal raid on the Chinese Consulate. When Dr. Marc Besson (Thomas Vincent Kelly) informs Jack that he is in the middle of surgery on Paul and that if he aborts then Raines will surely die, Jack draws a gun on the doctor and forces him to abandon Paul (an innocent civilian) and operate on Lee Jong (a terrorist conspirator) instead, as Jong has information vital to national security:

Audrey: Jack! Jack, what's going on? Jack?!

Dr. Besson: You can't come in here.

Jack: He's dying!

Dr. Besson: So is he. Get out of here, I just started this operation.

Jack: This man is our only connection to a stolen nuclear warhead. You've got to save him now.

Dr. Besson: I'll get to him as soon as I can.

Jack: He's not gonna make it!

Dr. Besson: I already have a patient.

[Jack pulls his gun on the doctor.]

Jack: You have a new one.

Dr. Besson: Are you crazy?

The doctor's reaction is important: "Are you crazy?" he asks. Much like Paul and Audrey, he comes from another world, one where the right thing to do is to continue surgery on the innocent man who is in a critical condition. He is not national security-minded. Jack, on the other hand, is aware that if Jong dies, then the vital information he possesses dies with him, and measures need to be taken accordingly to keep Jong alive. The tense scenario continues:

Jack: Maybe you didn't understand me. This is the only man that can help us find the missing warhead and stop it from being detonated. If you don't save him, millions of people will die, do you understand that? Millions of people. Start working on him now!

Here, the greater good must be served. For Jack, it is perfectly rational that Jong should be saved as he possesses information that could prevent a nuclear warhead from being used on the United States, causing the deaths of millions of people. This is despite the fact that Paul Raines is innocent, Audrey's husband, and someone who saved his life earlier in the day when he took a bullet aimed for Jack, while Jong is a terrorist. The ideology here is that if it saves lives, then it is worth it. Indeed, the same argument can be made of all the instances discussed in this section.

Audrey: Jack, what are you doing?

Dr. Besson: If I walk away from Mr. Raines now, he will die.

Jack: You don't know that for sure.

Audrey: Jack!

Jack: Do it. Now!

[Audrey is stunned as Paul is abandoned.]

Dr. Besson: More valium.

Nurse: Yes, Doctor.

Audrey: Jack, please. Please, don't do this.

Nurse: I'll make half of the syringe. Prep me the needle.

Nurse #2: All right. I'll have it standing-by.

Dr. Besson: His lungs are damaged. He's lost a lot of blood.

Jack: All I need you to do I stabilize him so I can talk to him. Can you do that?

Dr. Besson: Maybe.

Jack: Then do it.

Dr. Besson: Debra, I need you over here.

Debra: What about Mr. Raines?

Dr. Besson: Have one of the agents give him chest compressions if his pressure drops.

Curtis: I got it.

Dr. Besson: Put some gloves on.

Audrey: Jack. Jack!

Jack: I have my orders, I'm doing my job! I'm sorry!

Audrey: You're sorry? You're letting him die! Stop, Jack!

For Jack, these kinds of tough decisions are part of serving the cause of national security. He is doing his job, and his job means making choices like this.

[Audrey starts to become violent.]

Jack: Get her away from me, now!

[Agents pull Audrey out of the operating room.]

Audrey: Stop it, Jack! Jack, stop! He saved your life, Jack! Stop it!

Dr. Besson: We have to relieve the pressure immediately. Get me a trace 2.

Audrey: Stop! Let go of me! Stop it! Let go of me! Jack, listen to me. Please, stop this.

Jack, please. Please, I'm begging you, Jack, stop it! OK, let go of me! Please! Let go of me!

[Paul's blood pressure crashes.]

As the doctor predicted, Paul dies, and Jong's life is saved. However, Jack is wracked with guilt over his actions and the decisions he made that led to Paul's death. Audrey's reaction is one of fury:

Audrey: You son of a bitch, Jack! You son of a bitch! You killed him! He saved your life.

Dr. Besson: Get her out of here now.

[Jack just stands there in shock. Audrey screams at Jack as she is carried out of the operating room.]

Audrey: How could you? You killed him! I hate you, Jack! You killed him! How could you do this? You killed him, Jack! You killed him! Let go of me! Get off me! Let go of me!

Jack: Is he gonna make it?

Dr. Besson: I'm doing the best I can.

[The doctor continues to operate on Lee.]

Again, this is not pleasant viewing. This does not directly relate to the topic of torture, but it does add further weight to the argument that Jack Bauer and his colleagues adopt an attitude of "national security first, everything else second." Jack quite literally causes Paul's death to happen by forcing the doctor to work on the terrorist instead of the civilian. The dubious message here is that when national security is at stake, information is everything. Thus the dying

terrorist with information is worth more than the dying civilian who has no information. Jack makes a judgment call that evidently haunts him.

Shortly afterwards, when CTU administrator Bill Buchanan (James Morrison) notices Jack's discomfort, he asks if he is okay:

Jack: Paul Raines just died. There was only one doctor and I had to make a choice between Lee's life and Paul's... and I chose Lee.

Buchanan: You did the right thing, Jack. Are you okay?

Jack: No, I'm not okay. I'm sorry. Just tell me when Lee's out of surgery.

Buchanan validates Jack's decision, telling him he "did the right thing." This is often the case within CTU. Aside from Erin Driscoll, who was initially resistant to Jack and his methods (and this may be due to personal animosity between them caused by her being the one who fired him from CTU), we see the agents of CTU imbued by a "real world" sensibility where their decisions are motivated by a realization of the darkest exigencies of reality. Judgment calls need to be made, tough decisions need to be tackled, and national security is paramount in all of this. Sacrificing an innocent man who did nothing wrong and who, indeed, saved Jack's life by taking a bullet for him, is a sacrifice worth making if it means a terrorist who has valuable information can be saved simultaneously. It was, as Buchanan observes, "the right thing" to do. The same is also, as we have seen, true of torture.

Behrooz Araz. As the seventeen-year-old son of Navi and Dina Araz, Behrooz is an unwilling conspirator in their plans, often being asked to carry out small tasks that advance their goals, such as taking the briefcase containing the nuclear override device procured in the aftermath of the train crash in episode one to the compound where Secretary of Defense James Heller is being held, but his heart is never entirely in the operation. He witnesses the lengths his

mother will go to when Dina invites Debbie Pendleton, Behrooz's girlfriend, to the Araz home in order to find out how much information Debbie knows about their activities. Dina offers her tea and questions her, and Debbie reveals she knows nothing. Dina then takes Behrooz into another room and hands him a gun, telling him that he must kill Debbie. Behrooz defies his mother, attempting to warn Debbie of the danger she faces, but it is too late, as Debbie collapses as a result of the poison that Dina had surreptitiously placed in her tea. Dina calmly takes the gun from Behrooz and shoots Debbie's lifeless body in order to make it appear as though Behrooz had shot and killed her himself, as Navi had instructed. Navi is suspicious and starts to question Behrooz's loyalty to their cause, ultimately deciding that Behrooz lacks commitment, ordering his own son's killing. However, Behrooz manages to overpower his captor and make a bid for freedom, contacting his mother, and eventually they are brought into custody by CTU, saving them from Navi and his aides. Behrooz and his mother are separated at CTU, and we are to assume that Behrooz is questioned off-screen.

He re-appears several episodes later, when Dina accompanies Jack on a mission to locate Marwan, and Dina says goodbye to her son. He warns her of the danger but she goes on the mission anyway, and is ultimately killed. When Marwan captures Jack and claims he wants Behrooz in exchange (a red herring to divert attention from an attack on the President in Air Force One), CTU are (falsely) led to suspect that Behrooz has tactical value, and CTU director Michelle Dessler authorizes the use of force in an interrogation of Behrooz:

Michelle: Edgar, have your team sift through everything we have on Behrooz Araz. Go back as far as you can and see if there's a family link between him and Marwan. Did the initial interrogation reveal that Behrooz knew anything that might make him valuable to Marwan?

Tony: No, but the main focus was on the mother. We really didn't push him very hard.

Michelle: Curtis, push harder. See what you can find, but do it now. My guess is Marwan will wanna make this exchange within the hour. Tony, monitor him from the observation room.

The fact that Behrooz is only seventeen years old is clearly not even a consideration for Michelle. He may have information, and measures need to be taken to obtain that information. Everything else is secondary. At the end of the briefing, Tony approaches Curtis:

Tony: So how are you gonna handle this?

Curtis: The kid thinks his mother made a deal to protect him. The first thing we have to do is let him think that deal's off.

Tony: No, we can't use a psychological approach. It's too slow.

Curtis: What are you suggesting?

Tony: Well, I think he's just gonna drag his feet unless we put some physical pressure on him.

Curtis: He's just a scared kid. I'm pretty sure he's given us everything he knows.

Tony: You're *pretty* sure?

Curtis: I'll call Richards¹⁶.

Curtis's reservations at torturing Behrooz are pacified by Tony putting doubt in his mind, and Curtis rationalizes torturing the "scared kid". Yet again, we see that the quickest and easiest way to get information vital to national security is torture; the psychological approach that Curtis initially advocates is "too slow". This scene also suggests that Curtis Manning is willing to put his personal ethical concerns aside in the interests of national security. This theme will be discussed at greater length in my consideration of the broad ideological themes that dominate the

¹⁶ Richards is CTU's interrogation specialist.

show. Following this scene, we witness Behrooz roughly handled by Curtis, who grabs him out of his chair and throws him against the interrogation room wall. Curtis demands to know what Behrooz knows about Marwan:

Curtis: Hello, Behrooz.

Behrooz: How much longer do I have to stay here?

Curtis: These things take time.

Behrooz: Where's my mother?

Curtis: She's still in the field.

Behrooz: With Jack Bauer? Is she OK?

Curtis: Yeah, she's fine.

[Curtis gets physically forceful with Behrooz.]

Curtis: Tell me about Habib Marwan.

Behrooz: Why are you doing this?

Curtis: Habib Marwan. Your mother gave us a little information. She said you could give us some more.

Behrooz: You promised you wouldn't hurt me, please, get this guy away from me!

Curtis: Look over here. We're just gonna have a little talk.

Behrooz: Marwan's the leader, that's all I know. I heard my parents talk about him, that's it.

Tony: Go ahead.

[Richards enters the holding room.]

Behrooz: What are you gonna do? What is he gonna do to me?

Curtis: I'm sorry, Behrooz, we just don't have a lot of time.

Behrooz: No! No! No! Please, let go of me! Please, no!

The notion of not having enough time comes back into the foreground here and again suggests that torture is the de facto method of obtaining information within limited time constraints. However, Behrooz does not know anything as (much like Sarah Gavin) he is innocent, and did not play any role in the planning of the day's catastrophes, only doing minor work for his terrorist parents (and there is evidence in the early episodes that even this is done under duress, given that Navi strikes Behrooz on a number of occasions for disobedience). Torture is deployed once again, this time in the form of a painful drug administered via syringe that causes Behrooz to go drowsy.

Due to Behrooz's innocence, and the fact that he is only seventeen years old, his treatment at the hands of CTU is somewhat shocking and suggests that it does not matter what age one is; if you are a suspect, then you will be treated accordingly. Ultimately, CTU then decide that they are going to go ahead and trade Behrooz for Jack, who is being held hostage by Marwan. The trade goes ahead and Behrooz is thrust into Marwan's hands. We do not see what happens to him after that, and we are left to forge our own ending for Behrooz, though given the ruthlessness we see manifested in Marwan, it would be a logical conclusion to suggest that he does not meet a pleasant end.

Joe Prado. Joe Prado (John Thaddeus) is introduced as a mercenary who works for the highest bidder, this time assisting one of the terrorists in fleeing the country. However, no sooner is he introduced than he is arrested by CTU for his involvement in the terrorist plot, but not before Prado manages to kill the terrorist he had claimed to be helping, claiming it was in self-defense. When Habib Marwan heard about Prado's arrest, he contacted Amnesty Global, a fictional group quite obviously modeled after Amnesty International or the American Civil

Liberties Union (ACLU), informing them that an innocent man is about to be tortured at CTU Los Angeles. Prado is questioned, and about to be tortured when an attorney from Amnesty Global, David Weiss (Evan Handler) shows up and orders them to halt the interrogation, having a signed court order that protects Prado:

Buchanan: We have a problem. This is David Weiss from Amnesty Global.

Weiss: And I have a signed court order here protecting the rights of one Joseph Prado whom you have in custody. This U. S. Marshall is here to assure that I am taken to the prisoner immediately.

Curtis: That's ridiculous.

The comment from Curtis signals how torture is part of the routine for CTU, so that when the law and the constitution of the United States are invoked, they are treated almost as alien concepts. It prompts the following response from Weiss as the scene continues:

Weiss: That's your opinion, but Mr. Prado's rights will not be violated. Take me to him now.

Buchanan: We have no choice, Curtis. Do what he says.

Curtis: There's a nuclear warhead missing. This is our only lead, Bill.

Buchanan: I'll get into this with the Justice Department. In the meantime, do what he says.

Buchanan is later heard arguing with a representative of the Justice Department, claiming "This does not fall outside the boundary of the Patriot Act." The arrival of Weiss serves as a huge roadblock on CTU's path to justice-by-torture. It provokes the comment from CTU analyst Edgar Stiles: "I don't like what's happening here. We have some prissy lawyer holding us up from doing our job." The notion of a lawyer holding national security agents up from "doing

their job” when the job in question is the torture of a suspect is startling. Again, for CTU it seems that this is part of the routine, something that needs to be done to protect national security.

When Jack Bauer arrives at CTU shortly after this, he is confused at the lack of action being taken, asking “What the hell’s going on here? You’ve got a key witness on a missing warhead. We should be pressing this guy with everything we’ve got!” When Buchanan informs him, with regret and anger in his voice, that “If we want to appeal, we’ll have to wait until 7:00 a.m. to take it to an appellate judge,” Jack, who seems baffled by this turn of events, simply asks, “Does he know what the stakes are?” The notion of “knowing what the stakes are” is important. The stakes when national security is concerned are evidently high, as lives are at stake. Jack is aware of this, and his intuition makes him skeptical as to how Prado managed to get a lawyer so soon after being arrested and an interesting exchange takes place between Jack and Weiss:

Jack: You and I both know that your client isn’t clean, and that he conspired to steal a US nuclear warhead.

Weiss: All my client wants is due process.

Jack: Mr. Weiss, these people are not gonna stop attacking us today until millions, and millions of Americans are dead. Now, I don’t wanna bypass the constitution, but these are extraordinary circumstances.

Weiss: The constitution was born out of extraordinary circumstances, Mr. Bauer. This plays out by the book, not in a back room with a rubber hose.

Jack: I hope you can live with that.

The fact that David Weiss hails from Amnesty Global is an awkward yet knowing pun on Amnesty International and organizations with a similar remit to it, such as the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). Organizations such as Amnesty International and the ACLU are

popular targets for conservative ire due to the belief that they only exist to protect terrorists and criminals and impede law enforcement from doing their job (Eggen, 2003; Hentoff, 2007; Higham, 2004). The above exchange between Bauer and Weiss is quite remarkable, one example of a number throughout the season where deep political, ethical, and/or philosophical issues are brought to the fore¹⁷. Bauer's notion of "extraordinary circumstances" is reminiscent of the scenario painted by Brit Hume in the opening passages of this study. However, Weiss reminds him that the constitution "was born out of extraordinary circumstances." For Jack Bauer, it seems that the constitution represents little more than bureaucratic red tape that muddies the waters of national security. Bauer's parting shot that he hopes Weiss can live with himself is also intriguing. The assumption is that Bauer can live with himself and his decisions, whereas Weiss, the man who follows the law, is called to doubt himself and his conscience because if national security were left down to people like Weiss (and the likes of Erin Driscoll and Charles Logan), then the United States would be a scarier place to live, given the lack of a backbone in standing up against terrorism. Also, the notion of going "by the book" is something I will expand upon shortly in my discussion of the larger ideological themes at work in the show.

Jack and Buchanan contact President Charles Logan, who has recently ascended to the Presidency through the 25th Amendment as a result of the near-fatal air strike on President John Keeler in Air Force One, explaining the circumstances of Prado's arrest to Logan and his aide Mike Novick (Jude Ciccolella) and how he is withholding information pivotal to national security:

Buchanan: Sir, in the process of trying to track down this missing warhead we brought in a prime suspect for questioning.

Logan: What have you learned?

¹⁷ Indeed, as I hope this study is demonstrating, the whole show is premised on something of an ethical conundrum.

Buchanan: Well, that's the problem, sir. Right now, our hands are tied. Amnesty Global has interceded on his behalf.

Logan: Interceded on what grounds?

Buchanan: He's a US citizen with no previous record.

Logan: Why is he a suspect?

Buchanan: We found him with Yosik Khatami, the man who's linked to today's terrorist events.

Logan: I don't understand. It doesn't violate any law to question a suspect.

Logan here is painted as quite clearly naïve. He has no experience of dealing with these kinds of issues, and is baffled as to what Buchanan is referring to. Torture does not even enter his frame of reference. Logan's lack of understanding necessitates Mike Novick to intercede:

Mike: Mr. President, if I may?

Logan: Go ahead, Mike.

Mike: Jack, it's Mike Novick.

Jack: Hi, Mike.

Mike: Am I correct in assuming that this suspect is unlikely to respond to the kind of Q&A his lawyer would permit?

Jack: That's correct, Mike. If we want to procure any information from this suspect, we're gonna have to do it behind closed doors.

Logan: You're talking about torturing this man?

Jack: I'm talking about doing what is necessary to stop this warhead from being used against us.

For Logan, torture is torture, to use an awkward turn of phrase. But for Jack (and Buchanan and their colleagues at CTU), torture is “enhanced interrogation” where the interrogators are only “doing what’s necessary,” thus removing the unethical connotations of committing the act, as it gets results, being the “necessary” course of action. Logan stalls on a solid answer to Jack and Buchanan’s request, instead telling them he will seek advice from the Justice Department. Jack pleads, “With all due respect, sir, please let us do our jobs,” but it is to no avail. Similarly to Edgar Stiles’ comment that Amnesty Global lawyer David Weiss is preventing CTU from doing their jobs, this notion of duty comes back to the foreground. CTU needs to be given the powers and resources they need to protect national security, to counter terrorism, to invoke the name of the unit that makes up their acronym. Mike Novick recognizes this and tries to persuade Logan to come around to CTU’s thinking:

Logan: Authorizing the torture of a foreign national’s one thing, but torturing a U.S. citizen... I can’t...

Mike: Sir, this man, Prado, has information on the whereabouts of a nuclear warhead.

Logan: We don’t know that for sure, Mike.

Mike: No, sir, we don’t because you’re not letting CTU do what they need to do.

Again, the notion of “letting CTU do what they need to do” is an important one, and at the risk of sounding repetitive, what they need to do is torture. They need to be invested in the powers to do what they believe is in the best interests of national security.

Ignoring Logan’s command to wait, Jack and Buchanan formulate a plan where Jack “resigns” and Buchanan sets Prado free, allowing Jack to interrogate Prado as a private citizen. Prado is at first skeptical, and complains to Weiss and the Federal Marshall accompanying him that he thinks something suspicious is afoot, but Weiss tells him not to worry. Once Weiss has

left, Jack knocks out the Federal Marshall and handcuffs Prado to the dashboard of his car. Prado refuses to talk, so Jack holds a knife to his throat and proceeds to break each of his fingers until Prado admits to where Marwan is hiding out. Jack offers to give Prado something to “help you with the pain,” promptly knocking the mercenary out. The following is an excerpt of when Buchanan informs Novick of what has taken place:

Mike: I’m sorry for the delay, Bill, but the President is still working through his decision.

Buchanan: The President won’t have to make that call, Mike.

Mike: What are you talking about?

Buchanan: Prado gave up Marwan’s location.

Mike: I thought Prado claimed he didn’t know anything.

Buchanan: He did. He changed his mind.

Mike: You mean Bauer physically coerced him? Tell me what happened, chapter and verse.

Buchanan: Mike, Bauer got the information we needed. I think it’s best if I insulate you from the details.

Mike: The President gave explicit orders. You should have restrained Bauer.

Buchanan: With all due respect, restraint is a luxury we can’t afford right now.

Mike: What am I supposed to tell the President?

Buchanan: Convince him to sign off on the extreme interrogation, and we’ll cheat the timeline in the official record.

Not only here do we have a federal law enforcement officer calmly explaining to a high-ranking government official his willingness to “cheat the timeline,” and essentially lie about what has transpired, the notion of “restraint is a luxury we can’t afford” is an intriguing one.

The Prado case is a useful representation of the myriad issues that surround 24 and torture, bringing issues of civil liberties, ethics, and legality to the fore. The following conversation between Jack and Audrey serves to highlight this:

Audrey: I just came from the clinic where they're treating Prado for multiple injuries.

Jack: Audrey, what'd you expect me to do? Marwan has a nuclear warhead, and he's gonna use it unless we find him first.

Audrey: I understand the situation, Jack.

Jack: Then you know what I did was absolutely necessary. At least now we know where he is.

Audrey: Logan gave you a direct order not to use extreme interrogation method without his authorization. Jack, you are acting against the President.

Jack: I know.

Audrey then warns Jack that he "can't keep walking outside the line and not expect consequences." However, his actions are validated by Curtis Manning, a fellow CTU field agent, who tells him, simply, "Look, for whatever it's worth, you did the right thing with Prado." The suggestion here is that while the likes of Jack and Curtis serve on the frontline and "know what needs to be done" in the War on Terror and in the best interests of national security, people of Audrey's ilk who do not have that experience are naïve and lack the decision-making faculties to make such quick, effective, and independent judgment calls. As Buchanan explains to Audrey when she registers her dissent at what Jack has done, "We got Marwan's location. Audrey. With all due respect, this is not Washington D.C. Policy and politics do not always work on the front line, which is where we are today."

The same naivety can be said about President Charles Logan, who is portrayed as a weak, naïve, and hesitant leader who lacks the ability to make effective decisions. Logan is irrational in his decision-making, and when he learns that Jack tortured Prado when he had explicitly ordered him not to, he reacts in a manner that effectively compromises CTU's mission, by ordering Jack's arrest while Jack is in the middle of an operation to capture Habib Marwan. Jack is seconds away from apprehending Marwan when he himself is apprehended by Secret Service agents sent by Logan. Marwan escapes and the operation is aborted. Logan realizes his mistake, claiming that that wasn't what he meant to happen, but it is too little too late. Ultimately, he is persuaded by Mike Novick to bring in former President David Palmer (Dennis Haysbert) in an informal advisory capacity, as Palmer has experience dealing with national security crises, and asks Palmer to serve as his proxy.

Of course, the "effective decisions" under scrutiny here are the ones that involve torturing a suspect or violating their civil liberties in some way. Crucially, the show almost always validates these decisions as the *correct* decisions, the correct course of action that stops the bomb, foils the terrorist plot, and saves the lives of innocents. Joe Prado is guilty of a crime and does "deserve," in Jack's logic, to be tortured in order for CTU to get the vital information he possesses, information that will certainly prevent the loss of innocent life. Similarly, Tomas Sherek and Dina Araz are also guilty of crimes that lead to the deaths of countless innocent people, and "deserve" to be tortured, according to the Bauer logic and narrative thrust of the show. What is arguably more intriguing, however, is when the torture is quite clearly unjustified. Naturally, as a viewer, we are privy to more information than the characters themselves, witnessing more aspects of the narrative than they can possibly achieve given the boundaries of fiction and the need to create effective drama. So therefore we know when a wrongdoing is being

committed, and when the torture is appropriate or inappropriate (these rationale determined through 24's epistemology and logic, not our own). Of the seven figures highlighted above, only three can be said to fulfill the role of "villains" in the true sense: Prado, Dina Araz, and Sherek. Their deeds cast them as villains and we are left in no doubt that they are "deserving" of torture as we know that they have information vital to national security. Of the remaining four, one (Sarah Gavin) is wholly innocent, framed as she is by a colleague, a terrorist conspirator covering their tracks; while Behrooz Araz is guilty of some wrongdoing but clearly the result of being under duress from his father; Richard Heller is guilty of withholding information related to his sexuality for personal reasons rather than seditious ones; and Paul Raines is only guilty of being tricked by Habib Marwan, his involvement in the day's crises essentially incidental. However, in each of these cases, torture is explained away through a "higher" ideology. Richard Heller does have information that CTU need and the revelation he finally makes allows them to fit the pieces of the puzzle together and prevent a nuclear warhead from striking Los Angeles. However, had he confessed this information earlier, there would have been a significant minimizing of loss of life beforehand. The torture of Paul Raines gets Jack Bauer the answers that he wants, answers that Paul may not have provided through other means.

It is the torture of Behrooz Araz and Sarah Gavin that raise the most questions, I feel, but any challenges to the dominant ideology that they may present are minimized by the outcome of Araz being left essentially open to interpretation and Sarah Gavin being portrayed as a greedy, self-serving careerist whose mind is not focused on her job. The sole challenge to torture that is presented in the show is in its consequences and impact on Jack Bauer, which I will discuss at length in the next section of this study.

Themes at the macro level

The research question for this study asked what ideologies are apparent in *24*'s depiction of torture. Having looked at a number of key characters and incidents that occur to them that I feel highlight the show's portrayal of torture, I now wish to move to a more macro-level analysis of a number of themes that relate to the ideologies of torture that *24* exhibits that I felt were apparent throughout the season under analysis. It is my hope that the examples used in the "case studies" above, combined with the extensive use of excerpts from the text that are used in the name of "thick description," has provided sufficient context for the macro-level analysis that is to follow. I should also point out that I felt over the course of the analysis that there were a number of issues that while not directly relevant to torture, were relevant in setting up a context or atmosphere that surrounds the show. Thus, some of the analysis that follows does not directly tackle the issue of torture (that has already been explicitly dealt with in the case studies). Rather, these themes are to be viewed as larger ideological frameworks within which the use of torture is situated, as part of, perhaps, a larger systematic ideology within which the show operates. Here, I seek to use Dershowitz's (2002, 2003a, 2003b) "ticking time bomb" argument as a framework for highlighting and understanding these ideologies. I will then explain the process by which I categorized the themes I found in the show, and follow this up with an in-depth discussion of each of the ideological themes I found to be apparent in regard to the show's portrayal of torture.

The ticking time bomb: A framework for understanding

Earlier, in the literature review of this study, I discussed the ethics of torture and the contemporary debate caused, in part, by the legal scholar Alan Dershowitz's (2002, 2003a, 2003b) claim that the torture of a suspected terrorist is ethical if it leads to information being obtained that saves the lives of others. This argument has come to be known as "the ticking time bomb" theory. This argument has been repudiated by many other scholars, on ethical (Allen,

2005; Ignatieff, 2004) and legal (Allen, 2005; Ignatieff, 2004; Kreimer, 2003) grounds, as well as that it is contingent on a number of factors that make such a scenario unlikely (Cohen, 2005). These arguments are not reckoned with on *24*. Indeed, executive producer and co-creator Robert Cochran observes, somewhat tongue-in-cheek, “Most terrorism experts will tell you that the ‘ticking time bomb’ situation never occurs in real life, or very rarely. But on our show it happens every week” (as cited in Mayer, 2007, ¶5). It is clear that the ticking time bomb is not only an apt metaphor for *24*, but given the premise of the show as taking place over twenty-four hours, it is central to the framework under which the show operates. The notion of the ticking time bomb is thus given extra velocity by the continuous movement of the clock, counting down the hours, minutes, and seconds until potential disaster. Each episode is an hour in the life of the protagonists and details the decisions they have to make to prevent any number of disasters from occurring. Howard Gordon, the lead writer of the show, observes that “the premise of *24* is the ticking time bomb. It takes an unusual situation and turns it into the meat and potatoes of the show” (as cited in Mayer, 2007, ¶20). Executive Producer Joel Surnow describes the twenty-four hour premise as the show’s “trick” (as cited in Mayer, 2007, ¶4). Essentially, *24* is Alan Dershowitz’s ticking time bomb theory writ large, played out for an audience of millions worldwide. Thus it makes for a good framework towards understanding the dominant ideologies inherent to the show and its representations of torture. What follows is a discussion of four related sub-categories, based on themes I found prevalent in my analysis of the media text, that I believe help to construct the ideology of the ticking time bomb theory.

Categories

The process of coding saw a number of key trends and themes emerge. In order to determine what ideologies are apparent in *24*’s depiction of torture, as posed by the research

question for this study, these trends were distilled into four categories, using axial coding to bring “previously separate categories together under a principle of integration” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 221). The ticking time bomb argument is used as an over-arching context for all of the following categories, given the centrality it has to the show’s narrative. These categories, then, are to be considered as ideologies that relate to, and help construct, the dominant ideology, that of the ticking time bomb.

The first category relates to breaches of established protocol and the law, where the law is blatantly ignored by characters, and those that follow established protocol and the law only serve to get in the way. This theme also considers the notion that, contrary to the actions of the characters that abide by the law, it is Jack Bauer’s outside-of-the-law actions that consistently prove to be the “right” ones, i.e. the ones that get results and “stop the bomb,” to again invoke Dershowitz. This theme is categorized as “*The law doesn’t matter.*” The second category relates to the notion of tough times requiring tough decisions, with the United States having dangerous and ruthless enemies who pose risks to innocents, thus necessitating that characters needing to do whatever it takes to “stop the bomb,” to use Dershowitz’s logic. This category is titled “*Getting your hands dirty.*” The third category relates to the expendability of human life. This category is titled “*Human life is expendable.*” The fourth category relates to patriotism, loyalty to a cause, and the country coming before everything else. This category is titled “*Duty to a cause.*”

Suffice to say, these categories are not designed to serve as quantifiable boxes into which the show’s depictions and portrayals (and the ideologies contained within these depictions and portrayals) can neatly be filed; rather, they are central characterizations of some of the themes that were dominant throughout the analysis process, and there is certainly room for crossover.

What follows is a description of each of the four ideological themes, supported with examples from the show.

The law doesn't matter. The fact that torture is illegal under the terms of the Eighth Amendment yet is commonplace in *24* as a means of extracting information from suspects, whomever they may be, is, perhaps, proof enough that *24* projects the ideology that the law doesn't matter. The torture of the characters mentioned above is evidence towards this, including Richard Heller's frequent assertions that what is being done to him is against the law, assertions made to his own father, the Secretary of Defense, who brushes these protests off with seeming scant concern. However, the actual instances of torture are not the only factors that help construct this dominant ideology within the show. Here, I will discuss how the ideology that the law doesn't matter is projected through the law-breaking actions of the central characters, particularly Jack Bauer, but is also reinforced by the portrayals of those characters who do follow the law and established protocol as weak, naïve, and incompetent.

Jack Bauer is clearly the central character around which the narrative pivots. As the "good guy" of the plot, he is pitched against forces that would conspire to threaten the national security of the United States. Bauer is seen operating outside the law on a frequent basis, and when it comes to torture, he often turns to it as the first option for obtaining information from suspects. He is also unafraid to act outside the boundaries of the law in order to get results whilst out in "the field." At the end of episode three, he stages a robbery of a gas station where a suspect has stopped to get gas in order to buy Chloe time to get satellite coverage, detaining the suspect until Chloe is able to track his future movements. During this robbery, he threatens a police officer and a group of innocent customers. In the latter part of the season, he stages a raid on the Chinese Consulate in order to obtain information from Lee Jong, who has been conspiring

with the terrorists behind the events of the day. The ideology here is that the law, essentially, is in the way of national security, much like the conversation highlighted above (in the section on Joe Prado) between Jack Bauer and Amnesty Global lawyer David Weiss in relation to the constitution of the United States. Indeed, the very fact that it is the terrorist Habib Marwan who alerts Amnesty Global to Joe Prado being held in CTU custody, with the potential that Prado is being tortured for information, speaks volumes for how the law is regarded. In this particular instance, the law is a tool used by the central villain of the show as a means of literally slowing down and distracting the law enforcement officials he is attempting to evade. The law itself becomes a weapon in the tool of the terrorist, used against CTU, who find that dealing with the legalities of what they propose to do to Prado to be arduous and time-consuming. Though CTU ultimately find their way around it, by having Bauer “resign” and torture Prado as a private citizen, the use of Weiss and Amnesty Global by Marwan slows them down and helps him advance his plot, if only momentarily. Quite simply, in a highly ironic turn of phrase, the law is an obstruction to justice.

Despite his disregard for protocol, procedure, and the law of the land, Bauer is very much cast as the hero of the show. Jack’s moral position and the role he occupies as the hero of the narrative is reinforced by the fact that those that oppose him and his actions are portrayed as either incompetent or naïve. One of the major obstacles to Jack in the early episodes of the season is his former boss at CTU, Erin Driscoll, who fired him for his drug addiction. Driscoll continually thwarts Jack’s methods and is determined to go “by the book” and follow protocol with an almost religious fervor. Furthermore, Driscoll is painted as a somewhat incompetent figure, ineffective at dealing with multiple unfolding crises and lacking the ruthlessness in decision-making that makes Jack such an effective agent and protector of national security

(though she later has an about-face when she sees Jack's methods working). In the very first episode, we see CTU agent Chloe O'Brian present Driscoll with a potential lead from a friend of hers who came across information that the terrorists had accidentally allowed to appear on the Internet. Driscoll dismisses O'Brian's information as irrelevant to their current task, telling her to "go pass it to the FBI" and focus on the train bombing that occurred in the opening moments of the season. When O'Brian protests, on valid grounds (and the viewer has witnessed the scenes that lead into O'Brian informing Driscoll, so we are in the privileged position of knowing O'Brian is correct), Driscoll again dismisses her. In the early episodes at least, Driscoll does not deviate from protocol.

In that same episode, Jack returns to CTU for the first time since his firing, and he helps the unit when he observes CTU agent Ronnie Lobell investigating a suspect on a monitor in Driscoll's office. Jack realizes that something is wrong:

Jack: Listen to me, the store is open for business but the blinds are closed, there's no other employees, this guy is way too nervous. Trust me, he's hiding something.

We come to trust Jack and his instincts and, in a logical extension of that, come to distrust Driscoll, as she did not notice what Jack finds so glaringly obvious. Naturally, Jack is proven right and the man was indeed hiding something. As mentioned above in the section on Tomas Sherek, Jack is again proven right when he uses torture (shooting Sherek in the knee) to get the answers that Erin Driscoll and Ronnie Lobell could not. Jack's punishment for his actions is to be detained by Driscoll, prompting the following conversation:

Driscoll: You don't give me orders, Jack. I'm detaining you until an investigator from Division¹⁸ can take your statement. I'm going to recommend that you be arrested for torturing a suspect and rendering him useless for questioning.

Jack: You weren't getting anywhere with him. Because of me Sherek told you everything he knows.

Driscoll: You'd better hope so. [To a security guard] Would you please escort Mr. Bauer to a vacant office until Division gets here?

Jack: You're making a mistake.

The viewer knows that Jack is correct in his judgment, as he obtained the information that Driscoll and Lobell could not. However, the show presents the law-abiding, protocol-following Driscoll as an obstacle in the path of justice, detaining Jack instead of commending him for getting the information she had failed to. Later that episode, Chloe O'Brian visits Jack in his confinement, keeping him up to speed with the latest intelligence. When Jack asks her why she isn't passing that information on to Driscoll, she tells him:

Chloe: I don't think Driscoll's handling this the right way and I don't trust her. I trust you.

Having another character (who the show has also established as one of the "good guys") confide in Jack gives Jack's character credibility and his actions justification. It presents him as a figure who knows what call to make in tough, uncertain times. When Chloe shares with Jack the information she received from her friend, and that Driscoll made her pass it on to the FBI, Jack shoots her a look of surprise, coupled with his comment "She did what?" This reinforces the notion that those who follow protocol (and the law) are incompetent bureaucrats getting in the way of the hard work that needs to be done. Driscoll continues to make bad judgment calls

¹⁸ Division is the organization that has jurisdiction over CTU.

against Jack, going against the advice of her staff. For example, when Chloe enlists the help of her colleague Edgar Stiles, the following exchange takes place:

Chloe: I've been in contact with Jack Bauer.

Edgar: What?

Chloe: That's right. Now you're involved, so you're either gonna help me, or you're gonna turn me in.

Edgar: I'm turning you in.

Chloe: Jack can find Heller if he's allowed to follow the hostile, but Driscoll won't let him.

Edgar: That's her call.

Chloe: She's wrong.

Jack is continually painted as making the right decisions, the decisions that “pay off” in the interests of national security, and this is reinforced alternately by the fact that there are colleagues who continually vouch for him, and by the colleagues that resist him being either naïve or incompetent.

In the second episode, Jack makes a tough call when he and Lobell are pursuing a terrorist who had kidnapped a teenage boy who he suspects has overheard the terrorist plot and wants to find out what he knows. When Lobell makes a dash to save the teenager, Jack tells him to hold back, explaining that “This isn't the right play.” Jack insists that they follow the car. Lobell points out that by doing that, they are certainly dooming the teenager to death, but Jack points out that if they don't intervene and follow the car, they stand a better chance of following the car to the location where the kidnapped Secretary of Defense is being held. Lobell decides to follow protocol, detaining Jack and moving in to save the teenager, getting shot dead for his

efforts. Again, when protocol is followed, things go wrong. When protocol is breached, national security can be protected. Driscoll gets word of Lobell's death and has the following interaction with Jack:

Jack: I'm in transit. I'm tracking them. But he doesn't know it.

Driscoll: Give me your location. I'll send backup to apprehend him.

Jack: Erin, I don't think that's the right call. I believe that if I follow them, they're gonna lead me to Secretary Heller and the men who kidnapped him.

Driscoll: Listen to me. The terrorists have just announced that they are going to try and execute Heller in less than three hours. Bring the man in now!

Jack: Right now this is our best chance of finding him by then.

When Jack refuses and ends the phone call, a frustrated Driscoll announces to the CTU staff gathered around her:

Driscoll: I've just been informed that Ronnie Lobell has been killed in the line of duty. The killer was a hostile connected to Heller's abduction. At this point, Jack Bauer is no longer cooperating with this investigation. All departments need to be working on the location and capture of Jack Bauer and the hostile that he's tracking down.

As capturing Jack inadvisably becomes the focus of CTU's attention, again we see protocol-following administrators getting in the way of national security. This prompts Chloe to contact Jack behind Driscoll's back:

Chloe: What are you doing, Jack? Driscoll just announced you're operating outside her authority.

Jack: I don't have a choice. She's not handling it the right way.

Chloe: What if you're wrong?

Jack: I'm not. This is the best chance we have of finding Secretary Heller.

We place our confidence in Jack. Erin Driscoll, the protocol-follower, is “not handling it the right way.” This is despite the fact that Jack frequently takes actions that are quite clearly against the law. Furthermore, Erin Driscoll's stubbornness and dislike of Jack seems to harm the cause of national security, as the following scenario reveals:

Jack: Erin. Look, I've got some information for you. The hostile's name is Kalil Hasan.

Driscoll: Stand down, Jack. It's over.

Jack: Erin, right now Hasan is free. He's looking for a car and a phone. Once he has those things he's gonna lead us straight to Secretary Heller, I promise.

Driscoll: You can't know that for sure.

Jack: What have you got to lose? You've got him on satellite. Just bombard the area with the receptor beacon.

Driscoll: Send a team to pick up the hostile.

Jack: Damn it, Erin, if you do that, everything I've done over the last two hours will mean nothing!

Driscoll: I'm glad you finally figured that out.

Jack is willing to go to any lengths to protect national security interests, and those that get in his way are portrayed as either politically naïve or incompetent, bureaucrats who have no idea about what the realities of working on “the front line” are like, and who do not make decisions that are in the best interests of national security.

Getting your hands dirty. This theme revolves around the notion that tough times require tough decisions and the need to “get your hands dirty,” where the United States has enemies who need to be dealt with in a firm manner, and where any method is appropriate in the interests of

national security. This is most clearly manifested in the discussions of torture mentioned in the case studies above, perhaps most notably including the torture of an innocent CTU agent (Sarah Gavin), a minor (Behrooz Araz), the son of the Secretary of Defense (Richard Heller), and the husband of the Secretary of Defense's daughter, who has been framed by a major terrorist (Paul Raines). However, this ideology presents itself in other aspects of the show aside from torture that are relevant towards an over-arching ideological theme.

Earlier, I mentioned Jack making a tough call when he decided that he would not intervene and rescue Andrew Paige (Lukas Haas), a friend of Chloe's who was kidnapped by terrorists, instead wanting to watch the scenario play out in the hope that the terrorist would lead him to the kidnapped Secretary Heller. Jack's CTU colleague Ronnie Lobell, as discussed, disagreed and was shot dead when he intervened. Thus, Jack was proven right in that instance. Shortly afterward, when terrorists are torturing Andrew, Jack is positioned and able to intervene yet does not. Chloe, who is watching the incident play out on security camera footage, pleads with Jack to step in and save Andrew, but Jack does not wish to spoil his cover, instead wanting to follow the terrorists to the location of Secretary Heller. As the men beat Andrew to a pulp, Chloe continues to beg Jack to help, but Jack does not move until he is absolutely sure he will be able to follow a lead, and then he intervenes, shooting the two men who have beaten Andrew until he is unconscious. Jack is visibly angry that he has wasted time saving the life of Chloe's friend when he could have been pursuing a lead that could possibly lead to Secretary Heller. The greater good is always at the forefront of Jack's mind, it seems. When Chloe later berates Jack and tells him she will never forgive him, the following exchange takes place:

Jack: Chloe, I understand how you feel, but you've gotta think through this clearly. We have terrorists on U.S. soil. They've bombed a train, and they've kidnapped the Secretary

of Defense. Right now our only chance is to follow this hostile and hope that he leads us to Secretary Heller.

Chloe: This is over. I'm going to Driscoll.

Jack: No you won't, Chloe, because you know I'm right.

And ultimately, Chloe does indeed know Jack is right, and she continues to aid Jack, her actions ultimately resulting in her losing her job for consistently defying Driscoll (though she is reinstated by Driscoll's replacement Michelle Dessler). Jack's course of action is consistently portrayed as the right course of action, no matter how many corners he has to cut, no matter what happens or who gets hurt along the way. The fact that ultimately Jack saves the day only serves to reinforce this ideology, demonstrating that torture works.

One of Jack's skills is evidently his ability to make quick and ruthless decisions in the thick of the action. This is something that President Charles Logan lacks. Logan begins to buckle under the pressure following his ascendancy to the Presidency, and his aide Mike Novick drafts in former President David Palmer to assist him, with Palmer (the President in *24* seasons one through three) having experience at managing crises in national security. Palmer, much like Bauer, is portrayed as a cool decision-maker, able to juggle multiple crises whilst retaining his composure. He seems more Presidential than the nervous, awkward Logan, who seems unsure of himself and doubts his capabilities after the call he made to have Secret Service arrest Jack Bauer, which allowed Habib Marwan to escape. In conversation with David Palmer, Novick sums it up thus:

Mike: President Logan is requesting you run the effort to recover the stolen weapon and be in place to make whatever decisions need to be made. A crisis is looming. Hard choices may need to be made. By the President's own admission he feels he may not be

up to the task. This county is very possibly about to face the worst terrorist act in its history. We need your leadership.

Logan asks Palmer to serve as his proxy and make decisions in his absence. When a known conspirator of Marwan's, Lee Jong, is discovered to be seeking refuge at the Chinese Consulate, Palmer authorizes a raid on the Consulate to retrieve Jong. The raid is led by Bauer, and it is only a half success, as the Chinese Consul is accidentally killed in the process (getting in the middle of "friendly fire"), and Jong is badly wounded (thus leading, later, to the death of Paul Raines when Bauer forces the CTU doctor to operate on Jong instead of Raines). In D.C., Logan does not take kindly when he hears the news of the raid on the Consul:

Logan: David, what have you done?

Palmer: Excuse me, sir?

Logan: I just got a call from the Secretary of State telling me about a covert action against the Chinese consulate in Los Angeles.

Palmer: That's correct. I sanctioned it.

Logan: Why would you have done such a thing?

Palmer: It was the only option at the time.

Logan: Don't you know how fragile our relationship with China is right now? You authorized an attack on their consulate! That's a military engagement.

Palmer: It was a covert operation, not dissimilar to those carried out by countries on a routine basis around the world.

Logan: Don't give me a social studies lesson, David. We marched onto Chinese soil, we kidnapped one of their nationals, and in the process the Chinese consul was killed.

Mike: We were unlucky, sir.

Logan: Unlucky? Ha-ha. Yeah, I would say that we were unlucky. That's the kind of thing that could start a war! Now, how am I supposed to be able to fight terrorists while I'm provoking a nuclear superpower?

Palmer: I would advise you to calm down, sir, if we are gonna get through this day. We didn't bring this crisis on ourselves, but we're gonna be the ones to settle it. This is a dirty business, and we're gonna have to get our hands dirty to clean it up. Now, please, Mr. President, you brought me here to help you. Let me do it.

This notion of "getting our hands dirty" is very important to the show, as I hope I have established above. Getting your hands dirty is a necessary ingredient to halting terrorism. This suggests that terrorists are willing to play dirty, and the only way the good guys can win is if they play dirty too, thus giving the green light for all sorts of questionable methods, all in the name of national security of course. To relate this to the first ideological theme I presented, that of the need to operate outside the law, again we see a contrast between those who are willing to make the tough decisions in favor of protecting national security (Jack Bauer, David Palmer) contrasted with those who lack the ability to make such tough decisions (Erin Driscoll, Charles Logan). This brings me to my next point – one of the tough decisions that those decision-makers have to face over the course of the day, that of the expendability of human life and the notion of sacrifice in the name of a greater cause.

Human life is expendable. Concern for human life is also secondary to the cause of protecting the United States of America. This is true when it comes to a willingness to torture their own people, as in the case of Sarah Gavin, but also in terms of sacrificing innocent people, as in the case of the aforementioned Andrew Paige, Chloe O'Brian's friend, whom Jack leaves to be tortured for an agonizingly long time before he intervenes, only after he has been assured that

he has a lead to follow to retrieve the kidnapped Secretary Heller. The ideology that human life is expendable if it serves the greater good, then, is dominant throughout the show. This ideology becomes especially prevalent when we look at the treatment of CTU agents in “the field.” When Tony Almeida is captured, his ex-wife Michelle Dessler, with whom he has recently reconciled, grows alarmed at the lack of manpower they can devote to finding Tony. However, Buchanan reminds her that “The big picture is that we have to apprehend this hostile, alive. Nothing else matters.” Tony is a bit part player in the grand opera that is national security, and thus he can be sacrificed if it is for the greater good, just as the torture of innocents (Sarah Gavin, Paul Raines, Behrooz Araz, Richard Heller) is for the greater good. Later, when Tony is believed to have been killed, in an operation under Michelle’s command, Buchanan points out:

Buchanan: I can’t even imagine what you must be feeling. I know a part of you is second guessing your decision, but you couldn’t place Tony’s life before the lives of potentially millions of people. You made exactly the decision Tony would have wanted you to make. That’s our job. It’s what we signed on for.

The safety of the many outweighs the concerns of, and risk and harm to, the few. However, Tony is alive and is being held hostage by the mercenary Mandy (Mia Kirshner), who is in the employ of Habib Marwan. When Jack manages to discover where Tony is being held, a tense stand-off occurs between him and Mandy:

Jack: Don’t move! Drop the gun. It’s over.

Mandy: Take one more step and I’ll kill him.

Tony: Do it, Jack. Do what you have to do.

Mandy: Shut up. Do you really have what it takes to let me kill him while you’re looking him in the eye?

Jack: Yes.

Mandy: I believe you...

Jack manages to overpower Mandy, with Curtis Manning's help, and Tony is saved. However, Mandy recognizes that Jack is willing to sacrifice his colleague and friend in the name of national security. Moreover, Tony's statement – "Do it Jack. Do what you have to do" – makes him aware of his own expendability in the face of apprehending Mandy and saving the lives of millions of people. He, like Jack, knows that he is a pawn in the game of national security and ultimately, his life does not matter in comparison to the lives that may be saved if he dies. This scenario does not play out as such, as Curtis intervenes and subdues Mandy before she can harm Tony, but the ideology that human life is expendable if it protects national security – the old "greater good" argument appearing once again – dominates the show, and is inextricably linked to the ticking time bomb theory.

A similar situation occurs when Jack is held captive by Habib Marwan. Marwan grows worried that CTU will discover his plan to attack President John Keeler by capturing a stealth fighter and shooting Keeler down while he is traveling across the United States on Air Force One. Wanting to distract CTU, he offers the unit a trade: Jack for Behrooz Araz, who has no tactical value and the trade is a red herring to waste CTU time and distract them from the attempt on President Keeler's life¹⁹. When Audrey learns about the trade, she enquires about Jack's welfare:

Audrey: Is the operational objective to get Jack?

Tony: No, it isn't. Audrey, we have to consider Jack expendable. This whole thing's about creating an exposure point for Marwan.

¹⁹ It is this turn of events that prompts the torture of Behrooz, as CTU desperately attempt to obtain the information they reckon he must be withholding, given that Marwan seems to want the boy back, when in fact he does not have any tactical value.

Audrey: I know. Thank you for being straight with me, Tony.

Jack, like Tony (indeed, like all of them) is expendable if it means lives can be saved. The greater good always needs to be served. Then, at a briefing to discuss Jack's retrieval:

Buchanan: I don't like giving something up unless I know its value. Let's talk about what happens if we don't agree to the exchange.

Chloe: We don't get Jack Bauer back, for one thing.

Buchanan: That can't be the deciding factor here.

Chloe, ever Jack's defender at CTU, ventures that Jack's loss would be a blow to the unit. For Buchanan, who is portrayed as an experienced administrator who, unlike the likes of Erin Driscoll and Charles Logan, is willing to make the "necessary" decisions in the name of national security, losing Jack Bauer is not the "deciding factor," it does not even come into his frame of reference as a factor for not agreeing to the exchange. Once again, the lives of CTU agents (and indeed the lives of innocent people like Andrew Paige) are considered "casualties of war," almost, and acceptable sacrifices if it means that a greater number of lives can be saved and American national security can be protected. Tony puts it succinctly when he says:

Tony: Honestly, it could go either way, but I don't need to tell you that Jack would want us to do what's best for the operation and this country, not what's best for him.

This brings me to my final theme, that of loyalty to a cause, and particularly in the case of Jack Bauer, loyalty to the United States of America.

Loyalty to a cause. Patriotism is a major theme in *24*, and has close ties to the previous theme, that human life is expendable. The sacrifice of lives is often deemed to be an acceptable loss if it means that American national security is protected. This is also true of American reputation, as we see during the protracted rescue efforts for Secretary of Defense James Heller.

Here, CTU director Erin Driscoll and President John Keeler discuss the potential that Secretary Heller may not be rescued in time:

Driscoll: Mr. President, I have to ask you something now as we may not have time later.

Keeler: What is it?

Driscoll: We may find ourselves in a situation where we have Heller's location, but can't extract him safely. If that's the case, would you authorize, in advance, an all-out assault?

Keeler: The assumption being that the Secretary would not survive.

Driscoll: Correct.

Keeler: We'll cross that bridge if the scenario presents itself.

The scenario does indeed begin to present itself as later in the day Robert Franklin (J. Patrick McCormack), a senior advisor to the President, discusses with Keeler the possibility of having to launch missiles to destroy the compound where Secretary Heller is being held to prevent damage to the nation's image in the event of the terrorists carrying out their threat of executing Heller live over the Internet:

Robert: CTU thinks it's identified the location where the terrorists are holding Secretary Heller and his daughter.

Keeler: Where?

Robert: A compound in the Santa Clarita valley. But there is a problem. The teams dispatched to the site may not get there in time to prevent the broadcast, and even if they do, there is a good chance the Secretary will be killed in any rescue attempt.

Keeler: Well, we have no choice but to hope and pray that you're wrong.

Robert: We do have a choice. The Secretary's death would be tragic, but his execution on American soil broadcast to the world would be far worse. It would be a complete and utter humiliation for the country, perhaps the worst in our history.

Keeler: I'm well aware of that, Robert. But unless you have some solution, I'm missing the point of this conversation.

Robert: The solution is we make a preemptive strike. Assuming we locate the site in time, we destroy it.

Keeler: We kill our own Secretary of Defense?

Robert: To prevent our enemies from making a public spectacle of his death. He's going to be killed anyway.

Keeler: Jim Heller is a good friend. A loyal public servant. You expect me to kill him to save face?

Robert: Not yours, sir, the country's. If we look impotent in this situation, we'll only encourage more attacks. And if I may say so, sir, having known Jim Heller many years myself, if he were here he'd be the first to endorse this plan.

Keeler: The public will never accept it.

Robert: All the public will know is the Secretary died during the course of a rescue attempt, which is certainly more palatable than letting him be executed with the whole world watching.

The nation comes before everything else. This is a pervasive ideology that permits the sacrifice of CTU agents in the field (as seen by the expendability of Jack Bauer and Tony Almeida when they are taken hostage in separate situations), the torture of suspected spies within CTU (as in the case of Sarah Gavin), the prolonged torture of an innocent teenager by terrorists when Jack

Bauer is able to step in and help (as in the case of Andrew Paige), the torture of the son of the Secretary of Defense and his daughter's husband, and, here, the killing of the same Secretary of Defense by his own government to prevent shame being brought upon his country by seeing him executed with the whole world watching.

The patriotic tone is particularly prevalent when we focus our attention on Jack Bauer. Throughout the season, Jack is portrayed as not being self-serving in the slightest, but rather putting the country first, and he is portrayed as being ruthlessly dedicated to his job, to the point where he starts to lose his humanity as a result. This is perhaps best highlighted when he allows Paul Raines to die, and when Audrey protests, he exclaims "I have my orders, I'm doing my job!" For Jack, duty comes before compassion. Jack's devotion to the cause is highlighted in the following battle of ideologies between him and the terrorist Habib Marwan while he is being held captive:

Marwan: I have a few simple questions. If you answer them, there's a chance you might survive today.

Jack: Don't waste your time.

Marwan: You located me through a man named Joseph Fayed, who you might be interested to know, has since martyred himself. It would help me if I knew he was the only link you had to me.

Jack: Whatever you've planned next is going to fail, just like everything else you've tried today.

Marwan: Fail? Almost 40 dead in the train crash, many more near the San Gabriel island nuclear plant.

Jack: That wasn't really your plan, was it? We managed to stop the other 103 power plants from melting down. That's what America will remember, that we stopped you.

Marwan: No. They'll remember the image of Secretary of Defense Heller held hostage on your own soil, and it will burn in their psyches. This country will forever be afraid to let their leaders appear in public.

Jack: For all the hatred that you have for this country, you don't understand it very well.

Whatever you throw at us, I promise you, that'll never happen.

Jack here is the super-patriot, the man who cannot be broken. He also has an unshakeable faith in the American spirit and resolve. This is something he exhibits himself, and this is recognized by those who know him well. When he and his team are about to raid the Chinese Consulate building, Jack gets a call from David Palmer, and Palmer warns him:

Palmer: No one connected with the government can admit to knowing anything about this. Ever. If you're caught, you'll be tried at a Chinese court under Chinese law.

Jack: I understand.

Palmer: Jack, if it was anyone else, I'd ask if you were sure about this. With you, I already know the answer. God bless you. Good luck.

Jack is the patriot, willing to give his all for his country at a moment's notice and without second thought. However, his willingness to answer his country's call, and the ethical crossroads he faces, are not without their consequences for him and those nearest to him.

Arguments against torture

Those that doubt the effectiveness of torture as a mechanism for finding out the truth object not on grounds that it does not work, or that it damages the interests of the United States, or even that it is unethical. Doubters, such as Erin Driscoll (before the interrogation of Sherek),

Audrey Raines, and President Charles Logan do not raise a serious debate over the ethics of torture. Rather, they are either preoccupied with maintaining power and asserting their dominance (Driscoll), are somewhat politically naïve (Audrey), or poor decision-makers (Logan). Nobody makes a compelling case against torture, other than on procedural terms, such as when Jack defies Driscoll in torturing Sherek, or when he defies Logan in torturing Joe Prado. The only exception is David Weiss, the lawyer from Amnesty Global, who tells Bauer that he is in violation of the constitution, only to be told by Bauer that “these are extraordinary circumstances.” However, I believe this is negated by the fact that Weiss and the law that he represents are used against CTU in a tactical ploy by Habib Marwan, the terrorist ringleader. That said, I believe that the show’s portrayal of torture is slightly more nuanced than we may first suspect, and just because we do not see characters protest to torture on ethical grounds does not necessarily translate as a firm indication that the show fundamentally endorses torture as an ethical means of obtaining information from suspects. I do not necessarily see the show as being as two-dimensional as that. While I do not see any of the tortures of the characters mentioned above as posing a challenge to the dominant ideological themes I have put forward, I believe that the greatest argument to counter these dominant ideological themes is in the consequences of torture for Jack Bauer and the impact the tough, unethical, illegal, and oftentimes coldhearted decisions he has to make have on him.

The consequences of torture

Jack begins the day working a desk job at the Department of Defense, alongside a new love in his life, Audrey Raines, daughter of Secretary of Defense James Heller. He talks often of how he needed to get out of “fieldwork,” telling Audrey:

I could have joined other agencies if I still wanted to do field work. But I didn't. I wanted something different from my life. It might not seem like a lot to you, but for me, to be able to have this kind of a connection with somebody... I couldn't do that before.

Being on the frontline in the war against terror has scarred Jack, and he has apparently left that life behind, and is now able to settle down²⁰. In a conversation with Ronnie Lobell in the second episode of the season, Lobell asks him:

Ronnie: So what's its like working in D.C.?

Jack: For the most part, we solve problems in theory that will never come into play. You wouldn't be interested.

Ronnie: Then why do it?

Jack: I've got my reasons.

Ronnie: Hey, man... I'm just trying to make some conversation. I read your file. It must have really burned you up when Driscoll fired you.

Jack: She did me a favor. I wanted to get my life back. I wouldn't have been able to do that if I was still doing field work.

Ronnie: So how's the master plan going? Do you have a life yet?

Jack: Yeah. Yeah, I got a life.

Jack has gotten away from field work because of the damage it was doing to his personal life. Now he has a comfortable desk job at the Department of Defense working alongside the woman he loves, Audrey Raines. However, the kidnap of Secretary Heller and Audrey by terrorists serves to thrust Jack back into the field work he has been trying to escape from, and for the remainder of the day he is back to his old life, not just dealing with "problems that never come

²⁰ For the sake of context here, it is important to note that in the first season of the show, Jack's wife is killed by a CTU colleague he had trusted, but who turned out to be a terrorist conspirator.

into play” but real problems that necessitate real solutions. This has an effect on his relationship with Audrey, who has not witnessed the ruthless side of Jack Bauer before. The following excerpt is from Audrey’s conversation with her father following Paul’s initial torture at Jack’s hands:

Heller: How are you doing? Sit down. Any word from Jack or Paul?

Audrey: No.

Heller: I can’t imagine how hard this must be for you. There’s something else, isn’t there?

Audrey: A couple of hours ago, when we thought that Paul was somehow involved with the attacks, Jack questioned him, and Paul has his pride, so he resisted, but...

Heller: Jack was pretty rough.

Audrey: Very.

Heller: That’s his job. He had to make sure. You have to believe that Jack had no choice.

Audrey: I know. I guess it was just a shock to see it. Somehow he seemed like a different person.

[Audrey starts crying.]

Heller: We need people like that, Audrey.

Audrey: Jack is an incredible man. It’s just...

Heller: But you’re not sure you feel the same way as you did before, is that it?

Audrey: Something like that.

There are a couple of interesting statements here. First, that Heller says “Jack had no choice.” The lack of viable alternatives is consistently presented in relation to torture. There is often very little debate on the issue: Richard Heller was tortured for information he was unwilling to

volunteer, Sarah Gavin was arrested at her station and taken to an interrogation chamber almost instantly, and Behrooz Araz is tortured for the tactical value CTU believe he has, having been tricked by Habib Marwan. There are often no alternatives presented to torture, as though it is the only course of action that can garner a result. Of course, in the cases of Joe Prado and Tomas Sherek, it does. The same is true for Jack's torture of Paul Raines. Again, this reinforces the ideology that torture works. Secondly, Audrey's statement that "somehow he seemed like a different person" is highly relevant, given my earlier discussion of how Jack exists in a world with vast ethical and epistemological differences of thought to the likes of Audrey and Paul Raines. Finally, Heller's statement that "We need people like that" is important given the political context in which the show is situated. What exactly do we need here? Someone who is willing to torture a suspect at a moment's notice? Someone who is willing to electrocute his partner's estranged husband with wire torn from a lamp? What Heller is suggesting here is that the United States needs people who will take ruthless measures – who will "get their hands dirty," to use the term from my theme of the same name – to protect American national security from equally ruthless terrorists who would conspire to do the nation harm. Heller's statement indicates that these are tough, uncertain times where people like Jack, who can make the kinds of tough decisions in the name of national security, are coveted. However, while the country needs people like Jack, the actions Jack undertakes on his country's behalf cause significant damage to his personal life.

Relevant to this discussion is a conversation between Tony Almeida and Audrey, again after the torture of Paul Raines, discussing Jack's return to the frontline:

Tony: So, uh... how are you and Jack fairing with him out in the field today?

Audrey: It's different. A lot different than Washington.

Tony: Yeah, it is different. To tell you the truth, I couldn't believe it when I heard that Jack had taken a desk job at D.C.

Audrey: He said he was happier this way.

Tony: Uh-ha. Well, you've gotten the chance to see him in both worlds today. You think he'll go back to wearing a suit?

Audrey: After the hell Jack's been through today, you think he'll wanna come back to this?

Tony: Some people are more comfortable in hell.

On a similar note, Tony Almeida is called back into duty by Jack Bauer this season after having been arrested for treason at the end of the third season, when he put national security in jeopardy by allowing a terrorist and mass murderer to escape so that his wife, Michelle, who was being held as the terrorists' captive, could be freed. He knows all too well the decisions that come with working on the frontline of national security, and it is clear that the grim nature of the job contributed to the breakdown of his marriage. When he and Michelle are reunited at CTU, they discuss their future:

Tony: It's funny, this morning Jack and Audrey were planning their future. Now he's responsible for her husband's death, and he may have to torture her brother.

Michelle: And yet every move he's made has been the right one.

Tony: Not if he wanted to be with her. Look, Michelle... Everything that's happened here today, it's been hard going through it with you again.

Michelle: It's been hard for me too.

Tony: And I look at what this job does to the people in our positions, and I realize I want us to be together again, but it's gotta be away from all of this.

Michelle: You want us to leave our jobs? We've spent the last twelve years of our lives doing this. Where would we go? What would we do?

Tony: I don't care. People start over every day if it's important to them.

Michelle: You're asking me to leave the only thing I've ever done.

Tony: Yes, I am.

Tony is aware that the tough decisions that are mandated of the kind of work that CTU does can only have a damaging effect on interpersonal and romantic relationships. Tony says "I look at what this job does to people in our positions," suggesting that he knows all too well that fighting terrorism, and the ruthless decisions that have to be made in the name of that fight, can damage a person's soul, so to speak. When Michelle points out that every decision Bauer has made has been the right one, Tony retorts by saying that these weren't the right decisions if he was putting his relationship with Audrey first. Tony's analysis is ultimately proved to be astute, as Jack and Audrey's relationship breaks down over the course of the day, with the torture and then death of Paul Raines a major contributing factor. Ultimately, it is Jack's work at the frontline of the fight against terror that destroys his relationship with Audrey, as she explains in the following exchange:

Jack: Audrey, you are not responsible for this. I, and I alone, made the decision on how to handle Paul. If you wanna remain effective, be able to do your job, you have to let it go.

Audrey: Jack, that's your gift. You're able to block things out. I can't do that.

Again, this emphasizes the gulf between Jack and Audrey. Jack attempts reconciliation with

Audrey:

Jack: Audrey, it's Jack. I know you don't wanna talk to me right now, but there are a few things I need to say.

Audrey: All right.

Jack: Look, I know with everything that's happened today, you've seen me do things that before now you thought were unimaginable.

Audrey: I would have been happy to skip today.

Jack: Yeah, me too. But the truth of it is, Audrey, I never believed you could ever really love me if you'd known about everything I've done.

Audrey: Jack, I can't...

Jack: Audrey, please, let me finish. These were the things that I was running away from. That's why I moved to D.C. That's why I stopped doing fieldwork. That's why I don't work at CTU.

Audrey: All I know is that you're back in it, and it's too much for me, Jack.

Jack: I know. I know. The last thing I ever wanted to do was push you away from me. God, Audrey, I love you. But this is how the job has to be done. I just want you to know how sorry I am that it had to involve you and the people you care about. Look, you don't have to say anything now. Please, just promise me, as soon as this is over we can talk about everything that's happened. Audrey, please.

Notice that Jack says "Audrey I love you. But this is how the job has to be done." Even though he is in danger of losing the woman that he loves, he still refuses to disavow his convictions that he is doing the right thing. Ultimately, Jack and Audrey break up:

Jack: Your father said you're going to Washington tomorrow.

Audrey: Yeah, I have to take care of Paul's funeral.

Jack: Yeah. And after that? I'm sorry, I... I know this isn't the right time to talk about everything. Maybe tomorrow before you catch your flight, we could... we could get together.

Audrey: Jack, I don't think that's a good idea.

Jack: I thought we agreed that we... wouldn't make those kinds of decisions today.

Audrey: I know, it's just...

Jack: Audrey... I love you. I wanna spend the rest of my life with you. That's all I want.

Audrey: We both know that you belong here, Jack. At CTU, doing what you do best. And thank God there are people like you who can deal with that world... But I can't.

Jack: Please don't say that.

Audrey: Oh, Jack. Oh, Jack. I love you. But after today, it's just... It won't work. I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

[Audrey gives him one last kiss and walks away. Jack is stranded in her wake, devastated.]

At the very end of the season, Jack is forced to fake his own death and go into hiding when a contract is placed on his head by the Chinese government, aided and abetted by the cowardly Logan administration. His life has to begin anew, without Audrey, without a job, without his colleagues at CTU to support him. He has lost everything.

One could advance the argument that due to Jack's loss of everything he owns and loves, he pays the price for his torturous acts. He is forced to adopt a new identity and essentially start over with nothing. Moreover, Jack is clearly filled with remorse at his actions, even though he believes that he did the right thing; he is appalled by what he feels he had to do, but also convinced he had to do it. But is this enough? Is it enough that although torture might cause Jack

some anguish, he still carries out the act, and it is presented as the right and patriotic thing to do? Though a strong case can be made that this is “redemptive” enough, I would advocate that it does not matter how aggrieved a character may be or how much they may lose as a consequence of their actions. Jack’s patriotism, devotion to his cause, and unswerving loyalty to the United States permits him to rationalize torture (and other illegal activities) as a means of protecting the greater good. Jack Bauer is certainly no villain. He believes in what he is doing and believes in the cause he is fighting for. One could say that Bauer is something of an idealist, with a fervent belief in flag, nation, and justice and an unwavering commitment to the protection of the innocent. Indeed, as a viewer we are drawn to like Jack and almost forgive him of the crimes that he has committed in the name of national security. He is, in truth, a passionate advocate of Dershowitz’s (2002, 2003a, 2003b) theory that torture is ethical if it means defusing the bomb or preventing some incident from happening that will cause the loss of innocent life. Meanwhile, people like Jack are valorized by those who know him. In the above conversation, Audrey remarks “thank God there are people like you who can deal with that world [of counter-terrorism].” Earlier, I noted Secretary of Defense James Heller remarking that “We need people like [Jack], Audrey”. However much woe it causes Jack Bauer, the kinds of actions that Jack (and others like him) take in the name of national security are painted as necessary, a vital cog in the War on Terror. Thus, while the consequences that torture have on Jack are perhaps the most compelling arguments that can be made *against* the over-arching ticking time bomb ideology, whereby the ideology that torture is ethical as long as it “stops the bomb” is the dominant ideology within 24’s portrayal of torture, the fact that those above and alongside Jack value the contributions he makes, and still mandate them of him, ultimately cast Jack as a pawn in the

game of national security akin to the theme of “human life is expendable” that I introduced earlier.

Finally, worthy of some discussion are the parallels between the show and the War on Terror in “real life,” due to the blurring between fiction and reality that takes place on the show. Obviously, there are thematic parallels given the climate of contemporary national security issues, but there are also some nuances that need to be noted.

Parallels with reality

The show has a number of intriguing parallels with reality. Whenever a character turns on the news, it is always Fox News that is showing. This is perhaps unsurprising given that *24* airs on the Fox network, and the network is unlikely to give promotional consideration to a rival, but when we consider the allegations of conservative bias that have been leveled against Fox News (Aday, Livingstone, & Hebert, 2005; Hart, 2004; Lewis, 2005; Morris, 2005; Turner, 2007), its presence is a little more disquieting. Indeed, drawing together the alleged conservative biases of both *24* and the network’s news output, *Time* columnist Joe Klein (2006) sardonically observes, “By no accident, *24* is a product of Fox” (¶3).

Secondly, in an argument between Secretary of Defense James Heller and his son Richard, reality is invoked again when Heller accuses Richard of political naivety:

Heller: Can’t you ever think of anything besides yourself? If you do this, it will humiliate the President, and it will be dangerous to national security.

Richard: What could be more dangerous than 25,000 missile delivery systems?

Heller: Spare me your 6th grade Michael Moore logic. The world is a little bit more complicated than that, Richard. We do not live in a utopia. America has enemies.

Richard: Enemies who were our friends a year ago. And in another year it'll change again unless people stop supporting your psychotic need to control the world.

Heller: Psychotic need? We serve our country. We serve the cause of freedom. What do you do?

The invoking of Moore, a prominent figure on the liberal left in American political and cultural discourse, brings the show into the “real world,” thus suggesting that the problems faced in the show and the problems faced by the nation are one and the same. For the purposes of narrative, then, *24*'s United States of America and “reality's” United States of America are the same, and Michael Moore lives in both. Richard's arguments against his father are seen as naïve; he doesn't inhabit the world his father does and thus does not have a real scope of the “big picture,” so to speak, where the United States has dangerous enemies who are opposed to what it stands for. As well as being a potshot at Moore, the spat is also a reminder that the liberal mindset that Moore typifies is, in the world of *24*, a naïve one. There are “bad guys” out there like Habib Marwan and Navi Araz who will stop at nothing to see the United States crumble. Thus, to bring this back into the realm of torture once again, the subtext of what Heller is saying here is that the United States has enemies who it needs to respond to in kind, and match their ferocity. His clincher, “We serve the cause of freedom. What do you do?” is a typical play on the notion of the young liberal as a good-for-nothing complainer who does not give to the system but is happy to endlessly critique it.

A third disquieting similarity occurs when Heller is kidnapped and he is dressed in the orange jumpsuits that have become synonymous with the prisoners being held at Guantanamo Bay and of the gruesome videotaped executions of Americans in the Middle East such as journalist Daniel Pearl and contractor Nicholas Berg. At the end of the second episode of the

season, the terrorists put Heller in front of a camera and one of their number, Omar (Tony Plana), speaks the following:

Omar: We speak for the men, women and children who have had no voice until now, who have been victimized by the genocidal policies of the United States that James Heller has advanced. But the time has come for the victims to demand justice. Our soldiers have taken the terrorist James Heller into custody. In three hours Heller will be tried for war crimes against humanity. If he is proven guilty, he will be executed in accordance with our laws. Because we have nothing to hide, the world would have full access to these proceedings.

Later, when Heller is about to be executed (before he is saved by Jack Bauer):

Omar: Finally, we hold you responsible for the blasphemy, for disregarding holy lands and shrines, and for spilling the blood of our brothers. James Heller, your guilt of these charges is not a matter of dispute. I have here a full confession that you have signed. So now it is time for your sentence to be read, and for the execution of that sentence to be carried out. James Heller, before the eyes of God, I sentence you to death.

These are eerily reminiscent of the footage of Berg, Pearl, among many others, where the hostage is dressed in an orange jumpsuit and made to kneel down while a clutch of terrorists gather behind him, with one typically reading a list of charges, and the whole charade ending on an extremely grisly note with the beheading of the hostage, live on camera and streamed for the world to see. Though Heller is saved by Bauer at the last minute, the parallels are still somewhat jarring.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Purpose of study

This study adopted the stance of Thornham and Purvis (2005), who argue that television drama is “a key site for exploring the usefulness of contemporary theories of identity, cultural change, and representation” (p. ix) and Newcomb (1976), who wrote that television drama is a “crucially important” area of study, as “it brings its massive audience into a direct relationship with particular sets of values and attitudes” (p. 274). The purpose of this study was to determine and highlight the “values and attitudes,” or ideologies, that are apparent in *24*’s depiction of torture, based on the premise that television is an ideological device that can construct a sense of reality for viewers (Fiske, 1991, 1994; Gitlin, 2000, 2001; Goodenough, 1971; Hall, 1977; Kellner, 1995; Real, 1996) and thus inculcate dominant ideologies that support the status quo (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1993; Artz & Ortega Murphy, 2000; Fiske, 1983, 1986, 1987, 1991; Gitlin, 2000; Kellner, 1982, 1995; Morley, 1980; Newcomb, 1984; Radway, 1986; Thompson, 1990).

Findings

This study found that the ticking time bomb theory as devised by Alan Dershowitz (2002, 2003a, 2003b) is the dominant ideology in the show’s portrayal of torture and related issues. Through thorough analysis of the media text (incorporating visual analysis of the show and analysis of episode transcripts for the whole season), I determined that this ticking time bomb ideology is supported by four related ideologies that help construct the ticking time bomb notion. These ideologies are: (a) that the law does not matter and those that follow the law only get in the way, (b) that there is a need to “get your hands dirty” in times of a crisis, where any method

is appropriate to use in the name of national security, (c) that human life is expendable, as long as it protects national security interests and the safety of the American populace, and (d) that loyalty to a cause comes above all other considerations, the cause being the United States of America and its security. Furthermore, I found that there are not many compelling argument made against torture in the show, the most compelling being the effect that engaging in acts such as torture has on those that commit the acts, specifically the character of Jack Bauer. However, ultimately the fact that Jack's actions are valued by those around him and whom he works for, I believe minimizes the challenge this notion poses to the dominant ideology that torture is an acceptable course of action in times of crisis.

A quintessential post-9/11 television drama

I began this study with a brief anecdote regarding former candidate for the Republican Presidential nomination Tom Tancredo, who, when asked a question related to torture, responded by saying, "I'm looking for Jack Bauer at that time, let me tell you... [the U.S. should do actions that] make the bad guy fearful" (Brooks, 2007; Doyle, 2007). The blurring of the lines between fact and fiction that instances such as these serve to highlight making the ramifications of this study important. It is apparent that *24* is a reflection of the anxieties of the age. Crucially, *24* is a show that deals with terrorism and counter-terrorism in an age when these subjects dominate contemporary discourses. "The writers of *24*," writes Feeney (2004), "grasp that when it comes to terrorism we are desperate for answers" (¶7). The show plays into current topics in American society, dealing with issues that a nation is still attempting to get the grips with after a devastating attack in its own backyard. This, I believe, makes it the quintessential post-9/11 television drama, playing into the anxieties, issues, and dilemmas of the age. With the revelations of torture and prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib prison and extreme interrogation methods at

Guantanamo Bay, *24* has even more immediacy and has paralleled the course of the Bush administration, dealing with the same volatile issues as the politicians and national security agents in “real life” have had to contend with. The time frame that the show is bound by increases the tension and necessitates swift action to prevent a terrorist attack. Bauer and his colleagues only have a window of twenty-four hours to prevent disaster on American soil, and thus often resort to brutal methods of interrogation to extract the necessary information from suspects. The show does not flinch in its depictions of suffering. Rather, it dwells on the acts of torture. Take, for example, the way the camera uncomfortably lingers on the grimacing faces of Paul Raines or Sarah Gavin when they are being tortured for information. The ethics of these acts are questionable, hence this study. The executive producer of *24*, Joel Surnow, stated, “If there’s a bomb about to hit a major U.S. city and you have a person with information... if you don’t torture that person, that would be one of the most immoral acts you could imagine” (as cited in Cusac, 2005, p. 35). The show tackles the dilemma of what is more important: security or liberty? I believe the answer that the show endorses is, quite clearly, security, given that the show emphasizes the ticking time bomb theory to maximum effect, with a number of related ideologies supporting this over-arching ideology.

24 speaks to an audience unsure of its direction in post-9/11 America, sending the signal that these are dangerous times, and we need to take extreme measures to protect ourselves, and thus torture becomes a necessity for our very survival, rather than an unthinkable evil. In the introduction to this study I cited Freedland (2005), who commented on the impact the narrative of the show can have on the viewer, arguing, “As we watch, our nerves taut, there is no ethical corner we don't want Bauer to cut, if that's what he has to do to prevent murder and mayhem” (p. 19). Thus the danger, of course, is in the attitudes that *24*'s portrayal of torture may inculcate

among its viewing audience. It was not the purpose of this study to offer hypotheses as to what these potential effects are, yet one must speculate that if audiences are continuously subjected to viewing torture as a normal and natural way of combating terrorism, then there is a possibility that they will accept it as a legitimate method of interrogation. In *24*, torture becomes an acceptable means to an end, socializing the audience into accepting the view that, in times of threat to national security, extreme measures are necessary if we are to protect the nation, one such extreme measure being torture. The view that torture is acceptable action in times of strife is one that *24* seems to endorse, and it is concerning that this can become part of an audience's acceptable norms.

Theoretical implications

Earlier, I cited Ignatieff (2004), who stated that torture “expresses the state’s ultimate view that human beings are expendable” (p. 143). This was found to be a common theme in my analysis of *24*’s portrayal of torture. As discussed, this show supports Alan Dershowitz’s (2002, 2003a, 2003b) “ticking time bomb” theory, whereby it is an ethical course of action to torture a terrorist suspect if it leads to information being obtained that saves innocent lives. Indeed, Dershowitz (2003b) asks, “Would torturing one guilty terrorist to prevent the deaths of thousands of innocent civilians shock the conscience of all decent people?” (p. 173). The ticking time bomb scenario is one which the very narrative of *24* supports, given that we are presented with a clock constantly ticking down, putting pressure on the national security agents of CTU to get results or “stop the bomb,” to use Dershowitz’s analogy, before time runs out. The ticking time bomb scenario is supported by the four related ideologies that I mentioned above.

This study drew heavily on critical-cultural theory which locates television as an ideological device that can be used for transmitting and inculcating dominant ideological

messages. This study adds to that literature by presenting an example of a television text that deals with one of the major issues of contemporary American society, torture, and the findings of this study indicate that *24* does present torture as a normal course of action in dealing with terrorism, highlighting specifically four dominant ideologies – the law not mattering, the need to “get your hands dirty,” the notion that human life is expendable, and the cause coming before everything else – that suggest that torture is indeed an acceptable course of action. Earlier, I cited Fiske (1991), who writes of the naturalization process within media texts. The ideologies contained within media texts, he writes, “[work] to naturalize the meanings of the social world that serve the interests of the dominant; it works to create *common* sense out of the *dominant* sense” (pp. 445-447, emphasis in original). This argument stems from Gramsci’s (1971, 1985) theory of hegemony, where the interests of the elites are seen as the interests of everyone, and dominant ideologies come to be seen as common sense, or “the way things are,” thus stifling dissent and maintaining the status quo. *24* does indeed, as theorists (Fiske, 1991, 1994; Gitlin, 2000, 2001; Goodenough, 1971; Hall, 1977; Kellner, 1995; Real, 1996) have established, create a sense of reality for viewers, the reality that torture is an acceptable means of dealing with terrorism and gaining information that can save innocent lives. Goodenough (1971) writes that television reifies “standards for deciding what is, standards for deciding what can be, standards for deciding how one feels about it, standards for deciding what to do about it, and standards for deciding how to go about doing it” (p. 22). When the ideologies at stake regard something such as torture then the stakes are undeniably high, and, in *24*, when one is presented with somebody who may have information that may save lives, “how to go to about doing it” is to torture them! Thus for *24* the danger of such normalization is that it can normalize and desensitize the viewing audience to torture, so that torture becomes less and less of an unacceptable evil, or at the very

least a last resort, and more of a part of “the way things are,” and an acceptable means of combating terrorism.

This study also supports work done that indicates that Hollywood rallies around the flag in times of crisis, releasing movies with ideological overtones that demonstrate support and solidarity with the present administration (Davies, 2005; DeBauche, 1997; Doherty, 1993; Hellmann, 1986; Isenberg, 1975; Jeffords, 1986, 1989, 1994; Kellner, 1991; Shindler, 1979). It also helps further situate *24* within the context of the post-9/11 media culture, where there was a shift from attempts to be sensitive in film and television storytelling, to the trend swinging to the polar opposite, in the form of action-packed movies with themes of war and conflict that vicariously played out American patriotism and imperialism on the big screen. Dixon (2004) has written that movies such as *Black Hawk Down* (2001), *Collateral Damage* (2002), and *We Were Soldiers* (2002) represented “a renewed audience appetite for narratives of conflict” (p. 1). We can safely add *24* to this context, with its portrayal of security issues on the domestic level. Baudrillard (2002) suggests that these movies are somewhat akin to an “exorcism” (p. 7), a way of numbing the pain. Certainly we can consider *24* using Baudrillard’s argument, looking at how it represents a time of paranoia, uncertainty, and constant crisis, and how having Jack Bauer empowered with the tools to do our dirty work for us helps Americans come to terms with having a terrorist attack in its own backyard on September 11th.

However, such portrayals may not necessarily be a bad thing. One approach is to suggest that anything that gets people thinking and talking about controversial and volatile issues such as torture in contemporary society is a productive step. Claire Wardle and Rachel Gans-Boriskin have the optimistic belief that television drama has the potential to spur discussion among viewers in ways that news may be unable to. “Fiction,” they write, “gives people in society the

space they need to play with ideas and arguments that might be too politicized if attached directly to ‘real’ situations” (Wardle & Gans-Boriskin, 2004, p. 74). It would certainly be quite pleasing if we were to discover, somehow, that *24* was allowing for rich discussions of political, moral, and ethical issues across the United States. We can but hope. In terms of reality, if one is of the opinion that torture is immoral no matter the circumstances, then one again can only hope that the situations presented in *24* are purely fictional and have no precedent in real life.

Unfortunately, the ghosts of Abu Ghraib indicate that this is not the case. The danger of torture, as Bauman (1989) points out, is that it can become institutionalized and thus the goals behind its use become taken for granted, resulting in moral resistance to abuse being much less likely to occur, with torture naturalized as normal.

Directions for future research

I believe this study adds to the critical-cultural literature on television as an ideological device used to inculcate dominant ideological messages and thus maintain the hegemonic status quo. I would hope that, as a start, research will continue to delve into the ideological messages that are contained within television dramas, particularly within the post-9/11 context. Spigel (2004) claims that the majority of post-9/11 media scholarship has focused almost exclusively on news media, ignorant of the messages within, and impact of, non-news media. Indeed, she makes the strong claim that “Despite its significant achievements, however, the scholarly focus on news underestimates (indeed, it barely considers) the way the “reality” of 9/11 was communicated across the flow of television’s genres, including its so-called entertainment genres” (p. 238). Media research should come to terms with the fact that postmodernism has eroded the boundaries between fact and fiction (Featherstone, 1991), with the boundaries that once clearly delineated factual and fictional research coming to be seen as arbitrary and socially constructed

(Delli Carpini & Williams, 1994; 2001). It is my hope that future study will address this vastly under-researched area.

This study has lent some support to the concerns among journalists that the show adopts an ideology in favor of torture as a means of obtaining information (Aaronovitch, 2004; Amdur, 2006; Feeney, 2004; Freedland, 2005; Klein, 2006; Mayer, 2007; Miller, 2007; Rich, 2005). It would be pertinent if scholarship started to catch up to what those in the media have been saying for some years since *24* premiered. Looking specifically at *24*, the logical place for future study would be to examine the evolution of the show's portrayal of torture from its first season up until the most recent season. Here, I have attempted to address a small part of that larger puzzle by situating the fourth season of *24* within the context of the post-9/11 era, with particular reference to the Abu Ghraib scandal. However, given that the show essentially charts the course of the Bush administration and the War on Terror, it would be interesting to see how such portrayals unfold with the times and if the fourth season, where torture appears to be accepted as a normal means of operating, has similar ideologies to previous and later seasons. I also regard this show as being particularly fruitful for research into other kinds of portrayals. Journalists have criticized the show for its supposed conservative political outlook (Aaronovitch, 2004; Freedland, 2005; Klein, 2006; Rich, 2005), and its portrayal of Muslims (Doward, 2007; Fenner, 2007; Keveney, 2005; Khalil, 2007). Future research could delve into these areas. Similarly, future research could also examine the construction and articulation of civil liberties in the show in relation not only to torture but to issues such as privacy, surveillance, and wire tapping, as these are all prevalent themes within the show, and are particularly salient in the post-9/11 era due to legislation such as the Patriot Act. Interestingly enough, the seventh season of *24*, delayed until January 2009 due to the Writer's Guild of America strike, features Jack Bauer testifying before a

Senate committee regarding his use of torture. It will be interesting to see how the show tackles this topic²¹.

In my introduction to this study, I mentioned how, before 9/11, television networks had scheduled three shows with a counter-terrorism theme – *24*, *The Agency*, and *Alias* – to air in late September and early October of 2001 (Hark, 2004). Potential avenues for research could be investigations of each of their depictions of torture either in isolation or in comparison to one another. It would certainly make for an interesting scenario should all three shows express the same ideology in relation to torture.

Conclusion

The media theorist John Fiske once wrote “Communication is too often taken for granted when it should be taken to pieces” (Fiske, 1990, p. xi). I feel that television dramas such as *24* offer great scope for media research because of the ideologies that may be contained within them. Unfortunately, this well has not yet been pumped, at least to any great extent, in the post-9/11 era. We cannot take television drama and other fictional televisual formats for granted. In the post-9/11 era, when we live in a time of dubious political morals, of abuses of prisoners in American prison camps, of a media that only serve to support to status quo and not challenge it, of an age where the breach of civil liberties is increasingly a major concern, of a political and cultural climate ruled by fear and paranoia, we cannot take television for granted.

²¹ The preview of the seventh season is available (at the time of writing) at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G0KtyHCuAtA>.

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