The Cognitive and Behavioral Impacts of Psychology Training on the American Special Operations Forces and the Accuracy and Changes of Heroic Ideal in Film

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**Abstract**

The Researcher studied the history of Special Operations forces in addition to the gradual introduction of neuroscientific research in selection methods. In doing so, the Researcher found cognitive and behavioral psychology play a large role in the training and selection of Special Operations Forces. By examining scholarly sources, the Researcher answered the questions: *What roles does neuroscience play in today’s selection of United States’ Special Operations Forces, and how does cognitive and behavioral psychology impact the conditioning of these forces? How has the heroic ideal changed over time and how accurate is the modern portrayal of the Special Operations Forces seen in film?* The Researcher found character, resilience, and adaptability often characterize a Special Operations soldier and such traits are developed through total immersion training and stress management training. The Special Operations heroes of today closely resemble the heroes fighting mythical creatures since the beginning of time, appealing to society’s desire for protection. Following this research, the Scholar conducted a study to determine the saliency of protecting one’s country or democracy to American citizens. The researcher conducted a case study to compare heroic ideal through World War II, the Vietnam War, and the War on Terror by analyzing the hero’s character, adaptability, and stress management. Following this analysis, the Researcher studied torture and its’ psychological impacts on both the victim and torturer.

**Introduction**

Wars have existed since the beginning of recorded history: Only 268 (8%) of the past 3,400 years were peaceful (Hedges, 2003).  In the search for superiority during this nearly incessant warfare, militaries sought improved methods of defeating enemies such as developing specialized troops who can successfully accomplish complex missions (“SF History,” 2013).  Often confused with the Special Forces, a specific unit in the U.S. Army initially called the Green Berets, Special Operations Forces are any units falling under the United States Special Operations Command including SEAL teams and Naval Special Warfare (Skovlund, 2017). Until modern times, military training research concentrated on elevating physical strength and building patriotism. However, industrialization during the late 19th and early 20th centuries led to ways of thinking and implementing new warfare techniques, thus ushering in an increasingly strategic, mobile military force (Lynch & Bravman, 2008; Dhillon, n.d.).  At the same time, developments in psychological research led to the application of human behavior in military practices, which improved the cognitive effectiveness of forces.  As a result, military commanders recognized the immense operational advantages of integrating behavioral and cognitive psychology with strategy and tactics.  The purpose of this paper is to examine military research on behavioral and cognitive psychological conditionings and selection of Special Operations soldiers to improve the operative’s neurological and physical functions. In addition, the Scholar will examine ways these soldiers are portrayed in media from World War II through today in an effort to ascertain the accuracy and transformations over time.  To properly understand Special Operations Forces to the fullest extent, one must first understand the history surrounding these fighters.

**Background**

        Unlike age-old conventional combat strategy, Special Operations implement unconventional war tactics (”Special Operations,” 2000).  First assembled in Rome and revived during World Wars I and II, early Special Operations Forces laid the groundwork implemented by Special Operations Forces today.  Previous approaches tested physical strength to determine and create the finest, most dedicated fighters; however, modern methods incorporate neuroscience to increase the efficiency of methods by which applicants are selected and trained (“History of,” n.d.).  In Rome, the Praetorian Guard constituted the first Special Operations unit and inspired today’s Italian Arditi and the American Special Operations Forces.

*Praetorian Guard*

While historians remain unable to determine exactly when the Praetorian Guard formed, the purpose of such a force remains clear: serve and protect Roman emperors (Bingham, 2013).  Scipio, a Roman general and politician, selected the bravest men in the kingdom to be the first Praetorian Guards who served in the most prestigious outfit in the military at the time: bodyguards for the top Roman leaders (The Praetorian,” 2015).  Praetorian Guards were always present when Roman Emperors rode into battle, attended special events, and met with enemies (Bingham, 2013).  Later used by Caesar, Antonius, and Octavian to quell civil wars and social strife, the Praetorian Guard received specialized tactical and psychological training and wore fine armor, used oval shields, and carried special flags to indicate elite status (Dhillon, n.d.; Cartwright, 2016).  The Italians carried on this tradition when World War I began, using innovative assault techniques in the formation of the Arditi.

*Arditi*

        The Italian Arditi, translated as, “brave, bold, or audacious”, became an important Special Operations team during World War I (Farina, 2000).  The formation of the Arditi in 1917 marked a distinct shift from basic to elite tactics as these fighters implemented unconventional methods to assault entrenched positions with specialized rifles, daggers, and grenades (Salvante, 2016).  The Arditi were specially trained in physical fitness to perform as shock troops, using speed, surprise, coordination, and meticulous planning (Farina, 2000).  In World War II, the American army developed a similar Special Operations force that relied heavily on specialized fighting methods.

*American Special Forces*

        In World War II, American and Canadian commanders created the First Special Service Force as an elite combat unit to conduct lightning-fast raids and strikes (Kelly, 1973).  Consistent with other Special Operations units throughout history, this group learned unconventional warfare tactics including demolition, rock-climbing, amphibious assault, skiing, and airborne maneuvers.  After the unit demonstrated effectiveness, the military provided additional funding to American Special Operations training, which allowed the Army Green Berets, Navy SEALS, and Marine Force Recon, to develop.  The funding also included research into psychological operations in conflicts to improve chances for success in hostage rescue, counter-terrorism, and other similar conflicts (“American,” 2017).  After Vietnam, the military’s emphasis on conventional mass troop warfare further declined; this, combined with rising terrorist activity following the 9/11 attacks drove American Special Operations Forces to focus training on bombings, kidnappings, hijackings, ambushes and hostage situations (Taillon, 2001).  Selecting suitable operatives for such high-intensity conflicts forced commanders to integrate cutting-edge research and strategic philosophies to further enhance the selection process.

*Past Selection Process*

        From Roman times through World War I, commanders usually relied on superior numbers of soldiers with qualities of strong loyalty, bravery, and physical strength when selecting Special Operations Forces, as exemplified through Rome’s concentration on coordinated units including cavalry and cohorts (Hollis, 2017; Cartwright, 2016).  Determining rigid and simplistic warfare tactics to be unreliable, militaries shifted efforts to develop flexible, strategic plans for success.

        Beginning in World War II, revisions to the U.S. Special Operations selection process drastically increased operational success as suitable warriors were selected more accurately (Perez, 2015).  Campaigning to incorporate intelligence testing to augment selection procedures, the American Psychological Association (APA) introduced the importance of synthesizing scientific research with military practices (Yerkes, 1921).  Advances in such research indicated certain individuals remain better suited for the rigors of Special Operations’ campaigns and led to the addition of psychological evaluations during World War II to assess one’s ability to perform under extreme pressure.  Further application of scientific research, including new screening methods and psychological assessments, revolutionized the selection process and boosted support for psychological and neuroscientific research.

*Neuroscience*

U.S. military analysis of warfare revealed egregious deficiencies in the military’s understanding of human cognition and behavior.  Seeking to reduce such deficiencies, scientists initiated research on cognitive and behavioral psychology stemming from recent neuroscientific advancements (Matthews, 2013).  Initial investigations led researchers to the goldmine of warfare experience found in Sun Tzu’s *The Art of War* and to events such as the Trojan Horse, both of which revealed the benefits of psychological warfare (Dhillon, n.d.).  Learning from history, modern strategists began to teach Special Forces to employ psychological tactics such as sneaking behind enemy lines to mentally weaken the enemy (Mockenhaupt, 2012).  This invaluable insight not only enabled commanders to train Special Forces, but also allowed commanders to select the most capable fighters. Special Forces’ cognitive and behavioral psychology conditioning played a key role in cultivating human mental weapons by exposing fighters to new methods including counter-insurgency and stress management tactics in order to psychologically undermine the enemy while remaining mentally strong.  In the mid 20th century, military researchers began to understand the biological mechanisms associated with the brain’s response to stimuli during combat.

*Application of Neuroscience*

Trainers first applied neuroscientific research in 170 BC to improve gladiator temperament and bodily functions; today, neuroscience remains the leading frontier in Special Operations mental training (“Neuroscience,” 2017; *Opportunities in*, 2009).  Militaries studying the success of the Arditi in World War I soon realized the benefits of implementing such research to improve the stress responses and were able to increase Special Operations training effectiveness, thus enabling operatives to better initiate, plan, and execute complex plans under high pressure (Dhillon, n.d.; Perez, 2015).  As new research emerged, the importance of applying neuroscientific research in Special Operations training and selection steadily increased as the insight provided Special Operations Forces with crucial competitive advantages designed to increase the probability of a mission’s success. *Given the above information one may ask, what roles does neuroscience play in today’s selection of United States’ Special Operations Forces, and how does cognitive and behavioral psychology impact the conditioning of these forces? How has the heroic ideal changed over time and how accurate is the modern portrayal of the Special Operations Forces seen in film?*

**Review of Related Literature**

The limited training and inadequate strategic values constrained military success before World War I.  Unlike warfare in the past involving mass troops and dedicated fighters, modern warfare styles often involve self-dependent, individual fighters.  Previously, warriors needed to act as a small part of a larger unit, greatly depending on those around for success. Changes in weapons and defense technology decreased mass troop effectiveness as new weapons allowed a single person to kill multiple people indiscriminately, influencing the development of Special Operations Forces.  Trained specifically to fight in unconventional warfare styles, these operatives relied on physical strength and psychological operations to defeat enemies. Finding these traits invaluable, militaries sought to find individuals to meet these criteria but found the current selection methods inefficient and unreliable.

**Selection Process**

*Need for Neuroscience*

        Today, over 8,000 American Special Operations Forces are stationed in more than 80 countries fighting drug cartels, terrorist cells, and engaging in other high-risk conflicts (Turse, 2017).  Early in the Vietnam War, President John F. Kennedy’s began the Green Berets, Specials Operations forces designed to fight the unconventional tactics of the Viet Cong guerrilla soldiers (Cloninger, 2005).  In such a brutal war, these soldiers were the best counterinsurgency group, executing guerrilla warfare and infiltrating enemy Vietnamese society unnoticed (“Special Forces,” 2016). As these skills became crucial for mission success, the American Armed Forces scrambled to recruit men with exceptional mental prowess (Cloninger, 2005).  Never before had the need for neuroscience become more evident as such research led to quicker improvements in Special Operations training and selection by providing new insights into ways to take advantage of brain and nervous system functions in both friend and foe.

The modern method of Special Operations selection expanded past the singular focus of physical strength to rely on four guiding principles: 1) humans over hardware, 2) quality over quantity, 3) small over large group training, and 4) proactive over reactive preparation (Wheeler, 2000).  Gone are the days of military dependence on rigid strategies and superior numbers for success; rather, militaries now rely on developing creative, strategically-minded soldiers.  Acting on lessons learned from the Vietnam War, the American military developed a selection process employing research to select the finest “artisans” to oppose the enemy (*Tactics*, 2001).  Fine-tuning this selection process through neuroscientific research, the modern Special Forces Assessment and Selection (SFAS) course allows commanders to precisely analyze and predict operative success capabilities such as character, resilience, and adaptability (Russell et al., 1995; “Special Forces,” 2017).

*Operative Character*

        Since the success of a civilization balances on the proper utilization of brainpower, militaries must heavily rely on men of exceptionally high moral character who remain capable of making sound decisions in high stress situations (Kevles, 1968).  A 2004 study by the American Psychological Association used a “Value in Action Inventory of Strengths” (VIA-IS) questionnaire to determine the correlation between character strengths and the performance of soldiers and found strong character to be an important predictor of ability to adapt in demanding combat environments.  This led to the selection and training of Special Operations Forces who display strong character and adaptability, invaluable indicators of mission success (Hancock & Szalma, 2008). The addition of neuroscience to military selection allows commanders to determine those with the genetic predisposition of character, a trait necessary for exceptional behavior in high stress environments.

Character improves the survivability of the operative by providing an enhanced ability to fight with unwavering determination and serves as predictor of operative success.  According to a 2002 study by the Department of Military Leadership and Tactics, only 15% of operative selection takes into account personality and mental ability (Boe, 2015).  Since personality and intelligence remain stable while character strengths are malleable, commanders must analyze operative character or risk a gap in selection and training insight.  Reinforcing the importance of mental tests, a 2015 study by the Association of Military Surgeons of the U.S. found all Australian Army Special Forces applicants who did not include teamwork, integrity, and persistence as strengths did not complete the selection process (Gayton & Kehoe, 2016).  A similar 2015 study by Military Medicine revealed 84% of Special Operations Forces highly valued strong integrity, teamwork, persistence, and good judgment, giving evidence to both the importance of neuroscientific research and how operatives must maintain innate character traits.

Worldwide, military doctrines state character strengths are crucial for effective leadership and increase one’s ability to face adversity with perseverance.  Whether tracking down terrorists or organizing a rebellion against corrupt governments, Special Operations Forces often assume leadership positions in which one’s decisions are naturally influenced by character (Boe, 2015).  Because recent neuroscientific research revealed those with strong character can selflessly commit to the nation, mission, and fellow soldier, the U.S. military developed the Warrior Ethos, the professional attitude and beliefs of American soldiers, with the hopes of selecting operatives with strong character  (*Army Leadership*, 2006). In stressful situations such as the 2012 Benghazi, Libya attack, a soldier’s only hope for success rests on remaining an optimistic leader of character who demonstrates the courage to act (Coady & Primoratz, 2008).  In order to remain optimistic and to stay true to one’s values, an operative must exhibit outstanding resilience.

*Operative Resilience*

        The implementation of neuroscience in Special Operations selection increased the focus on other factors beyond physical ability, including operative resilience.  The ability to recover or adjust to change has been identified as an essential attribute of a Special Operations soldier due to the particularly exhaustive demands of combat (Resilience, 2017; Moffitt, 2013).  According to a 2003 study by the American Journal of Epidemiology, 12.1% of the 11,441 Gulf War veterans met the criteria for PTSD (Kang, Natelson, Mahan, Lee, & Murphy, 2003). A 1994 study by the Veterans Affairs Medical Center on PTSD prevalence in Operation Desert Storm participants indicated approximately 48% of the deployed units showed considerable signs of PTSD (Hing, Cabrera, Barstow, & Forsten, 2012).  Despite the considerably greater stressors Special Operations Forces face during combat, Special Operations personnel showed a lower frequency of adverse behaviors throughout nine years of operations than those outside the Special Forces community (Bottoms, 2009). Neuroscientific research serves to select healthy individuals who quickly recover from stress (Bartone, Roland, Picano, & Williams, 2008).

While a host of neurobiological factors are associated with resilience, the two major systems are the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems.  The body’s natural, automatic stress response has existed since the beginning of time when humans unconsciously relied on instincts for survival. According to the Department of Medical Pharmacology, stressors trigger physiological and behavioral responses aimed at reinstating homeostasis by causing the amygdala to send distress signals to the hypothalamus, thereby controlling involuntary body functions (“Understanding,” 2016; De Kloet, Joels, & Holsboer, 2005).  A 2003 study by the Association for Psychological Science shows exercise greatly improved the exercising group’s cognitive abilities by 50% while the control group without exercise improved by only 12.5% (Colcombe & Kramer, 2003). Since exercise activates the sympathetic nervous system to increase heart rate and blood pressure, this system directly improves Special Operations’ visual and cognitive reaction times along with gross motor skills (Lloyd, 2016). A 2004 study by the National Center for PTSD found Special Forces soldiers average 33% higher plasma levels of neuropeptide Y than normal soldiers and possess clearer minds and out-performed average soldiers under stress (Morgan, et al., 2000).  After combat or exercise, the parasympathetic nervous system begins regulating heartbeat, bronchi, breathing, and digestive activity to return the body to homeostasis (Weingart, 2014). Once America’s military commanders understood why individuals responded differently to stress, these leaders could focus efforts on finding operatives exhibiting resilience.

While resilience cannot be tied to a specific trait, neurological factors including an individual’s parasympathetic and sympathetic stress response do indicate resilience since this system plays an integral part in one’s fight or flight response.  Commanders desire Special Operations forces with high resilience because these warriors will not back down in tough circumstances and handle stress better than average soldiers. While originally believed to be a rare trait, a 2012 study by the National Institute of Mental Health disproves this belief as results show only 7.8% of the 50-60 people exposed to extreme trauma contracted mental illnesses, a common consequence of the body being overwhelmed by stress (Russo, Murrough, Han, Charney, & Nestler, 2012).  Since nearly 90% of those affected by trauma will display resilience and not everyone displays the resistance to the negative effects of stress, commanders must add resilience testing into Special Operations selection. Further research showed certain individuals have an inhibitory potassium channel counteracting the stress-induced Ih channel.  Should this channel become overly active in combat due to low resistance to stress, operatives experience “tonic immobility,” a defense mechanism similar to when an opossum plays dead for survival.  From a neurological standpoint, fighters who control parasympathetic symptoms in combat can perform complex maneuvers despite immense adversity and stress (Koppes & Black, 1990). A 2011 study by Current Biology found a patient with complete bilateral amygdala destruction scored 45% of maximum emotional fearlessness (Feinstein, Adolphs, Damasio, & Tranel, 2012).  The patience’s absence of fear resulting from a nonfunctioning amygdala not only shows the intrinsic connection between the parasympathetic nervous system and the amygdala, but also allows commanders to select operatives ideal for resilience to fear, which renders a fighter unable to judge clearly and control bodily functions (Perry, 2009).

Due to constant changes in military selection and the recent addition of neuroscience predictive of operative success, such predictive abilities remain in the beginning stages.  Independent studies show tests for hardiness, grit, and mental toughness are important indicators of resilience but must be coupled with cognitive testing due to current limitations of neuroscientific research (Moffitt, 2013).  One such study performed in 2011 by Biological Psychiatry found 70% of stress-exposed rats developed anhedonia-like symptoms, or the inability to feel pleasure, when exposed to mild stress (Delgado et al., 2011). In addition, a 2011 study by the Fishberg Department of Neuroscience used a social defeat stress model to show how one strain of mice (C57BL6/J) had a 35% resilience to stress while other mice (CD1 and FVB) had close to 100% resilience. These two studies indicate cognitive testing improves resilience testing accuracy (Golden, Covington, Berton, & Russo, 2011).

During Special Operations’ selection processes, instructors create an intensely stressful environment where applicants must overcome the overwhelming desire to succumb to negative emotions and give up.  During such testing, instructors use the Dispositional Resilience Scale to aid in identifying people with psychological hardiness, a prevalent trait found in the 2008 Special Forces Sniper Course graduates (Bartone, 2008). In addition, the 2007 study by National Defense University affirms the reliability of the scale in areas of commitment, control, and challenge, reaching Pearson correlation coefficients of 75%, 58%, and 81% respectively when compared to full-length scales (Bartone, 2007).  The Grit Scale, developed by Educational Researcher teams, provides yet another test to measure perseverance and likelihood to fail in the face of extreme stress (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007). While this study was conducted using the classical test theory, which cannot distinguish between the test and subject characteristics and has no evidence to support grit as a personality characteristic, the study’s physiological data does provide commanders with a more accurate understanding of a soldier’s perseverance (Tyumeneva, Kardonova, & Kuzmina, 2017).  These tests, intermingled with sleep deprivation and intense physical exercise, allow commanders to assess one’s ability to fight on despite even when fellow applicants succumb to feelings of hopelessness and negativity (Colebrooke, 2015). Those who pass the resilience portion of selection stand out from other fighters by demonstrating the mental fortitude necessary for operating effectively and efficiently in high-stress situations and environments. Despite these advantages over other applicants, operatives must also display adaptability in combat to succeed.

*Operative Adaptability*

Previous misconceptions among military brass led many to believe adaptability, the ability to adjust to a particular situation, and flexibility, the ability to be manageable and impressionable, were the same trait.  Modern commanders realize flexibility and adaptability are fundamentally different because flexibility reflects the ability to accept and carry out ever-changing orders from leaders. According to the Fleet Marine Field Manual, adaptability has long been a key to overcoming the frictions of combat and plays a crucial role in Special Operations Forces due to the convergence of several factors: the fluidity of warfare environments, operation tempo, and rapid technological growth rises (Dickerson, 2003).  When speaking to the National Defense Executive Reserve Conference in 1957, General Dwight D. Eisenhower noted plans are worthless, but plans are everything (McSwiggan, 2012). Military planners have always placed a premium on adaptability because the United States Army understands operations do not occur as planned (Dickerson, 2003). The way the American Army devises plans reflects the military’s value of adaptability. Sun Tzu’s *Art of War* further shows the relevance of adaptability by analogizing war to water with no constant form (Giles, 2009).  Further reflected in the U.S. Navy’s five core competencies of the sea-based, expeditionary force, the first on the list of competencies is adaptability (Hilley, 2009).  In a world of increasingly uncertain warfare conditions, commanders plan for upcoming conflicts by selecting forward thinking applicants with the mental plasticity to overcome ambiguous circumstances before a threat presents itself (Wheeler, 2000).

Special Forces operatives with the capacity to modify motor behavior and interpolate these behaviors with new motor solutions possess enhanced adaptability skills necessary for handling crisis in unfamiliar environments (Bandy, Clay, & Washburn, 2010; Seidler, 2004).  According to a study by the Military Institute of Physical Culture aimed to improve Special Operations Forces’ reaction times, those who used educational technology scored on average 48.87 shots compared to the reference group who scored 44.21 on the Makarov handgun shooting tests (“Motor,” n.d.).  Unlike traditional soldiers who possess insufficient coherence and precision in situations requiring coordination and quick reactions, these tests show Special Operations Forces uniquely possess a heightened ability to increase motor coordination, and therefore are more capable of successfully adapting to sudden situations triggered by outside factors.  Despite the extensive training military personnel undergo, in times of war and intense pressure, the previously developed habits and motor skills become inhibited due to high cortisol levels causing impaired memory (Taverniers, Smeets, Ruysseveldt, Syroit, & Grumbkow, 2011). According to a 1998 study by the American Alzheimer’s Association, an increase in cortisol causes a 14% reduction in total hippocampal volume, thus causing a deficit in memory retention and causing behavioral inhibitions (Lupien et al., 1998). This decrease in memory negates the benefits of complex strategic planning and makes the operative dependent on surrounding resources and restricted cognitive abilities. Once militaries understood certain soldiers retain high cognitive functions despite cortisol increases, commanders instituted mental, learning, and personality tests to determine one’s adaptability by testing performance under extreme stress (Feeley, 1998). Once selected, candidates advance to training aimed to hone the unique skills and traits of Special Operations Forces soldiers.

**Training**

*Neuroscience of Training*

With the introduction of the first modern Special Forces, the Green Berets in 1961, military trainers began to seek to manipulate parts of an operative’s brain to elicit and maintain the highest possible performance levels by incorporating the field of cognitive neuroscience to understand the neural mechanisms underlying cognition, mental processes, and existing behavioral manifestations (“Cognitive,” 2017).  A 2000 study by Cephalon Inc. showed pilots using the drug modafinil to prolong wakefulness experienced a decrease in performance by 15% to 30% compared to those who were not medicated and experienced a degradation of 60% to 100% (Caldwell & Smythe, 2000). Special Operations soldiers operate expensive, deadly equipment; therefore, trainers incorporate all methods possible to manipulate the brain to respond differently to negative stimuli such as fatigue, fear, and stress.  Knowing operatives must execute operations in various environments and cannot solely rely on medication for success, trainers aim to supplement pre-existing strengths through total immersion and stress management training.

*Total Immersion Training*

Since American culture remains only a small fraction of worldwide cultures, soldiers must proficiently understand different cultures to improve operational success. A 2008 study by Clarke University showed Americans account for only 5% of the world’s population (Arnett, 2008). Seeking to improve a soldier’s ability to defeat the other 95% of foreign populations, instructors require soldiers to complete cultural competency tests providing an overview of the American military history and culture (“Military Cultural,” 2016). A 2004 study by the Colorado Permanente Medical group shows 70% of commercial flight accidents stem from hindered communication associated with cultural differences among crewmembers, thereby demonstrating interpersonal communication is essential for successful teamwork (Leonard, Graham, & Bonacum, 2004). Such research also suggests a lack of cultural awareness at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels could lead to policies exacerbating insurgencies, negative public opinion, and could endanger both civilians and troops (Arcuri, 2007). Once operatives understand how to effectively work with others in combat, these individuals then must understand the foreign culture to ensure proper communication with foreigners. In addition to fighting, a major role of American soldiers in allied Middle Eastern countries is to live with and learn the customs of villagers, and then to teach combat. A 2009 study by the University of California and the University of Oregon shows client, family, and environmental factors account for 40% in a psychotherapy patient improvement (Sue, Zane, Nagayama, & Berger, 2009). Such research indicates immediate surroundings and culture largely influence behavioral and cognitive functions. Not only does this understanding allow America to win the hearts and minds of those in foreign lands, but it also enables America to achieve its political agendas. While total immersion training does prepare soldiers to achieve political goals, the main goal of the training stems from the inevitable demands of war: knowing and killing the enemy.

In an ever-tumultuous world where insurgencies and terrorism propagate more frequently, total immersion training trains soldiers to kill and not be killed. Today, with most Special Operations deployments extending into other countries, a lack of cultural awareness sows animosity between soldiers and natives, thus increasing the difficulties operatives must face (Wunderle, 2006). The difficulties stemming from America’s previous counterinsurgency approach to ending the War on Terror against an enemy composed of 40% to 50% local allies fighting for tribal or personal reasons shows America can no longer rely on conventional methods. Rather, as Sun Tzu famously wrote, “one must know his enemy” (Giustozzi, 2008). Never before has the success of America’s military depended so greatly on the ability to blend in, discover weaknesses, and exploit the exposed flaws. During the Cold War, states sided either with the East or West as two major ideologies competed through both aligned and nonaligned states (Arcuri, 2007). At the end of the Cold War, individuals and societies felt free to reconnect with traditional social norms not supported by the once overshadowing traditionally and religiously based societies in America. While the human domain of war fighting remains an area of focus for Special Operations training, the growing necessity for total immersion training was not fully understood before advances in behavioral and cognitive psychology research showed multinational operations require a sensitivity to the impact the deployment of forces has on the host country because humans behave in teams when proper communication is established (Joshua, 2014). Today, soldiers fighting in foreign countries undergo Live Environment Training (LET), which allows soldiers to completely immerse in another culture (“Army,” 2018).

Once believing enemy societies center around material artifacts, the American military lost immense tactical advantages until researchers uncovered the true center of cultures: theoretical concepts including origins, values, and roles (Magala, 2005; Arcuri, 2007). This research revolutionized military planning by allowing commanders to better prepare soldiers to perceive the large scope of the enemy culture through total immersion training, thereby enabling more accurate predictive strategies for engaging the enemy. Since the beginning of the Global War on Terrorism, the United States has invested more than $4 trillion dollars, however, research shows American efforts only worsen the issue. According to a 2008 study by RAND Corporation, only 7% of terrorist groups are defeated by military force while 43% are defeated by political efforts (Jones & Libicki, 2008). To defeat terrorist organizations, basic soldiers must be able to influence the culture of the terrorist group by blending in and subverting terrorist efforts. That being said, an important distinction must be drawn between the military’s goals of the basic and Special Operations soldier: Special Operations soldiers are trained to kill while the basic soldier’s training gradually shifts to include cultural awareness to promote political agendas. Modern research indicates culture can be conceptualized into three unique levels of mental programming where human nature forms the foundation through which culture and personality are learned and cultivated (Selmeski, 2007). This conceptualization shows culture dictates how individuals engage with the world and directly applies to Special Operations Forces who research and analyze methods of blending into foreign populations to gain intelligence, shift the population’s mindset, and eliminate threats to the American military (“Psychological,” 2016). This conceptualization and other total immersion training would have provided soldiers in the Vietnam War and the 1993 Somalia conflict a better understanding of the enemy’s thinking, thus providing immense strategic advantages in new warfare involving significant interaction with local populations. Total immersion training prepares operatives to effectively sabotage or annihilate foreign cultures by increasing understanding of the individual, community, and social normative patterns relating to a soldier’s tasks and environment (Magala, 2005; Arcuri, 2007).

This behavioral and cognitive psychology research led to the creation of the Psychological Operations (PSYOP) branch, which teaches Special Operations Forces to take advantage of the understanding of the enemy culture. A 1999 study by Stanford University included a cultural analysis of Americans and East Asians and found Americans selected uniquely colored pens 71% of the time compared to East Asians who chose these pens 15% of the time (Kim & Markus, 1999). While appearing to be an unrelated study, upon closer inspection, one will discover the study stands to demonstrate the differences between American and East Asian cultures: Americans tend to express uniqueness when given the choice while East Asians prefer conformity. Total immersion training bridges the gap between American and foreign cultures by revealing small but important differences and social cues, factors capable of endangering a mission’s success. Not only does the training bridge the gap among American and foreign cultures, but it also remains crucial in team environments as American soldiers must be culturally aware of one’s team members to improve communication and coordination. A 2009 study by the Queensland University of Technology shows teams with more communication in the areas of orientation, problem definition and solution development, and evaluation increased production by 23%, thereby proving the importance of interpersonal communication in hands-on tasks (Hassal, 2009). As the American military began to further understand the importance of teamwork to increase survival and operational success, the Psychological Operations branch began incorporating teamwork into total immersion training where soldiers learn methods to understand a culture through event analysis, community mapping, and social network analysis (Caligiuri, Noe, Nolan, Ryan, & Drasgow, 2011). Always working in teams, some branches such as the Marine Corps send soldiers through additional training including the Combat Hunter program aimed to increase a team’s observational skills for combat operations. Success in unconventional warfare remains contingent on each Special Operations soldier and team possessing the skills necessary to infiltrate foreign areas and effectively communicate within a team: understand how to blend in, identify characteristics of the enemy culture, and implement actions to exploit cultural flaws. For soldiers to perform these tasks with accuracy and precision, operatives must train extensively to acquire the cognitive and behavioral capabilities necessary for success in high stress environments.

*Stress Management*

The demands placed on soldiers who infiltrate and eliminate enemy forces while blending in creates new, unseen levels of stress. Modern psychological research indicates stress invariably affects one’s innate fight or flight abilities, thereby endangering or improving operative survivability (Anstead, 2009).  Demonstrating this point, a 1998 study by the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department found 45% of the 348 officers involved in shootings experienced tunnel vision while 41% experienced increased detail perception (Honig & Rolands, 1998).  Since each soldier relies on members of the team, everyone must be trained to respond positively to stress to reduce the risk of one member endangering the entire team and to allow the team to continue working optimally under the harshest conditions. This wide range of responses reveals the importance of training operatives to respond positively to stress. All organisms maintain a dynamic equilibrium until the body perceives physical or psychological stressors, at which point the body activates the endocrine system to enhance survival and combat instincts (Chrousos, 2009).  By understanding how the hypothalamus, a complex brain structure, stimulates the secretion of the adrenocorticotropic hormone, which then activates the adrenal glands surrounded by cortical steroids, trainers can begin developing ways to rewire bodily functions through intense training to reduce the inflammation, fatigue, and other negative effects of the system’s activation (“The Endocrine,” n.d.).  When the system activation produces steroids to increase stress resistance by releasing the necessary glucose for the situation, the operative enters eustasis, the optimal performance range where the sympathetic nervous system becomes activated just enough to optimize visual and cognitive reaction times, and gross motor skills remain most effective (“Stress,” n.d.).  Research indicates operatives in this stage facilitate arousal, alertness, and increased cognition in addition to inhibition of nonadaptive functions including eating and reproduction.  After the body perceives the danger is passed, excess hormones are flushed and homeostasis is restored.  Should the operative be required to respond to another source of danger while the body attempts to return to homeostasis, the operative must fight weariness and lethargy resulting from parasympathetic backlash.  Seeking to solve this issue, trainers use stress inoculation training to prepare the body for stressors and to decrease recovery time (Weingart, 2014).

When caught off guard by enemy soldiers, operatives respond by fighting, taking flight, or freezing (Savage & Torgler, 2012).  According to a 2001 study by the Department of Psychology at the University of Hawaii, animals exposed to a fear-inducing stimulus (electric shock, loud noise, etc.) exhibit activity in the amygdalae and the prefrontal cortex, the area of the brain connected to decision-making and may show heightened impulsivity (Blanchard, McKittrick, & Blanchard, 2001).  This response helps operatives in situations with manageable or minimal opposition, such as a single enemy, but endangers operatives should the threat be overwhelming or high risk, such as an entire squadron.  A 2005 study by the Department of Psychiatry at the University of California shows cortisol levels differed by 1.05 standard deviations of the baseline mean, thereby meaning the operatives experience significantly increased blood pressure and sugar (Burke, Davis, Otte, & Mohr, 2005).  This response is especially beneficial to operatives being chased or who suddenly fall into an ambush.  According to a 2007 study by Florida State University, when faced with a challenge, 18% of participants showed mild feelings of tonic immobility, the inhibition of motor and vocal controls, and 13% reported modest or greater feelings of tonic immobility (Roelofs, 2017).  While this adaptive stress response proves useful for situations where snipers must remain hidden, it becomes a serious danger should an operative be unable to utilize weapons or move when enemies attack.

        Due to the various rigors of battle including exhaustion, headaches, or feelings of alarm and the detrimental effects these have on operational success, Special Operations Forces must be trained to mitigate stress.  Understanding each operative has a different response to a perceived threat, instructors aim to teach operatives skills to diminish distress, the negative form of stress, while increasing eustress, the positive form of stress (Anstead, 2009).  A 2007 study by the Center for Studies on Human Stress found the endogenous hormone occupies 90% of type I receptors during sleep and only 10% of type II, but during stress, type I receptors become saturated and type II receptors are occupied between 67-74%.  These receptors play an integral role in the mammalian stress response as the brain redistributes energy resources to face challenges, restore homeostasis, and optimize survival.  When occupied normally, type II receptors modulate stress, inflammation, and anxiety levels to maintain homeostasis, while type I receptors mediate the cortisol and corticosterone appraisal process which affects how one copes with stress (Kloet et. al., 2016).  When the body becomes flooded by glucocorticoids, Special Operations Forces respond by fighting or fleeing.  Understanding the brain’s innate stress response, military psychologists can improve an operative’s cognitive and behavioral responses.

        Behavioral and cognitive psychology training radically transforms the neurological and physical functions of Special Operations Forces by enhancing cognitive behavior, physical performance, and motivation on the battlefield (Knowlton, 2017).  According to a 2014 study by the University of Bern, simple reaction time while under moderate stress, which is 70% maximal power, yields major reaction time improvements while high stress, which is 100%, only moderately improves reaction time (Wegner, Koedijker, & Budde, 2014).  Understanding operatives perform best with a moderate level of stimulation falling within the heartbeat range of approximately 125 beats per minute, trainers teach operatives to control heartbeat to activate the sympathetic nervous system, the bodily system handling unconscious actions (Lloyd, 2016).  With this system engaged, Special Forces’ visual and cognitive reaction times, along with gross motor skills, reach peak performance levels, thereby allowing operatives to complete missions using all previous physical and mental training.

Once trainers fully understand the implications and reasons for each stress response, trainers aim to enhance Special Operations Forces’ to prepare operatives for possible combat scenarios in order to decrease the negative stress response. One method of preparation involves event visualization, which alleviates information overload when operatives first enter combat situations and allows the body to process information and use prior training rather than emotions to make fight, flight, or freeze decisions (Chung, Chen, Chaboya, O’Toole, & Atabakhsh, 2005).  According to a 1996 study by the University of Chicago, those who only visualized shooting baskets in basketball improved 23% while those who physically practiced improved by 24%, thus showing the benefits of both visualization and repetitive training (Ekeocha, 2015).  In response to immense stressors such as deafening gunfire or constant fear, trainers teach operatives to regulate the parasympathetic nervous system to reduce recovery time so operatives may spend more time performing missions and less time remaining vulnerable (Bracha, 2004).  According to a 2000 study by the American College of Cardiology, controlled breathing increases ventilation by 131.9% when compared to spontaneous breathing (Bernardi et al., 2000).  This information proves useful in training soldiers, especially, controlling breathing and heartbeat, thus allowing operatives partial control of blood regulation and oxygen flow to vital organs (Weingart, 2014).

When operatives engage in long missions with no sleep, success relies heavily on the prior training habits such as breath control, weapons reloading, and room clearing because without these habits, the body’s natural responses to sleep deprivation would override personal judgments necessary for survival (Giuseppe, 2008). According to a 1997 study by the Center for Sleep Research, for each 0.01% increase in blood alcohol, performance decreased by 1.16% (Dawson & Reid, 1997). Therefore, after 24 hours of sustained wakefulness, cognitive behaviors decreased to a level equivalent of a blood concentration of 0.10%, which is equal to or above the legal limit for intoxication in the United States. To ensure operatives may rely on prior instruction despite fatigue resulting from prolonged stress, trainers use stress inoculation training (SIT) and motor learning patterns to increase an operative’s ability to handle stress and properly fight anxiety to escape and eliminate the threat. According to a 2007 study by Florida State University focusing on implementing the same psychological techniques used in Stress Inoculation Training, individuals provided with psychological skills training increased underwater breath-hold time from 25 to 44 seconds compared to the control group, which decreased time from 24 to 21 seconds (Barwood, Dalzell, Datta, Thelwell, & Tipton, 2006; Robson & Manacapilli, 2014). These forms of behavioral and cognitive psychology training expose operatives to fear and petrifying situations while providing instruction as to how to cope with the situations, thus acclimating soldiers to a heightened level of stress so combat-induced stress will not significantly diminish an operative’s ability to judge, fight, and lead in combat (Weller, 2017). As Special Operations Forces met more success and gained national attention due to such rigorous training, films depicting operative combat developed alongside cultural changes.

**Heroic Ideal as Seen in Literary Patterns**

Passed down by word of mouth over the centuries, elaborate stories immortalize heroes. As history is often told and remembered by the dominant social forces of the time, myths remain dynamic and change as the priorities of the society changes (“Worldbuilding,” 2015). For example, Hesiod’s “Phoenix,” written in the 8th century BCE, represented the cynical nature of the world and the importance of funeral rites to the Greeks and early Romans. Following the violent turmoil in Rome resulting from Christianity’s spread, the phoenix represented hope born from destruction since religious persecution threatened many.

*Literature*

Over a thousand years before the Old Testament and the aforementioned poem, an unknown author composed the “Epic of Gilgamesh,” the oldest known story featuring a hero (Swan, 2017). Gilgamesh, two parts god and one part man, struggled against his fear of death while defeating mystical creatures such as Humbaba and the Bull of Heaven (Kannan, 2013). Bridging the gap between oral and written stories, *Beowulf* remains a myth but was based on a real person. While not half god, half man, Beowulf, the prince of the Geats, uses superhuman strength and bravery to destroy monsters threatening those in the kingdom (*Beowulf*, n.d.). Such stories show ancient humans revere strong, fearless fighters who accomplish superhuman feats, but inevitably succumb to death, as they still are human. Epic heroes remain larger-than-life figures whose fortune arose by his own admired characteristics (Morrison, n.d.).

During the Middle Ages, classical heroes replaced the godlike heroes of the past. Although ancient heroes’ legacy survived via oral storytelling, authors often took creative liberties to preserve the adventures of the heroes. Classical, or romantic, heroes possess a unique attribute or quality and live in fairytale settings where mystery and supernatural elements abound (“Characteristics,” n.d.). Unlike epic heroes who act for personal gain, classical heroes often go on chivalrous quests to protect the weak or defeat the strong. King Arthur, a prominent member of the Knights of the Round Table, took on the noble mission of saving Queen Guinevere after a jealous knight takes her for his own (“King Arthur,” n.d.). While both classical and epic heroes encounter magical elements, classical heroes put the needs of others first and were equal to peers while epic heroes often remained selfish. As new forms of information technology arose, the heroes in literature became immortalized in films.

America’s independence from Great Britain precipitated the births of new heroes-pursuers of the “American dream.”

*Film*

From winning independence to conquering the savage Indians, early America saw many conflicts. While gaining independence from Britain haunted America throughout World War I, the American Dream and the hopes of a new world drove Americans onward. Just as in the past, people clambered for heroes, and America was no exception as seen through the proliferation of the new film industry in the late 1930’s. On an ever-expanding frontier, a hero who fit the needs and desires of the American settler was badly needed.

From settling a continent to supporting Allies, American heroes remained at the forefront of America’s attention especially as America’s neutrality during World War I waned as fighting quickly claimed innocent American lives. Enraged by civilian casualties and a rekindled spark of patriotism and heroism embedded in the hearts and minds of American youth, 48% of citizens eagerly enlisted, causing the army to swell from 200,000 to 4,000,000 soldiers (Ayres, 1919). When the short-lived peace between World War I and World War II was shattered on December 7, 1941 as Pearl Harbor was attacked, many new heroes arose to avenge the attack (“Pearl,” 2018; Loftus, 2016). As patriotism grew following the attack, motion pictures began featuring heroes, thus presenting a new medium through which new heroes could, for the first time, be seen. Not only did film allow people to see the same hero for the first time, but films depicting heroes such as John Wayne, the no-nonsense, self reliant cowboy and pioneer who expressed virile masculinity and both physical and moral strength, also initiated a new heroic genre (Smith, 2012; Levy, 2011). Following Germany’s sudden rise to power, American faced a new threat warranting the rise of new heroes: the Special Operations Forces. Aligning with shifting societal views, war films evolved during World War II, the Vietnam War, and the War on Terror.

Following the Pearl Harbor attacks in which hundreds of American lives were taken, many films produced during this time period showed America’s decisive response. *The Commandos Strike at Dawn* was one of the first World War II films to star a protagonist who, like medieval heroes, chivalrously sought to save his daughter. Muni becomes the embodiment of the brave hero Americans knew and loved, showing unwavering determination and a strong sense of teamwork as he led Commandos on an epic journey (*The Commandos*, 1941). Reflecting similar qualities, Mervyn Johns, the main character of *Went the Day Well*, valiantly risks his life to protect his village from the onslaught of German paratroopers (*Went the Day Well*, n.d.). While World War II gained much support from American society as most Americans saw the fight as “our war” due to the attack by Japan, most Americans after fifteen years of peace quickly became disenchanted by the idea of a new war in Vietnam as it was not “our war.” Reflecting such a shift in sentiment, films such as *The Killing Fields* or *The Walking Dead* portray heroic fighters as battle-worn, weary soldiers, but none show America’s true feelings as *Born on the Fourth of July* did. In this film, a young Ron Kovic excitedly joins the U.S. Marines, only to accidentally kill his own friend and to be shot and paralyzed from the waist down. This disillusioned soldier quickly faces reality as he wakes up in a rat-infested hospital and must resort to alcoholism, as there was no other way to reduce the pain wrought from the horrors of the Vietnam War (Kim, 2010). Not until America was once again attacked on 9/11 did American sentiment revert to those seen previously in World War II when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. Although modern films including *The Hurt Locker* and *13 Hours* depict brave Americans sacrificing lives to protect America and to free those threatened by terrorist organizations, *Black Hawk Down* presents a unique perspective as the main character, Garrison, displayed resilience after being shot down and engaging in a merciless fifteen-hour firefight (*Black Hawk*, 2017a). The film’s focus on Garrison’s unwavering commitment to defeating the enemy and leaving no man behind illustrates the stark contrast between the soldiers in the Vietnam War and those fighting in the War on Terror (*Black Hawk*, 2017). In the face of such a major calamity, Garrison and his men effectively managed stress and made rational decisions as resources dwindled and enemies kept coming.

**Method**

*Purpose*

Films depicting violence and soldiers are more prevalent in today’s society. These films often are studied to determine how accurately they represent society. Although some researchers utilize surveys, others watch films and collect data on what these films depict. The Researcher will examine the heroic ideal of Special Operations Forces in film.

*Null Hypothesis*

American citizens are not more likely to support a war to defend one’s country rather than to defend democracy elsewhere

*Case Study*

A comparison of heroic ideal from three periods of war in the United States: World War II, the Vietnam War, and the War on Terror in regards to the heroes’ character, adaptability, and stress management.

The Scholar sent out a survey and watched films to determine changes in heroic ideal over time. Since films often appeal to society’s sentiment to bolster sales, these offer insight into how people of the time felt about a film’s heroes.

*Participants & Sampling Procedures*

For the null, an electronic survey was distributed by the Scholar to Americans ages 14+. The Scholar chose this group because America is comprised of people from various backgrounds and ages, thus offering potential variability in responses. The average age in America is 37.8 years, and since the majority of the survey’s participants were 35-54 years old, the survey offers a good representation of the American population. 60.4% of Americans are currently employed, and since 43.7% of the survey’s population were employed and 8.3% were self-employed, the survey offers a fair representation of the American population.

For the case study, the Scholar chose war films dated around the time of the wars of interest. The Scholar chose three films produced at the time of World War I, the Vietnam War, and the War on Terror respectively based on proximity to the wars to better capture society’s sentiment towards heroes. By selecting films produced at different times, the Scholar hoped to discover trends surrounding American sentiment towards heroes.

*Research Design*

The research for the null hypothesis was a quantitative descriptive study because this was the most accurate and efficient form of collecting data. The purpose of the survey was to determine whether American citizens were inclined to support a war to defend one’s country or democracy in other countries. The Scholar utilized this method because it was a convenient sample and was the most efficient way of collecting a representative sample of American views.

The Researcher chose an action qualitative research design for the case study. The Scholar collected film artifacts because both the Researcher and source found these to be the fastest and most reliable ways to assess and compare American sentiment during different time periods. The Researcher watched three films from World War II, Vietnam War, and War on Terror and took notes on when a hero’s character, adaptability, and stress management became evident.

*Experimental Manipulation/Interventions/Instrumentation*

The survey to test the null was distributed digitally and included carefully designed questions to reject the null. Other authors in Scholar’s review of related literature most commonly used structured interviewing, thus the Scholar used both self-reporting and structured interviewing in the self-created survey sent to the population. Using a Google form survey with precise questions, the Scholar measured American support of war to defend one’s country in preference over support for war to defend democracy, the qualitative variable. Because the survey included clear, unbiased questions and included anonymous responses, the survey proves reliable. Because the questions pertain directly to the null to determine if Americans are more likely to support a war to defend one’s country rather than to defend democracy elsewhere, the survey is valid.

The case study was conducted by analyzing film artifacts and trait identification. The Researcher conducted the case study this way because these artifacts offer a view into the popular opinions surrounding World War II, the Vietnam War, and the War on Terror, as seen through the positive reviews for each film. The Researcher created a chart to track each instance of a hero’s character, adaptability, and stress management. The case study measured the popular opinion of the war, the qualitative variable, and the hero’s character, adaptability, and stress management, the quantitative variables. These measures are reliable because the instrument, the viewer marking each instance, remained constant for each film and each artifact was analyzed within close proximity to each other to reduce the effect of external factors changing the viewer’s perception of each variable. Since the same instruments and time periods were used, the case study proves valid.

*Data Collection*

Distributing a structured interview electronically through the Researcher’s iMessage on October 12, 2018, and the Houston Christian Dean of Student’s email on October 12, 2018, the Scholar measured the null. The survey reached 308 responses by October 28, 2018.

The case study was completed via the Researcher’s direct observation of nine films over a five-week period beginning on September 29, 2018, and ending November 4, 2018.

*Data Analysis Plan*

The Scholar devised statistics based on the responses to the questions on the online survey and determined the relative frequency of those who supported a war to defend one’s country rather than to defend democracy elsewhere. The Researcher applied a one proportion z test to the sample population of American citizens.

In the case study, the Scholar compared the frequency of character, adaptability, and stress management in films from World War II, the Vietnam War, and the War on Terror to determine the correlation between a hero’s actions and society’s views.

*Ethical Consideration*

Responses were both voluntary and anonymous, as ensured by the statement, “The results of this survey will be used for academic purposes and all responses are anonymous” at the beginning of the survey.No people were emotionally or physically harmed by the survey as the questions were in no way harmful.Responses were for educational purposes only and had no effect on the participants.

*Bias*

Due to the survey’s digital form through email and cellular messaging, there was bias against certain groups in America including those without computers, access to the internet, or the ability to understand English.

The case study also included biases. Since the Researcher was the sole data collecting instrument, personal bias may affect the results of the study.

*Assumptions*

The Researcher assumed the participants answered honestly and accurately represented the population of America. The Researcher also assumed the participants completely understood the questions. Assumptions in the case study also arose, as the Researcher assumed the films were original and the Researcher’s data collection methods remained invariable.

*Limitations*

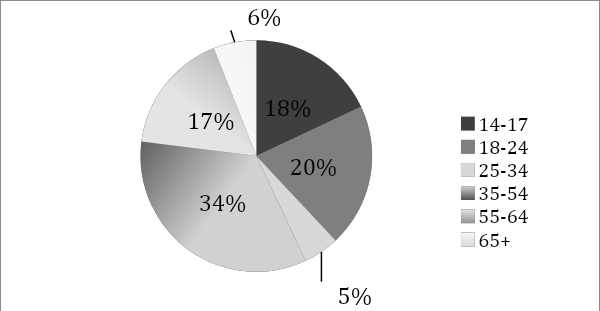
Although the Researcher could have narrowed the scope of research to include the sentiment of minority groups, different ethnic groups, or political parties, the Researcher decided against narrowing the scope of research. The Researcher could make improvements to the availability of the survey by offering surveys in other languages or in written form. The Researcher could have also refined the questions to ensure clarity and precision.

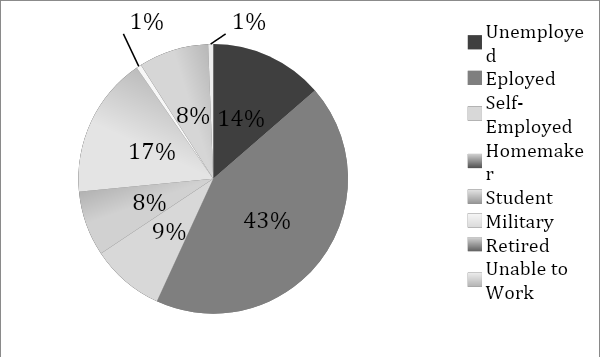
Different films and release dates could have been chosen for the case study, but the Researcher chose to focus on films more supported by society, as indicated by film ratings. Had the Researcher’s time permitted, other films could have been analyzed and the opinions of other individuals pertaining to the study’s variables could have been collected.

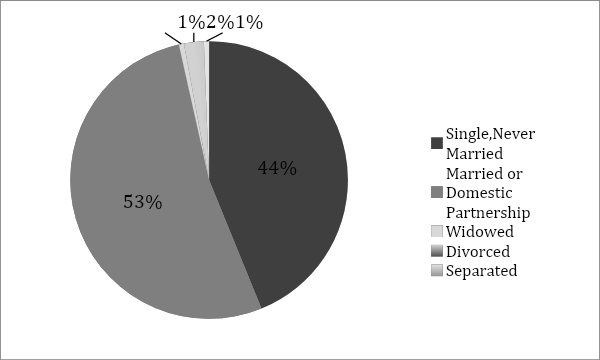
**Findings**

*Sample*

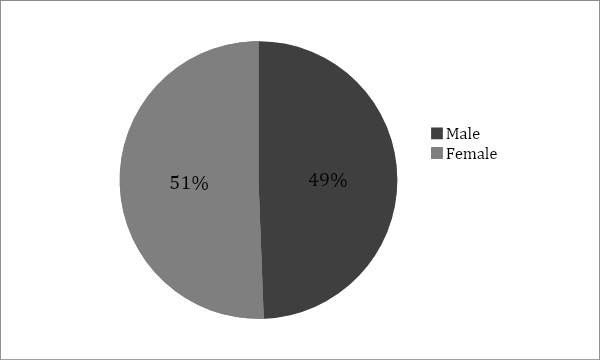
The Scholar distributed a survey for the quantitative study and closed the survey when adequate responses were collected. The questions were aimed at American citizens and the age, state of residence, education level, employment status, marital status, religious preference, income, and gender were recorded to understand the demographics of the respondents.

The largest group of respondents were 35-54 years old (33.8%), and 20.1% and 18.2% of respondents were 18-24 and 14-17 years old respectively seen in Figure 1 below. 

43.2% of respondents were employed, and only 14.2% were unable to work or were unemployed seen in Figure 2 below. 

Of the respondents, 52.6% were married while 43.8% were single and never married, as seen in Figure 3.

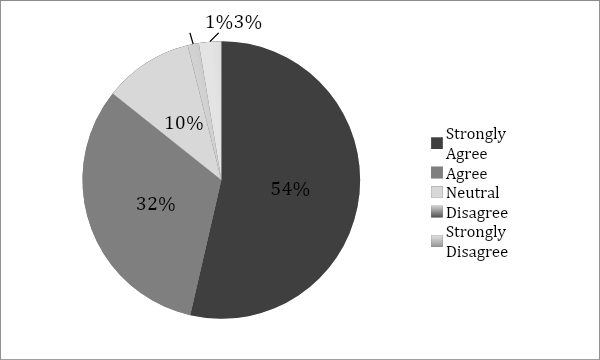
*Figure 3.* Marital status of American citizen respondents.

Of those polled, 50.6% were female while 49.4% were male, as seen in Figure 4. 

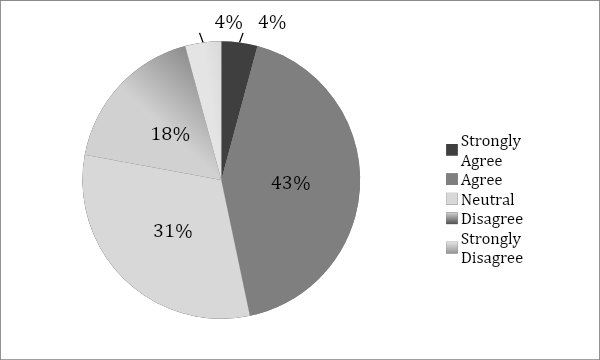
*Figure 4*. Gender of American citizen respondents.

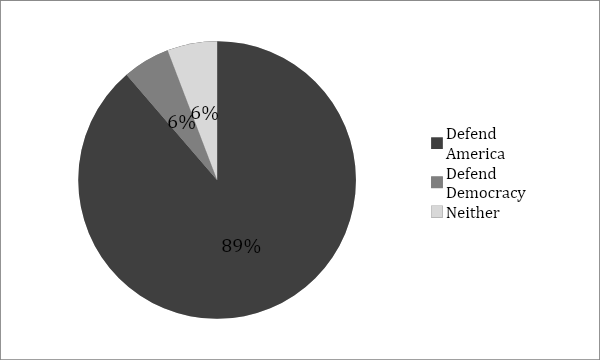
For the case study, the Researcher analyzed three films from each of the following wars: World War II, the Vietnam War, and the War on Terror. The first film, *Enemy at the Gates*, followed a Russian sniper’s journey to popularity through propaganda campaigns and avoidance of a Nazi sniper sent to eliminate him. *Come and See* began with German’s invasion of Byelorussia and recounted the resulting despair and destruction the main character Florya overcame for survival. *The Thin Red Line* depicted Private Witt’s assault on a heavily fortified Japanese defense line and bunker. The films for the Vietnam War include *Apocalypse Now*, *Platoon*, and *Full Metal Jacket*. The first film traced Captain Willard’s journey to kill Colonel Kurtz, who appeared to have gone crazy and joined the enemy. The second film followed a young Chris Taylor who enthusiastically joined the war effort only to realize the brutality of war and the merciless nature of soldiers. The last film depicted a company’s struggle through training and the Battle of Hue. The films for the War on Terror include *American Sniper, Black Hawk Down*, and *The Hurt Locker*. The first film followed Chris Kyle, a Navy SEAL, and his missions as a sniper to protected American soldiers from insurgents. The second recounted U.S. efforts to cripple Somalia and the unexpected battles resulting from the destruction of two American black hawk helicopters. In the last film, William James, an Explosive Ordnance Disposal commander, diffused bombs and kept American soldiers safe from explosive devices planted by the enemy. The Scholar studied these movies to determine whether society takes cues from heroes or whether society influences a hero’s actions.

*Survey Findings and Observations*

In the quantitative study, the Scholar created three objective questions. The first asked the participant to rate the degree to which he or she agreed America should engage in war to defend itself. Of those polled, 85.7% agreed or strongly agreed while 3.9% disagreed or strongly disagreed, as shown in Figure 5. 

*Figure 5*. Respondent beliefs concerning defensive war.

The second question asked the participant to rate the degree to which he or she agreed America is obligated to defend democracy in other countries. 45.7% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement while 22.1% disagreed or strongly disagreed as seen in Figure 6 below.

The third asked participants whether he or she would be more likely to support a war to defend America or to defend democracy in a foreign country. 88.6% were more inclined to defend America; 5.5% were inclined to defend democracy, and 5.8% supported neither as seen in Figure 7 below.

In the case study, the Researcher analyzed various heroes from different war films. The Researcher looked for instances in which the hero exhibited character, adaptability, and stress management. Heroes depicted in World War II films averaged 14 instances of character, 15 instances of adaptability, and 12 instances of stress management. Such character was depicted when, in *Enemy at the Gates*, Vassi Zaitsev put aside his rising fame to make meaningful friends and relationships with comrades during battles. Hero adaptability was revealed in *The Thin Red Line* when Sergeant Welsh overcame a heavily fortified barbed wire blockade with grenades and skillful leadership. Heroes shown in the Vietnam War films averaged 5 instances of character, 5 instances of adaptability, and 7 instances of stress management. Despite being imprisoned in complete darkness for multiple days, Benjamin Willard maintained his wits and succeeds in his goal of assassinating Colonel Kurtz in the film *Apocalypse Now*. Hero character was displayed primarily in combat in *Full Metal Jacket*, most notably when soldier Animal Mother refused to leave his wounded comrades despite the presence of an enemy sniper. Heroes depicted in the War on Terror films averaged 17 instances of character, 13 instances of adaptability, and 11 instances of stress management. Such character appeared in *American Sniper* when Chris Kyle gave a child holding an rocket-propelled grenade time to drop the weapon and avoid being shot. Stress management in *The Hurt Locker* was evident as William James, a new Explosive Ordnance Disposal team member, maintained strong decision making skills as he realized the hopeless fate of the man strapped with a suicide vest and decided to protect his men rather than risk their life for a hopeless cause.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Character | Adaptability | Stress Management |
| *Enemy at the Gates* | 10 | 13 | 13 |
| *Come and See* | 13 | 10 | 9 |
| *The Thin Red Line* | 19 | 22 | 14 |
| *Apocalypse Now* | 5 | 7 | 10 |
| *Platoon* | 3 | 5 | 7 |
| *Full Metal Jacket* | 7 | 5 | 6 |
| *American Sniper* | 20 | 13 | 8 |
| *Black Hawk Down* | 20 | 18 | 18 |
| *The Hurt Locker* | 12 | 10 | 8 |

*Analysis*

To determine whether Americans are not more likely to support a war to defend one’s country rather than to defend democracy elsewhere, the Scholar used a one-proportion z test. With a P value of essentially zero, the Scholar rejected the null. This result remains consistent with the concept that Americans are more likely to support a war to defend one’s country rather than to defend democracy elsewhere. When conducting research for the case study, the Scholar found the nine films to contain instances of character, adaptability, and stress management in varying degrees. Heroes depicted in the War on Terror films overall exhibited strong character compared to heroes in the Vietnam War and World War II films. Heroes in the Vietnam War films exhibited the lowest levels of character and adaptability, while heroes depicted in World War II films exhibited the highest average instances of adaptability. In World War II films, heroes exhibited the most frequent instances of stress management, while those in the Vietnam War exhibited the fewest. On average, the films depicting the Vietnam War included heroes with little character, adaptability, and stress management compared to those in World War II and the War on Terror.

**Discussion**

*Findings on American War Support*

As revealed in the findings, the Scholar rejected the null stating Americans are not more likely to support a war to defend one’s country rather than to defend democracy elsewhere. Analyzing a representative sample of American citizens, many of whom lived through both the Vietnam War and the War on Terror, the Scholar discovered nearly nine out of ten respondents (88.6%) would be more likely to defend America than democracy elsewhere. Such findings agree with America’s defense spending since the War on Terror began, which now exceeds $4 trillion dollars. When American citizens were asked whether they believed America is obligated to defend democracy in other countries, 46.7% either agreed or strongly agreed that America should provide aid. This disagrees with America’s current federal budget, in which only 1% is actually spent on foreign aid (Simmons, 2017). During World War II, 16.1 million American soldiers fought and during the Vietnam War, 8.7 million served. These numbers agree with the Scholar’s findings that Americans are more likely to support a war to defend America rather than to defend democracy elsewhere. Nearly twice as many Americans joined World War II than the Vietnam War.

*Findings on Heroic Ideal*

In the Review of Related Literature, the Scholar discovered the American army swelled from 200,000 to 4,000,000 soldiers following the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 (“Pearl,” 2018). Such an explosion in war support following this attack mirrors the findings in the case study where in World War II films, American media depicted soldiers with the second highest levels of character and the highest levels of adaptability and stress management. Analyzing films such as *The Killing Fields* and *Born on the Fourth of July*, the Scholar discovered a new type of hero starring these films: A young, disillusioned soldier who quickly realized the brutality of war. Such findings remain consistent with the Scholar’s findings, as heroes depicted in Vietnam War films exhibited the lowest levels of character, adaptability, and stress management. Just as American war support escalated following the attack on Pearl Harbor, American support for the War on Terror soared following the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center. This finding was consistent with the Scholar’s research as soldiers in film during this war exhibited the highest levels of character and the second highest levels of adaptability and stress management. Although most findings from the case study aligned with information in the Review of Related Literature, the Researcher found heroes in Vietnam War films exhibited higher levels of stress management than expected. Although still lower than heroes from other war periods, the Review of Related Literature suggested heroes would exhibit nearly no stress management as the heroes enter an unfamiliar land unprepared for combat. This disagreement may have arisen from the Researcher’s personal bias. These differences may also have arisen from the time in which the Researcher viewed these films, as some analysis took place following athletic activity while the other analysis did not. This may have impacted data collection.

*Implications*

The collected data suggest policies, practices, and future research may be impacted as a result of such findings. The data collected in the Review of Related Literature and the case study may help filmmakers make more money on films. Since films reflect American sentiment, filmmakers who are better attuned to audience sentiment are more likely to gain viewers. The Scholar believes such findings could impact the American government’s military recruiting practices. Since 88.6% of respondents in the Scholar’s survey indicated he or she would be more likely to support a war to defend America, the American government could use this loyalty to gain more volunteer soldiers. Rather than suggesting Americans should defend democracy in other countries including Vietnam, the military could suggest Americans themselves are in danger. Those conducting future research may trace character, adaptability, and stress management in other situations such as presidential elections and determine whether these traits highly correlate with the election of the individual to office. Researchers may also seek to discover whether generational development impacts one’s support for the defense of democracy and America.

**Conclusion**

The Scholar first analyzed the initial Special Operations Forces including the Arditi and the Praetorian Guard, finding these special fighting units effective. Following the success of such forces and exploring the resulting interest in soldier optimization and selection, the Scholar introduced and later scrutinized the intricacies of such processes. The Scholar reviewed the impact of neuroscience on the selection of United States Special Forces and found previous selection methods inaccurately determine a soldier’s qualifications based on physical strength alone rather than analyzing internal, more conclusive attributes: character, resilience, and adaptability. Having identified these qualities, the Scholar discussed the relevance of such traits as these enable soldiers to create and employ sound decisions under pressure, continue fighting despite immense adversity, and respond effectively to uncertainties during conflicts. The Scholar presented new selective tests, including SFAS, VIA-IS, the Dispositional Resilience Scale, and the Grit Scale, all of which employ neuroscientific research, to analyze the effectiveness of such studies in selecting the appropriate soldier for upcoming missions. Such analysis conclusively determined modern selection methods using neuroscience greatly improve a commander’s selective abilities. Next, the Scholar determined the role behavioral and cognitive psychology played on the training of such forces. Operating expensive, deadly equipment in rapidly changing environments while under extreme physical and psychological stress, soldiers must learn to conquer natural stress responses through stress management and total immersion training. The Scholar analyzed each method by first determining the relevance to modern conflicts, then by finding the role behavioral and cognitive psychology plays in an operative’s training. Such analysis found modern wars occur in other countries where cultural awareness remains crucial for influencing and subduing foreign populations. Psychology training enables combatants to improve covertness by immersing oneself in foreign cultures by understanding how the enemy thinks and acts. The Scholar also found the variability of one’s stress response ranging from fight, flight, to freeze and the crucial role of the body’s dynamic equilibrium during combat. This previously nonexistent understanding of one’s performance under pressure enables trainers to gradually build a soldier’s stress tolerance through SIT training and visualization. In analyzing character, resilience, adaptability, stress management, and total immersion training in World War II, Vietnam War, and War on Terror films, the Scholar found movie studios willingly sacrifice film accuracy to appeal to the society’s shifting heroic ideals. Unlike the Vietnam War where the American people grew tired of the war effort over time, soldiers during World War II and the War on Terror received support and adoration. This shift in support aligns with changes in soldier portrayal from heroic warriors to baby killers to brave heroes. As time progresses, the accuracy of war films likely will not change as society places satisfaction above film accuracy. Regardless of society’s view of Special Operations Forces, neuroscience’s broadening horizons enable commanders to comprehensively select and train individuals for grueling missions involving stressors from combat and from isolation.

The constantly shifting values and beliefs of the American people largely influence war film heroes and content. Notably, during the Vietnam War, society’s negative views of the war influenced filmmakers to depict American soldiers as baby killers in order to appeal to the audience. The alterations in film plots precipitated by the audience’s often cause traits including character, adaptability, and stress management to be distorted. After researching the heroic ideal in literary patterns, the Scholar analyzed three periods of war in the United States: World War II, the Vietnam War, and the War on Terror. From each period, the Scholar analyzed three films looking for specific variables: character, adaptability, and stress management. From the studies examined by the Scholar and discussed in this paper, the Researcher has concluded films produced during these wars seek to immortalize heroes by exaggerating both positive and negative qualities, thus allowing the audience to more easily understand the central theme. By researching this topic, the Researcher provided evidence to show how societal values influence the hero’s values rather than society taking cues from the heroes. After analyzing data collected by other researchers, the Scholar decided to conduct a qualitative analysis of American sentiment toward defending America or democracy. Due to research conducted by other scholars, the Researcher decided to create a study on American sentiment toward supporting a war to defend America or democracy. Creating a voluntary digital survey and distributing via email, text message, and social media, the Researcher used the results of the survey to test and reject the null hypothesis. The Scholar also conducted a case study of war films from World War II, the Vietnam War, and the War on Terror to determine variations in the hero’s character, adaptability, and stress management and how such variations associate to public sentiment of the war at the given time. The Researcher found American citizens prioritize America’s safety over the longevity of democracy and also found film heroes mirrored the public sentiment toward war of the time, appearing adaptable and full of character during wars supported by the public. The Scholar found evidence to support the findings in the Review of Related Literature. Due to this research, the Scholar was led to research the psychological impact of torture.

**Remaining Questions**

As all scholars are aware, good research leads to more research. The Scholar found connections between the psychological trauma associated with the combat situations Special Operations Forces face and the psychological experiences undergone by victims of torture. Torture, derived from the Latin word “tortus,” means to torment or distort and is the act of inflicting pain with the purpose of punishing, gaining information, or gratifying sadistic desires (“Torture,” 2019). Similar to intelligence methods incorporated by Special Operations Forces, torturers often use violence and psychological stimulation techniques perfected during the Middle Ages to achieve goals. Given the similarities in the torture Special Operations Forces face when captured and the psychological trauma associated with torture, one may ask: *What is torture, and what are the psychological impacts of torture on the victim and the torturer?*

Sanctioned first by the Catholic Church and reaching its’ height during the Middle Ages, the use of torture on criminals and heretics was exercised to force confessions, discourage dissent, and persuade Jews and other non-believers to embrace Christian beliefs. Believing the highest order of truth came from the lips of the tortured soul, those given the task to implement pain as an inducement were given creative ways to gain information, many of which caused death (Nash, 2019). To achieve these goals, devices and practices including the rack, the copper boot, Juda’s cradle, and foot roasting became commonplace in torture chambers. Developed in the fifteenth century by carpenters and engineers to torture London prisoners, these devices ripping bones and joints apart, boiled away flesh, and tore orifices. By employing this torture device, church authorities discouraged dissent (“The copper,” 2008). Such techniques and devices became widespread and perfected as the Inquisition combated unpopular religious ideologies.

*Spanish Inquisition*

In an effort to expel Jews, Protestants, and non-believers from Spain, Spanish powers forced nearly 40,000 Jews from its territories and drove others to convert to Catholicism in 1478 during the Spanish Inquisition (“The Spanish,” n.d.). In the 16th century this persecution continued, targeting Lutherans to end political and religious disunity, strengthen the monarchy’s power, and for economic gain. Those caught and accused of heresy, or holding contrary beliefs and challenging the church’s authority, experienced brutal torture as punishment and as a means of extracting information. The acts not only deterred criminals, but also solidified the country’s monopoly on violence (“How humiliation,” 2015). Many victims were burned alive as guards bound victims to a stake, added kindling, and sparked a blaze (Grabianowski, 2008). Those accused of witchcraft suffered similar fates, sometimes even having tongues burned or removed prior to punishment to distort the agonized screams. Such torture instilled fear as citizens believed burning one’s body prevented resurrection in the afterlife (“How humiliation,” 2015). These public displays of torture not only served to punish victims but also to deter others from performing similar actions. Within torture chambers other victims experienced rat torture, water torture, and the crocodile tube. Many victims condemned to death were immobilized on a flat surface with a caged rat set on the victim’s stomach. By heating the cage, torturers drove the rat to frantically seek a way to escape the heat through the victim’s stomach. The screams of the victim and the disgust arising from such a death served to solidify the country’s control of the people as others did not want to suffer similar fates. Water torture served the same purpose, as torturers funneled water into the victim’s mouth, clamped the nose shut, and caused the victim to drown in vomit or die from a ruptured stomach. Reserved for thieves, the crocodile tube fit around the thief’s abdomen by means of a ring of spikes and was tightened until the victim became immobilized, thereby allowing the torturer to heat the tube until a confession was obtained. Such torture techniques reigned until the end of the Inquisition in 1834 and reemerged during World War II when new forms of torture arose in response to needs for tactical information.

*World War II*

From World War II to today, new forms of torture arose, honing its already multifaceted objectives to more quickly acquire information. Signatories of the Geneva Convention, the United States and Germany generally adhered to the codified limits to permissible violence while the Japanese, who did not ratify the convention, implemented extreme torture practices resulting in the death of many (“American,” n.d.). This adhesion to anti-torture principles dissolved following Al Qaeda attacks on September 11, 2001, as national security interests predominated civility, resulting in the development of enhanced interrogation techniques at black sites such as Guantanamo Bay to learn more about Al Qaeda and to instill fear within Islamic societies (Hinwood & Reynolds, 2007). Waterboarding, forced nudity, and military dogs terrified, harmed, and psychologically devastated victims into submission (Chinnappa & Puggera, n.d.). Waterboarding, or the act of simulating drowning by pouring water over a victim’s clothbound face, became popularized by American soldiers during World War II and the Vietnam War and was adopted by American torturers. During CIA counter-interrogation training, members lasted on average fourteen seconds before giving in to the interrogator’s wishes (Layton, 2006). Such results reveal the torturer’s mastery of fear and terror techniques and the refinement of torture over time. Humiliation by forcing prisoners to parade in front of others while naked results in permanent psychological degradation and the fear instilled by military dogs renders victims unable to fully reenter society. Following the discovery of such torture practices in the Abu Ghraib prison, a torture camp housing foreign prisoners, American authorities repudiate previous interrogation techniques and promised to adhere to international standards of treatment. Today, exceptional circumstances and orders from superior officers do not justify torture, and countries around the world condemn these practices.

*Psychological Impacts on Victim*

Nearly half of all countries continue to torture victims despite universal bans on such practices (Pamoukaghlian, 2011). Whether experiencing torture for fourteen seconds or for fourteen years, “whoever was tortured, stays tortured” (Améry, 1980). Given the centrality of pain, victims quickly suffer psychological degradation, aggravated by perpetual scars and haunting memories. As new government sanctions seek to eliminate torturous practices in favor of more humane treatment, torturers hide practices by incorporating undetectable forms of physical assault including electric shock and rape, psychological torture including mock executions and mutilation, deprivation of human conditions including isolation and sleep deprivation, and sensory over-stimulation including exposure to powerful lights or drugs serve to degrade one’s capabilities of withstanding the torturer’s desires. Recent studies conclude physical torture’s impacts do not vary greatly from the impacts of psychological torture, as the negative feedback loop amplified by subsequent stressful events causes irreversible tissue damage in the hippocampus and prefrontal cortex (“Effects of torture,” 2015). Such studies also conclude torture renders the victim perpetually impacted by PTSD-like symptoms and learned helplessness.

Recent research suggests PTSD not only impacts soldiers returning from battle, but also torture victims who experience extreme trauma. Upon reentering society, torture victims from World War II and the Vietnam War adopted hypervigilant tendencies, believing threats subsist in every environment (Dombeck, n.d.). Victims found baseline arousal rates increased and the mental threshold for detecting danger increased. Unlike the physical scars caused by torture, these particular psychological issues ruined social relationships as victims perceived others as threats rather than as support, and the previously perceived “just world” shattered as a result of traumatic torture. Shackled, immobilized, and subjected to unavoidable pain, torture victims also experience learned helplessness. A 2016 study conducted by Penn State University found 37.5% of rats experiencing uncontrollable situations experienced degraded motivational, cognitive, and emotional facilities (“Learned helplessness,” 2018; Kim et al., 2016). Experiments with dogs produced similar results, as those subjected to unavoidable shocks failed to attempt escape in future experiments compared to other dogs subjected to avoidable shocks. As further illustration, CIA investigations found enemy combatants psychologically broken to the point where the torturer merely pointed and victims willingly walked to the waterboard for torture (Kitfield, 2016).

*Psychological Impacts on Torturer*

Previous psychological research concerning torture primarily focused on the victim, however, modern research reveals the psychological impacts of torture on the torturer. Recent research concerning Brazilian police torture methods during military regimes found torturers justified actions through personal isolation, social separation, and occupational insularity (Hajjar, 2009). Realizing intelligence endures as ammunition for the State, torturers allow self-perceptions to be shaped by the demand for national security and given times, such as times of war. By enabling others to shape one’s perception of morality, individuals suffer viscarious trauma and PTSD. Vicarious trauma, christened burnout, is characterized by exhaustion due to sustained and excessive stress and results in reduced productivity, feelings of hopelessness, and cynicality (“Burnout,” 2019). Responding to such discoveries, torturer interrogation training rose from three hundred to over a thousand from 2003 to 2004 (Pincus, 2006). This sudden increase mirrored the increasing demands on interrogators as more intensive torture techniques were required during the most intense phase of the War on Terror. The United States employed torture following 9/11 to obtain information about Al Qaeda and to intimidate potential terrorists and Islamic families. Such demands on the torturer often exceeded the individual’s coping capacity, thereby causing torturers to cope by compartmentalizing or by justifying the acts with the future goal of helping the nation or leader (Goleman, 1985). While such symptoms remain temporary and subside, prolonged torturing may cause PTSD. Similar to victims, torturers experience “toxic levels of guilt and shame,” no longer detaching themselves from the memories, but rather suppressing emotions (Dee, 2017). Nightmares and depression commonly haunt torturers who realized the implications of torture and the resulting deindividualization (Fair, 2007). Torturers also found senses of right and wrong blurred, as exemplified in Yale University’s 1963 Milgram Experiment, in which 100% of participants willingly electrocuted victims up to 300 volts following orders from an authority figure (McLeod, 2017). Following retrospective analysis, torturers come to terms with the reality of these inhumane actions and experienced PTSD and burnout as a result (Dee, 2017).

Although one cannot deny the effectiveness of torture as an informative and coercive practice, the morality of such practices is often contested. While in some circumstances the end goal of extracting information to prevent catastrophes does save lives, one must consider the cost of achieving such a goal and the impact these practices have on society. Such costs include the increasingly widespread use of torture to garner information, inaccurate information resulting from victims seeking to end suffering, the future abuse of American soldiers by other countries, and the degradation of the nation’s morality. Given these costs, the justification of torture cannot be upheld in all circumstances, but until the difference between torture and coercive interrogation are delineated, one cannot completely eliminate such practices from society. No matter how guilty the victim or stubborn the prisoner, the Bible contests people should love each-other and show compassion in all circumstances.

**Biblical Connection**

David, one of the most famous Biblical kings, rose from humble beginnings as a shepherd to lead Israel in a Godly path.  Unlike Saul, the people’s anointed king who possessed physically desirable qualities including handsomeness and height, David lived a rough, rugged life defending sheep deep in the countryside.  Despite Saul’s superior appearance and stature, God selected the youngest son of Jesse by looking past physical appearance and saw the traits necessary for a leader who could accomplish His great plans: resilience, character, and adaptability.  Similar to the modern Special Operations selection techniques seeking to identify internal indicators of success, God looks at the heart of a person, as indicated in 1 Samuel 16:7, which reads,

*“But the Lord said to Samuel, “Don’t look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him.  For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.”*

God explicitly advises His anointer, Samuel, to look past physical strength and appearance.  Before the anointing of David, Israelites rejected God and selected a man of physical strength to deliver the kingdom from calamity (1 Samuel 10:19).  While such leadership initially succeeded, the people did not look at Saul’s internal qualities, thereby overlooking Saul’s foolishness, impatience, and failure to obey God, all of which caused Israel to decline (1 Samuel 13-15).  Not only does the Bible’s contrast between poor leadership reveal the importance of selection, but it also reveals the benefits of obtaining capabilities to determine abstract qualities necessary for success. David’s previous life as a shepherd defending sheep from predators provided David with resilience in the face of danger (1 Samuel 17:34-35).  Despite Saul’s façade of confidence, God’s ability to examine internal strengths to select an appropriate leader, David, for the defeating Goliath and the Philistines, provided the Israelites with immense strategic advantages. As modern Special Operations selection methods further examine and predict an operative’s innate abilities, the United States gains competitive advantages similar to those seen in Israel.

Paul, one of the most prominent Biblical missionaries, traveled across the world during three missionary journeys bringing Jesus’ method to others. Encountering fierce opposition to Christianity and to the Christian efforts to gain disciples, Paul inevitably faced hardships, punishment, and torture as a result of his steadfast commitment to Jesus’ message. In the past torture was an acceptable practice but as Christianity spread, Jesus’ message of peace and love challenged the ethicality of torture. Paul emphasizes the necessity of peace and love in place of torture in Ephesians 4:32, which reads,

*“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgive each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”*

God explicitly supports forgiveness as he sacrificed his son on the cross for mankind’s sin. By enabling his son to take on the sin of the world, God demonstrated the purest form of forgiveness and set an example for others to follow. By forgiving others, Paul and the disciples unite the body of Christ and grow the population of believers. Despite torture’s use as a method of consolidating power and keeping subjects in line, forgiveness brings people together in ways torture cannot, using love and kindness rather than fear to build relationships. Paul’s condemnation of torture mirrors efforts America and other countries recently adopted to eliminate torture from society. Now, torturers seek to build rapport with the prisoners, being kind and compassionate to these individuals. Just as Jesus forgave each person and Paul forgave those who persecuted him, victims and torturers alike should forgive each other and show compassion. Just as forgiveness and kindness were important facets of Jesus’ message, torturers and victims alike must love each other deeply. The kindness and love urged by Paul and Jesus must continue to be embraced today, recognizing the damaging, unconstructive effects of torture and the positive, restorative effects of forgiveness and love.

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Appendix I: Survey Questions

*Section I: Demographics*

1. Are you an American citizen?
   1. Yes
   2. No
2. What is your age?
   1. 14-17 years old
   2. 18-24 years old
   3. 25-34 years old
   4. 35-54 years old
   5. 55-64 years old
   6. 65 or older
3. What state do you currently reside in?
   1. Alabama
   2. Alaska
   3. Arizona
   4. Arkansas
   5. California
   6. Colorado
   7. Connecticut
   8. Delaware
   9. Florida
   10. Georgia
   11. Idaho
   12. Illinois
   13. Indiana
   14. Iowa
   15. Kansas
   16. Kentucky
   17. Louisiana
   18. Maine
   19. Maryland
   20. Massachusetts
   21. Michigan
   22. Minnesota
   23. Mississippi
   24. Missouri
   25. Montana
   26. Nebraska
   27. Nevada
   28. New Hampshire
   29. New Jersey
   30. New Mexico
   31. New York
   32. North Carolina
   33. North Dakota
   34. Ohio
   35. Oklahoma
   36. Oregon
   37. Pennsylvania
   38. Rhode Island
   39. South Carolina
   40. South Dakota
   41. Tennessee
   42. Texas
   43. Utah
   44. Vermont
   45. Virginia
   46. Washington
   47. West Virginia
   48. Wisconsin
   49. Wyoming
4. Please specify your ethnicity
   1. White, not Hispanic
   2. Hispanic
   3. African American
   4. Native American or Alaskan
   5. Asian
   6. More than one of the above
   7. Other
5. What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? If currently enrolled, highest degree received.
   1. High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent (for example: GED)
   2. Some college credit, no degree
   3. Less than high school degree
   4. Trade/technical/vocational training
   5. Associate degree
   6. Bachelor degree
   7. Graduate degree
   8. Professional/Doctorate degree
6. What is your employment status?
   1. Unemployed
   2. Employed
   3. Self-employed
   4. Homemaker
   5. Student
   6. Military
   7. Retired
   8. Unable to work
7. What is your marital status?
   1. Single, never married
   2. Married or domestic partnership
   3. Widowed
   4. Divorced
   5. Separated
8. What is your religious preference?
   1. Seventh-Day Adventist
   2. Jewish
   3. Protestant
   4. Christian Scientist
   5. Mormon
   6. Muslim
   7. Roman Catholic
   8. An Orthodox church such as the Greek or Russian Orthodox Church
   9. Other
9. What was your total household income before taxes during the past 12 months?
   1. Less than $49,000
   2. $50,000 to $99,999
   3. $100,000 to $149,999
   4. $150,000 to $199,999
   5. $200,000 or more
   6. Prefer not to answer
10. What is your gender?
    1. Male
    2. Female

*Section II: Opinions*

1. Please rate the degree to which you agree that America should engage in war to defend itself.
   1. Strongly Agree
   2. Agree
   3. Neutral
   4. Disagree
   5. Strongly Disagree
2. Please rate the degree to which you agree that America is obligated to defend democracy in other countries.
   1. Strongly Agree
   2. Agree
   3. Neutral
   4. Disagree
   5. Strongly Disagree
3. Would you be more likely to support a war to defend America or to defend democracy in a foreign country?
   1. Defend America
   2. Defend democracy
   3. Neither

Appendix II: Survey Results

Total Responses: 308

Time Frame: 12 October 2018 to 28 October 2018

Response data organized as: (Number of respondents, percentage of overall responses)

*Section I: Demographics*

1. Are you an American citizen?
   1. Yes (304, 98.7)
   2. No (4, 1.3)
2. What is your age?
   1. 14-17 years old (56, 18.2)
   2. 18-24 years old (62, 20.1)
   3. 25-34 years old (16, 5.2)
   4. 35-54 years old (104, 33.8)
   5. 55-64 years old (52, 16.9)
   6. 65 or older (18, 5.8)
3. What state do you currently reside in?
   1. Alabama (7, 2.3)
   2. Alaska (0, 0)
   3. Arizona (4, 1.3)
   4. Arkansas (0, 0)
   5. California (9, 2.9)
   6. Colorado (3, 1)
   7. Connecticut (2, 0.6)
   8. Delaware (0, 0)
   9. Florida (4, 1.3)
   10. Georgia (2, 0.6)
   11. Idaho (0, 0)
   12. Illinois (0, 0)
   13. Indiana (0, 0)
   14. Iowa (0, 0)
   15. Kansas (0, 0)
   16. Kentucky (0, 0)
   17. Louisiana (0, 0)
   18. Maine (0, 0)
   19. Maryland (2, 0.6)
   20. Massachusetts (3, 1)
   21. Michigan (1, 0.3)
   22. Minnesota (0, 0)
   23. Mississippi (0, 0)
   24. Missouri (0, 0)
   25. Montana (0, 0)
   26. Nebraska (0, 0)
   27. Nevada (0, 0)
   28. New Hampshire (0, 0)
   29. New Jersey (0, 0)
   30. New Mexico (0, 0)
   31. New York (1, 0.3)
   32. North Carolina (5, 1.6)
   33. North Dakota (0, 0)
   34. Ohio (0, 0)
   35. Oklahoma (4, 1.3)
   36. Oregon (0, 0)
   37. Pennsylvania (0, 0)
   38. Rhode Island (0, 0)
   39. South Carolina (0, 0)
   40. South Dakota (0, 0)
   41. Tennessee (0, 0)
   42. Texas (255, 82.8)
   43. Utah (0, 0)
   44. Vermont (0, 0)
   45. Virginia (5, 1.6)
   46. Washington (0, 0)
   47. West Virginia (0, 0)
   48. Wisconsin (0, 0)
   49. Wyoming (0, 0)
4. Please specify your ethnicity
   1. White, not Hispanic (256, 83.1)
   2. Hispanic (18, 5.8)
   3. African American (8, 2.6)
   4. Native American or Alaskan (1, 0.3)
   5. Asian (14, 4.5)
   6. More than one of the above (7, 2.3)
   7. Other

(4, 1.3)

1. What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? If currently enrolled, highest degree received.
   1. High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent (for example: GED) (38, 12.3)
   2. Some college credit, no degree (34, 11)
   3. Less than high school degree (51, 16.6)
   4. Trade/technical/vocational training (1, 0.3)
   5. Associate degree (7, 2.3)
   6. Bachelor degree (80, 26)
   7. Graduate degree (73, 23.7)
   8. Professional/Doctorate degree (24, 7.8)
2. What is your employment status?
   1. Unemployed (42, 13.6)
   2. Employed (133. 43.2)
   3. Self-employed (27, 8.8)
   4. Homemaker (24, 7.8)
   5. Student (52, 16.9)
   6. Military (2, 0.6)
   7. Retired (26, 8.4)
   8. Unable to work (2, 0.6)
3. What is your marital status?
   1. Single, never married (135, 43.8)
   2. Married or domestic partnership (162, 52.6)
   3. Widowed (2, 0.6)
   4. Divorced (7, 2.3)
   5. Separated (2, 0.6)

1. What is your religious preference?
   1. Seventh-Day Adventist (0,0)
   2. Jewish (2, 0.6)
   3. Protestant (178, 57.8)
   4. Christian Scientist (15, 4.9)
   5. Mormon (3, 1)
   6. Muslim (4, 1.3)
   7. Roman Catholic (37, 12)
   8. An Orthodox church such as the Greek or Russian Orthodox Church (2, 0.6)
   9. Other (67, 21.8)
2. What was your total household income before taxes during the past 12 months?
   1. Less than $49,000 (17, 5.5)
   2. $50,000 to $99,999 (39, 12.7)
   3. $100,000 to $149,999 (44, 14.3)
   4. $150,000 to $199,999 (38, 12.3)
   5. $200,000 or more (84, 27.3)
   6. Prefer not to answer (86, 27.9)
3. What is your gender?
   1. Male (152, 49.4)
   2. Female (156, 50.6)

*Section II: Opinions*

1. Please rate the degree to which you agree that America should engage in war to defend itself.
   1. Strongly Agree (165, 53.6)
   2. Agree (99. 32.1)
   3. Neutral (32, 10.4)
   4. Disagree (4, 1.3)
   5. Strongly Disagree (8, 2.6)
2. Please rate the degree to which you agree that America is obligated to defend democracy in other countries.
   1. Strongly Agree (13, 4.2)
   2. Agree (131, 42.5)
   3. Neutral (96, 31.2)
   4. Disagree (55, 17.9)
   5. Strongly Disagree (13, 4.2)
3. Would you be more likely to support a war to defend America or to defend democracy in a foreign country?
   1. Defend America (273, 88.6)
   2. Defend democracy (17, 5.5)
   3. Neither (18, 5.8)