

Having Non-State Torture Recognized by the UN and Member States as an Infringement of Women's Human Rights Is Imperative

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WARNING: The content and images featured in this article are explicit and may be disturbing to some readers.

Cet article décrit l'impact «classique» de la victimisation suite à la torture infligée à l'extérieur des Nations. Les auteures mettent en relation leurs connaissances et leur contact avec des femmes qui dénoncent par le biais de leur art ce qu'elles ont vécu et les effets sur leur vie : des dessins, un tableau, une photo. Les femmes sont affectées hors de proportion par ces crimes qui ne sont même pas reconnus par la société et la justice. Cette torture doit être reconnue comme une forme spécifique de violence interpersonnelle dans les codes criminels de l'État alors que les Nations Unies sont outillées pour protéger les droits des femmes qui ne peuvent être jugées, ne peuvent recevoir de l'aide pour une réhabilitation que les auteures jugent réalisable.

During the 1946-48 drafting of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) women activists worked to remove sexist phrases from the Declaration (Pietilä). For example, Article 1 was made to read, “All human beings

are born free and equal in dignity and rights” instead of “All men....” The title of the Declaration became “of Human Rights,” rather than “of the Rights of Men” (Pietilä 17-18). Consequently, today women who have suffered torture perpetrated by private individuals or groups, known as non-State actors, can read that they were and are entitled to all the human rights stated in the Declaration (Sarson and MacDonald “No Longer Invisible”). It says:

No one shall be subjected to torture (Article 5) ... Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms, set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as ... sex ... political or other opinion ... (Article 2) ... [and] are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law (Article 7).

However, it is now 2018, and the work of challenging patriarchal discrimination must continue for feminist human rights activists. These Articles of the Declaration

are not universally operationalized nor genderized as human rights of women and girls when tortured in the domestic or private sphere by non-State actors.

It has been necessary even at the United Nations level to pass resolutions that prioritize integrating all human rights as women's rights. One example is resolution 1993/46 of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (1993). It spoke of the need to integrate women's human rights equality into the workings of the United Nations and States parties and to advance knowledge that women as a group suffer particular forms of human rights violations. Torture that is inflicted in the domestic or private sphere against women is such a human rights violation. In 1996, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Radhika Coomaraswamy, wrote in her report that protection from torture perpetrated by private actors against women has been discriminatorily overlooked by United Nations country members. Non-State torture of women and girls including sexualized torture is a human rights violation that has been

and continues to be overlooked, even actively rejected from being identified and distinctly criminalized in law by countries—Canada being one such country.

In Canada, political rejection was the outcome of Bill C-242, An Act to amend the *Criminal Code* (inflicting torture). Peter Fragiskatos, Member of Parliament for London North Centre, Ontario, spoke to his Private Members Bill in the Canadian House of Commons on February 26, 2016. Eventually the Bill was before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights to be studied. The Standing Committee's decision that was presented to the House by Presiding Chair Mr. Housefather was:

The amendments proposed by the Bill may be redundant in light of existing Criminal Code provisions [such as utilizing] existing offences of aggravated assault and aggravated sexual assault Therefore ... the Committee recommends that the House of Commons not proceed further with Bill C-242, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (inflicting torture). (House of Commons)

Prior to this event, as members of the Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW), we worked with members on the following resolution on the Criminalization of Non-State Actor Torture. It was voted into CFUW policy in 2011. It stated:

CFUW urges the Government of Canada to amend, immediately, the Criminal Code of Canada to include torture committed by private individuals and organizations, (non-state actors) as a specific and distinct criminal offence. ... CFUW urges the

Government of Canada to: I. Exercise due diligence by initiating into Canadian policies and practices without delay, all appropriate measures to ensure that no person is subjected to torture by non-state actors; II. Respect the priority of gender-sensitive frameworks on the United Nations agendas, given that women and girls are disproportionately affected by extreme forms of violence; and III. Uphold Canada's commitments to United Nations human rights instruments to which Canada is a signatory. (183)

CFUW followed this advocacy policy by submitting a shadow report to the United Nations Committee against Torture in 2012. The Committee monitors how countries apply the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UN CAT). The Committee recommended Canada needed to stop and to sanction acts of torture, including acts of violence against women that amounted to torture committed by non-State or private actors and to provide remedies ("Consideration of Reports"). It also recommended to Canada that all the provisions of the UN CAT be incorporated into Canadian law so persons subjected to torture could invoke the UN CAT directly in courts.

CFUW followed this initiative in 2016 by submitting a shadow report to the United Nations Committee overseeing how countries were integrating the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). This CFUW shadow report focused solely on the need for the Government of Canada to criminalize non-State actor torture, stating the CFUW policy and its support for

Bill C-242, a position it had made known to the Canadian Government ("Review of Canada's Compliance"). CEDAW Committee expert Pramila Patten of Mauritius asked Canada about establishing a law on non-State torture as non-State torture surpasses the crime of aggravated assault; Erin Brady, Department of Justice Canada, responded that Bill C-242 was not a State initiated Bill and had not passed (UN Web TV). In the CEDAW Committee report to Canada under the section on gender-based violence against women, recalling CEDAW General Recommendation 19, there was no specific recommendation made by the CEDAW Committee to Canada to incorporate non-State actor torture into its national law ("Concluding Observations"). CEDAW General Recommendation 197(b) is specific; it states women's human rights and fundamental freedoms include the right not to be subjected to torture.

The reality is, regardless of whether such a recommendation had been made by the CEDAW Committee as had been made by the United Nations Committee against Torture, the Canadian Government's policy is a patriarchal State-centric one. The following correspondence explains:

Canada's longstanding view is that the general comments and concluding observations of the UN treaty bodies are not legally binding. General comments and concluding observations of the treaty bodies, and this includes the Committee against Torture, are given serious consideration by governments in Canada, but Canada's view is that States Parties are not legally bound to implement them. (Brady)

This position is reinforced by the Ministerial Correspondence Unit of the Minister of Justice and Attorney

General of Canada, Jody Wilson Raybould, who stated that,

Under the Criminal Code, the existing specific offence of torture is meant to deter the infliction of pain and suffering by persons acting on behalf of a state for state purposes such as obtaining information or a confession.

Exercise due diligence to intervene to stop, sanction and provide remedies to victims of torture facilitates and enables non-State actors to commit acts impermissible under the Convention with impunity, the State's indifference or inaction provides a form of encouragement and/or de facto permission. The Committee

enough ... reinforces what the [torturers] said: "No one will believe you. What makes you think you are so special that someone would even want to save you or care about you?" ("Due Diligence" 13)

When non-State torture is not specifically named, and no law exists that

"When society minimizes [non-State torture] ... they are reinforcing the feeling of how the [torturers] minimized my worth when they tortured me.... Not having the law care enough reinforces what the [torturers] said: 'What makes you think you are so special that someone would even want to save you or care about you?'"

Because the Canadian Government holds a State-centric political position it disavows United Nations and its Committees efforts to genderize and to eliminate global patriarchal discriminatory human rights policies and practices. For example, not only does the Canadian Government disregard CEDAW General Recommendation 19 7(b), it specifically disregards the United Nations Committee against Torture General Comment No. 2, paragraph 18, which reads:

[W]here State authorities ... know or have reasonable grounds to believe that acts of torture ... are being committed by non-State ... private actors and they fail to exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate, prosecute and punish such non-State... private actors consistently with the Convention, the State bears responsibility and its officials should be considered as authors, complicit or otherwise responsible under the Convention for consenting to or acquiescing in such impermissible acts. Since the failure of the State to exer-

has applied this principle to States parties' failure to prevent and protect victims from gender-based violence.

Analyzing the impact of the decision of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights and the government's State-centric policy reveals both reject acknowledging and naming non-State torture as a distinct criminal human rights violation. This is an example of what Carly Parnitzke Smith and Jennifer J. Freyd describe as "institutional betrayal" (575). Such a betrayal is voiced by Alex, a woman we have been in relational connection with for over ten years (Sarson and MacDonald "Due Diligence"). Alex had fled Canada for another country seeking safety from family-based non-State torture victimization organized by her father. She described that,

When society minimizes [non-State torture], ... it is taken personally ... and feels like it is ... me They are looking down on ... reinforcing the feeling of how the [torturers] minimized my worth when they tortured me Not having the law care

identifies that such a crime occurs, there is no acknowledgement that non-State torture victimized persons exist. There is no non-State torture data, thus there is no governmental evidence for Canada to report to United Nations Committees such as CEDAW or the Committee against Torture.

As previously mentioned, non-State torture refers to torture perpetrated by private individuals or groups. This can include, for example, parent(s), inter-generational family members, guardians, spouses, human traffickers, pedophiles, pornographers, pimps, johns, or any person—man or woman—who is not acting as a representative of a government (Amnesty International "Respect, Protect, Fulfill Women's Human Rights"). Conversely, State torture refers to torture perpetrated by government representatives such as military or police personnel (Amnesty International *Surviving Death*; Smith and Boyles). "Classic" torture describes torture tactics used by State torturers (Nowak). Similar classic torture tactics are inflicted by non-State torturers in their homes, on private estates, in cottages, apartments, and

warehouses, on farms and boats, and in other secured places organized by like-minded groups within the community, the country, or across borders (Sarson and MacDonald "Torturing by Non-State Actors" 31). Thus, women's victimization includes being trafficked and or forcedly exploited into pornography and prostitution. The women who speak in this article have entrusted us with their *stories*, which refers to their narratives describing their lived ordeals. The women have consented to sharing their voices and their drawings, painting, and photograph. For many their victimization began in infancy or when toddlers and generally lasted into their young adulthood. Their stories were disclosed during our time in healing relationships with them or as a result of person-to-person interviews that took place at their kitchen tables or in a place of their choosing.

Our introduction into the reality that non-State torture victimization was being inflicted in Canadian neighbourhoods against women as children and/or as women began with Sara in 1993.¹ It was Sara's disclosures that altered our lives and professional practices forever. Realizing she was speaking about non-State torture, acts that were similar to the acts of State torturers (Sarson and MacDonald "Seeking Equality"), brought the realization that Canadian law and governmental policies had failed to name and criminalize non-State torture as a specific human rights crime. Now it's 2018 and Canadian women so tortured remain without the human and legal right to distinctly name non-State torture as the specific crime committed against them.

Sara lives in Nova Scotia as do the other women we interviewed. When we started our website, we began hearing from other Canadian women as well as from women in the United States, the United Kingdom and Western Europe, Australia, New

Zealand, Indonesia, and Israel. We heard some women from various countries who speak of having been in prostitution and who survived ordeals of non-State torture including group sexualized torture. We also have participatory questionnaires on our website that women and sometimes men complete (Sarson and MacDonald "Torturing by Non-State Actors"). They identify the tactics of non-State torture they have survived. Emailing, telephone calls, Skyping, and Facebooking are other ways we are contacted. The youngest woman to contact us was seventeen years of age; older women have been in their eighties.

This is a praxis based paper. It includes the theoretical knowledge gained as an outcome of women entrusting us with their stories and of the healing support we offered (Sarson and MacDonald "No Longer Invisible"). In the process of describing the non-State torture victimizations they survived, woman also detailed the actions of the torturers. We begin by describing the torturers' pleasures.

The Torturers' Pleasures

Comprehending why non-State torturers do what they do is to realize that torture is an intentional and deliberate act. Torture victimization is dehumanizing. This is why some women spoke of how they perceived they were a "thing," a "nobody," or an "it" (Sarson and MacDonald "Seeking Equality"). Comprehending why non-State torturers do what they do is to also recognize that they take pleasure in the acts of torturing (Sarson "Non-State Torture"; Sarson and MacDonald "Sexualized Torure"). They derive pleasure from dehumanizing women, beginning when they are powerless, tiny children; pleasure when exerting omnipotent domination, power, and control; and pleasure from witnessing the suffering

they cause ("No Longer Invisible"). Their pleasure is described by Hope as she reflects on one ordeal which occurred when she was seven years of age:

When I started to understand that my abusers and torturers ... the pornographers and the prostitutes got pleasure when I cried ... got off on seeing me suffer ... I resolved never to cry again ... I'd take away their pleasure ... so I made a deal with myself never to cry again. (Sarson and MacDonald "Torturing by Non-State Actors" 26)

However, women describe that the non-State torturers' ultimate pleasure is the infliction of sexualized torture pain and humiliation ("Torture Victimization"). Being tortured inflicts deep humiliation and can be dehumanizingly destructive to a person's relationship with their sense of Self (Baer and Vorbrüggen). Sexualized torture is not inflicted in isolation; it is compounded with many forms of dehumanizing physical, verbal, emotional, perceptual, and sensory violations. For instance, women speak of how the torturers' verbal tones were seeped in misogynistic and misopedic attitudes. These tones were deeply wounding to the women when as little girls they were torture raped and called a "fucking cunt," "evil," and/or "whore," when they were told they were "a nothing and a nobody," and laughed at (Sarson and MacDonald "Seeking Equality" 271). From Carrie, we heard:

I got so I would just lie on the bed waiting for the old man to almost choke me to near-death with his penis. My father, other men and women, would stand around the bed, watch and laugh. There are no words to

describe their sound, the tone of their laughter, and feelings I felt. (Interview 1998)

Carrie continued, “I can still hear their laughter ringing inside my head, inside my ears” (Interviews 1999). Such humiliation has a lasting impact on those who suffer torture victimization (Baer and Vorbrüggen 30-2).

sexualized torture, a norm that started in their homes with one or both parents and was often inter-generational (Sarson and MacDonald “No Longer Invisible”). That parents, family members, and friends can be traffickers is supported in U.S. research projects (Sarson “Review of Human Trafficking”; Bigelsen and Vuotto 10; Cole and Anderson ii) and globally by

this as being taken to “parties” where they suffered group sexualized torture (Sarson and MacDonald “No Longer Invisible”; “Seeking Equality”). “Party” is a euphemism that covers up organized, pedophilic, non-State torture group perpetrations.

c) Off-street trafficking and forced prostitution occurred for some women. Even after leaving home they

Sara, who was a university educated woman in her late twenties when she sought our support, described “being rented out” as her normal childhood activity, explaining that she had to “learn to do it good to please the family.”

Non-State Torture and Sexualized Human Trafficking

“Bring her back when you’re done.” This is what Sara remembers her father saying to the pedophiles he trafficked her to when she was a toddler (Sarson and MacDonald “Seeking Equality”). Sara, who was a university educated woman in her late twenties when she sought our support, described “being rented out” as her normal childhood activity, explaining that she had to “learn to do it good to please the family” (“Seeking Equality” 265). By this Sara meant she was taught to normalize, to perform, and to withstand sexualized torture. Additionally, we learned that “the family” was coded language used to manipulate Sara into believing that all the like-minded torturers connected to her family unit were relatives. This was so for other women; for example, Elizabeth was taught that male perpetrators from outside the family might be referred to as “uncles” (“Seeking Equality” 267).

At the time, Sara did not understand that her parents were pimping and trafficking her. Other women also spoke of being trafficked for

the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2014 and 2016 reports.

The research team that wrote the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime “Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2014” they confirmed in a conversation that family based non-State torturers and the daughters they traffic were an unidentified population of human traffickers and victimized girls (Sarson and MacDonald “Eliminate Torture”). Therefore, to expose the trafficking methods utilized by non-State torture family operators that women have detailed we offer the following descriptions:

a) In-home trafficking involves parents inviting like-minded torturers to their home to perpetrate sexualized torture against a woman when she was a child (Sarson and MacDonald “No Longer Invisible”). Sara described her torture as occurring in a “torture room” in the family basement with a “torture rack” she was immobilized on (Sarson and MacDonald “Seeking Equality”).

b) Out-of-home trafficking means as a child the women were taken to other places, and can involve one perpetrator or many. Some women describe

remain under the pimping control of their parent(s), who telephone with commands of where to go to meet the johns. During her healing process, Elizabeth said that when her father called, he triggered her into disassociation. Feeling robotic, she did as he commanded (Personal communication, 2015).

d) On-street trafficking and forced prostitution happened to some women. Sara explained that as she matured into adulthood the family perpetrators told she was “not saleable” as she no longer looked like a child, therefore, there were occasions when she was street prostituted (Sarson and MacDonald “Ritual Abuse-Torture in Families/Groups”).

e) In and out of country trafficking for some women meant being transported, as young as preschoolers, to other parts of Canada or taken to other countries to paedophilic group torture “parties” (Sarson and MacDonald “No Longer Invisible”; “Ritual Abuse-Torture in Families/Groups”). Being trafficked to foreign countries was described as uniquely horrifying because language and race were differences that maximized their vulnerabilities of captivity, powerless-

ness, disorientation, and aloneness (Sarson and MacDonald “No Longer Invisible”).

Non-State Torturers’ Tools and Tactics

Injuries resulting from the torture were generally hidden, often covered by clothing. The women we supported and interviewed reported that as children they were kept out of sight until their injuries healed. Later in life, women’s non-State torture injuries may be undetectable just as many State torture injuries are medically undetectable (Laws and Iacopino 205). We note the Laws and Iacopino study because classic physical torture—electric shocking, beatings, immobilizations, hanging, burning, submersion under water, needle punctures, and more—are the same acts of classic non-State torture about which women speak of surviving (“No Longer Invisible”; “Seeking Equality”; “Torture Victimization”). Furthermore, women’s descriptions of sexualized torture are similar to that of women who endured State-inflicted sexualized torture (Amnesty International *Surviving Death*; Smith and Boyles 5). In the following paragraphs, we have categorized examples of non-State torturers’ tactics and briefly shared women’s descriptive conversations of the ordeals they suffered as small children and that lasted for years:

a) Manipulative language tactics are used by the torturers to cover up their acts of torture. For example, Sara, as she healed was eventually able to explain that when she said, “My father came home through the back door,” this meant he raped her anally (“Seeking Equality” 267). We learned that for her “back door” and “dog house” meant anal rape, “front door” vaginal rape, and “sucking a lollipop” misrepresented oral rape (“Seeking Equality” 267). Sara was

almost thirty years old when she began translating the true meaning of manipulative coded language.

b) Chemical torture includes drugging—orally, with injectables, inhalants, and by mask. Drugging facilitates powerlessness, immobilization, and disorientation. Elizabeth remembers that her father’s pattern was to make her consume a drugged cocktail before bedtime. She knew this as “red sweets” (Email communication, 5 Feb. 2015). Drugging her into a stupor made it easy to carry her out of the family house and transport her in “black cars” to the pedophilic group her father was connected to (Sarson and MacDonald “No Longer Invisible” 97). Other women recall perpetrators calling pills “candy” and drugged liquids “Kool-Aid” (Sarson and MacDonald “Spillover Torture” 11).

c) Weapons such as guns were used to terrorize and for gun-raping, as were knives. Knives were also used for cutting women’s breasts, nipples, and vaginas. Vaginal cutting, women say, was terrifying because of the amount of bleeding it caused (Sarson and MacDonald “Torture Victimization”). Other weapons were homemade. L., entrusted us with a photograph (Figure 1) of a sexualized torture tool made by her grandfather. Called “bad stick” by the torturers, L. says it was used from the time she was “very young” and so often that she could not “really remember a time it wasn’t used” (Sarson and MacDonald “Spillover Torture” 5). She remembers that:

They just changed it—when I [was] really small it was a thinner stick etc. [It] got bigger when I got bigger. Pushed into my bum, that was very bad. They had other tools which cut or burned but I only have memories of these, not the actual things.... Rape was always done. Sometimes



Fig. 1: Bad Stick

they would push it in and out ... would twist it round and round to tear deep in me. Caused a lot of bleeding, not as much as the cutting but still a lot. They liked having sex when I was pouring blood.... It was awful having to lie with the stick with nails half in my body and half out and be terrified to move as it would then move inside me and tear.... And I was punished if I was found in the morning and it had come out. (Email communication 22 Jan. 2011)

L. explained that she was told the purpose of the “bad stick” was, “to open me up, to make me moist for the men coming, cause I was bad, cause I deserved it, lots of reasons” (Email communication 2013).

d) *Physical torture tools* generally had a sexualized torture outcome. In their stories, women described how everyday objects became torture tools: how car batteries become electric shocking tools, as did cattle prods, which were used to deliver electric shocks to their heads, nipples, and vaginas, that burning torture tools were made with a spoon heated on a stove burner, from lit cigarettes, hot light bulbs, heated curling irons, or a heated metal rod (Sarson and MacDonald “Spillover Torture”; “Torturing by Non-State Actors”; “Ritual Abuse-Torture in Families/Groups”). Lynn in her conversation with us said the perpetrators “owned a set of wrought iron implements that were used for penetration and drawing blood” (Email communication 31 Jan. 2015). Lynn says her painting (Figure 2) depicts “being tied down to a table and having various instruments inserted into my body cavities,” and tells us that “torture themes came up in my artwork long before I consciously knew about my history” (Email communication 31 Jan. 2015).

e) *Water torture tools* included buckets, sinks, and bathtubs filled with water that were turned into near-death ordeals. Sara called this “tub drowning” (Personal communication 6 Dec. 2004); State-torture literature calls this “non-fatal drowning torture” (Beynon 27). When semi-conscious, Sara described how she felt lifeless and powerless when raped. We identify these ordeals as the torturers’ pseudo-necrophilic sexualized torture pleasures (Sarson and MacDonald “Ritual Abuse-Torture”).

f) *Humiliation and dehumanization tortures* included forced nakedness,



Fig. 2: Lynn Schirmer, “Rite of Passage,” ©1993, acrylic..

being urinated and defecated on, and being smeared with bodily fluids including the women’s own (“Seeking Equality”). Women frequently speak of feeling they grew up in environments of human evil (Lane and Holodak; Sarson and MacDonald “Ritual Abuse-Torture in Families/Groups”; “Ritual Abuse-Torture Within Families”)

Evilism Fears

Women described their fears of being evil or having evil within. When asked why they felt they had evilism fears, their explanations were generally defined as a consequence of

being called evil, and a result of the sexualized tortures and other forms of horrification, including internalizing distorted beliefs forced upon them as children (Lane and Holodak; Sarson and MacDonald “Non-State Torture”; “Ritual Abuse-Torture”).

In our relational work with women so harmed we have found that easing their evilism fears occurred when we shared correct physiological and biological information with them. This helped them reframe beliefs and other distortions. Evilism fears that the women discussed with us and information that helped reframe their fears included:

a) When forced to swallow tortur-



Fig. 3: Sara's drawing, 1995.

ers' bodily fluids, women sometimes believed this meant they had ingested evil. For example, LynneE believed the perpetrators' bodily fluids "collected like grapes" on her internal organs (Personal communications 2000-2002). Women needed to know their body biologically eliminated the perpetrators' bodily fluids.

b) As little girls, the women were forced into bestiality and told if impregnated they would produce a half-animal-half-human evil monster; they needed to know this was not reproductively biologically possible.

c) Following painful forced abortions perpetrated by the torturers, it was not unusual for women to tell us they were forced to swallow aborted tissue as expressed by Alex (Lane and Holodak). They believed that the tissue was evil and that their bodies would grow an evil being. Biological and physiological explanations were needed to help explain this also was impossible.

Michael Welner writes about his research on establishing a "Depravity Standard" that indexes intentional acts of criminal depravity that social systems would deem as human evil (442). When the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment was adopted in 1984, United Nations Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar said torturing another human being must be "one of the most insidious evils" (1). Non-State torturers know what they are doing. They are doctors, lawyers, nurses, social workers, psychologists, counsellors, politicians, military and police personnel, farmers, fishers, and business managers—they function at jobs in all sectors of society. They intentionally torture, including for pleasure, showing no empathy for their daughters or the others they torture. We consider their acts of non-State torture to be expressions of human evil.

Distancing from Her-Self

A woman's survival depended on distancing her-Self from the pain of torture. For instance, women describe how, as children, sexualized torture pain made them slip into "blackness" (Sarson and MacDonald "Seeking Justice" 271; "Torture Victimization" 74). "Blackness" is the child-word women used as children to understand their childhood response of slipping into torture-pain induced unconsciousness, thus removing them from the torture pain ("Torture Victimization" 55).

Being harmed—"torture touched" as Sara called it—was all she knew (72). She and other women speak of being taught to Self-harm. For example, Sara described that her father taught her to head-bang when she was a toddler—head-banging pain distracted or distanced the sexualized torture pain (Sarson and MacDonald "Sexualized Torture" 271).

The objectification of a woman's relationship with her physicality is another way in which distancing from her-Self can happen. Sara, when we first met her, experienced and verbally depicted her physicality as body parts—as objects—all separate from one another. For example, she would say, "the hand" or "the head" versus "my hand" or "my head" (Personal communications 1993-1999). This survival response is illustrated in her drawing (Figure 3). This response enabled Sara to distance herself from the fact that it was her hand that touched the perpetrators during sexualized torture.

Our observations of women's collective patterns of distancing include dissociative responses we categorize as:

a) *Spontaneous survival dissociative responses*, which vary from women describing spontaneous, out-of-body responses, such as floating on the ceiling looking down at "the person down



Fig. 4: "Shatter Bits," "Little Goodness Coat for my Shatter Bits," "Age Four," and "Crash Landing."

there," to experiences such as Carrie describes: "I went into my black hole where I couldn't hear a sound and if I could feel I went even further into the big black hole" (Interviews 1999). We suggest that these responses are normal survival coping mechanisms.

b) *Forced dissociation*, which is intentionally inflicted by torturers who, during sexualized torture, inflict overwhelming pain—for example, by applying electric shocks to a woman's vagina—beginning when she was a tiny child. Elizabeth explained the torturers' tactic of intentionally inflicting a dissociative response. She was told at age three she would "get hurt if [she came] out of the black black black" (Personal communications 2010-2012). Women's use of words such as blackness or darkness, as previously mentioned, were generally associated with responses of unconsciousness and dissociation (Sarson and MacDonald "Torture Victimization"; "Ritual Abuse-Torture Within Families/Groups").

c) *A forced fracturing of her Self-identity* was a deliberate tactic of torturers who used psychological torture conditioning to force women when they were children to believe they were a different person at different times. Hope explains how a mirror torture tactic was used to facilitate this response in her:

I got diarrhea, I think that's what the pills were meant to do. The feces was smeared all over my

body as they pissed on, shit on, me. There was a box, standing on end with an old faded mirror propped inside. This faded mirror created a distorted image of myself. I was forced to look into it while being told, "Look what you did to her." The "her" was me. The box with the faded mirror was a technique ... used to force me into splitting and dissociating. (Interviews 1998-2000)

Our observations also suggest that dissociative conditioning creates vulnerabilities that can lead to women being susceptible to chronic re-victimization by family or group members. Women said that perpetrators could trigger them into conditioned dissociation, describing how they became robotized. Perpetrators do not want to lose control over the women they have pimped and trafficked, neither do they want to lose their ability to inflict sadistic sexualized torture onto the women they have conditioned to withstand such victimization. Consequently, when exiting the family or group, women report being threatened, stalked, harassed with phone calls day and night, and sometimes physically and sexually assaulted (Sarson and MacDonald "Ritual Abuse-Torture"). Breaking ties with all perpetrators is essential, but can be a struggle for some women as these are the only relational connections they know.

From "It-ism" to Being Her-Self

Dehumanizing and objectifying women as an "it" when they were infants or toddlers served the torturers' purpose. Our work with women in this paper to whom we have provided complex support focused on doing the opposite of what the torturers did. This means helping a woman undo dissociative responses, learning to stay present and connected to her-Self in the here-and-now. Our work also builds on the reality that a baby is born a single human being with a developing relational sense of Self. This relational connection with her-Self, although intentionally and purposefully harmed or shattered by non-State torturers' tactics when the women were tiny children, can be regained. It is, however, difficult and painful work.

Elizabeth says it is a very strange sensation to feel inside her body. In Figure 4, Elizabeth depicts and explains her evolving and healing relationship with her-Self from "shatter bits" to wholeness and womanhood (Personal communications 2010-2011). She and Sara both explained their "shattering" in their drawings—Elizabeth's as perceiving her-Self as "shatter bits"; Sara as perceiving her-Self as separated body parts. Elizabeth writes:

Shatter bits was my perception of how I felt from birth. I didn't know I had a body, or skin or

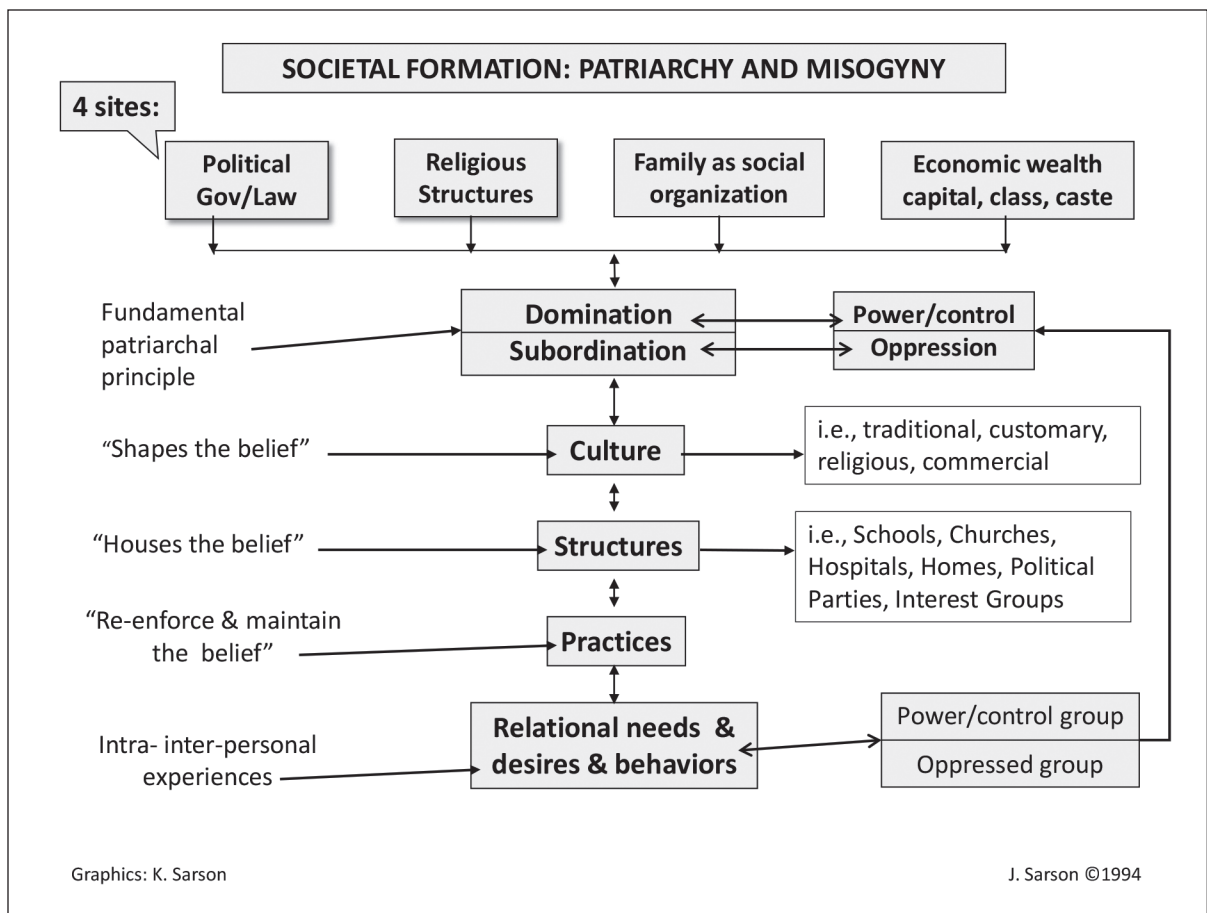


Fig. 5: Social Formation Model

I was a person. I believed I was invisible and people could just see an empty space. [When healing] I tried to cover each of the shattered bits with a little goodness coat to try and sooth the hurt pain of feeling bits. The torturers beat me, raped me, and made me feel I didn't exist. I was a no one and nothing. [When healing] I stopped believing the torturers and drew my little girl's body hurting, bruised, and crying all alone. I felt the crash landing when a horrific memory from when I was a very little girl released itself with all the hurt and torture pain from that time. I realized I had a solid body from when I was born. My body goes bump when I fall now and I cry out when I land. Now I only need

one coat on my one body. I know I deserve to wear clothes and a coat when I feel cold outside. I became aware I like putting clothes on my body and discovered I can choose what to put on my body. I can see and feel clothes go on me and they go on my body and I am solid. I can't explain in words how amazing and moving it is to feel this. I love being a woman. (Personal communications 2010-2012)

Healing from distancing, disconnection, dissociation, and a fractured sense of Self is painful but possible; a pain described as "double torture" by Sara (Voice of Women for Peace 23-24). What Sara means by this is that torture memories are re-lived as if they are happening in the present. This is the terrifying

process of flashing back, which is like time travelling. Flashbacks have a tendency to extinguish the present and submerge the woman into the past at the age she was in relation to a specific victimization flashback memory. Flashbacks can bring accompanying cellular memory or "body talk" (Sarson and MacDonald "Sexualized Torture" 12). Body talk means that the woman's body re-remembers the torture pain she suffered (Voice of Women for Peace). For example, if the flashback involved being tortured with a heated rod forced into her vagina, her body re-remembers in the here-and-now what the burning pain sensation was like. She connects with her-Self as she says, "this is what I felt back then but didn't

feel because I was unconscious or dissociated.” She may have actual slight bleeding or watery vaginal discharge in the present day that mimics the past bleeding and watery discharge from broken vaginal blisters (Sarson and MacDonald “Non-State Torture”). If the sexualized torture caused urinary or bowel incontinence, she may also re-experience these responses when experiencing a flashback. This rekindles the emotional humiliation suffered long ago. Understanding why these responses occur makes the re-suffering not quite so terrifying when accessing non-State torture victimization and traumatization informed support and care.

Conclusion: Challenging Misogynistic Patriarchy

Sara commented that she needed to borrow emotional hope from us until she could develop her own (Personal communications 1993-2000). This is not unique. Hope explained that this is absolutely necessary for a woman struggling to rebuild her relationship with her-Self and to regain personhood, womanhood, Self-dignity, Self-worth, and human rights (Interviews 1998-2000). Women need to know that non-State torture victimization was never, and will never, be their fault, nor was it ever their fault for being born female and, as such, with a vagina. Learning not to Self-blame for having a vagina can help eliminate vaginal cutting, for example.

Pandemic violence and discrimination against women and girls, including non-State torture victimization, is built on patriarchal domination and superiority that subordinates and objectifies women and girls. Eliminating gender-based violence is the primary challenge of the twenty-first century (Hudson et al. 2009). To reconsider

their humanness, their personhood, their womanhood, Self-dignity, Self-worth, and their human right not to be subjected to torture requires presenting women with an understanding of patriarchal oppression and the discrimination that exists against all women and girls simply because they are women and girls. To facilitate this education, we utilize a social formation model (Figure 5) based in part on the work of Herbert Gintis and Samuel Bowles (49-50).

In this social formation model, four sites—politics, religion, family, and economic status—are identified as formulating the organizational framework of patriarchal societies. All sites being male-dominated lead to a societal formula of male domination, power, and control over the subordination and oppression of females, influencing culture and shaping beliefs, which then filter into structural rules that reinforce and maintain patriarchal practices. This influences intra- and inter-relational experiences, desires, and behaviours, which are socio-culturally and relationally recycled back into fundamental patriarchy. Based on our experiences, when women understand the global social construction of patriarchy and its misogynistic impact on the global reality of violence and oppression against women and girls, this opens a large space of healing for them to work at their efforts to let go of Self-blame and Self-hatred. It helps women undo psychological tortures that convinced them they were bad, at fault, and deserved to be punished—tortured. It can help them understand that responsibility rests solely with the misogynistic patriarchal lies the perpetrators tortured them into believing.

However, the final question concerning human rights equality and social inclusion of the women who have shared their stories in this paper is: is society really listening and

seeing them as persons, as women, who name their collective non-State torture victimizations and who show what they endured in their art forms? This is the journey we and they have shared in this article. This year marks the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). The question for the Canadian Government and all countries is: when will social patriarchal misogyny and discrimination transform so that every woman and girl will be equally entitled to read that,

No one shall be subjected to torture (Article 5) ... [that they are] ... entitled to all the rights and freedoms, set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as ... sex ... political or other opinion ... (Article 2) ... [and] are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law (Article 7)?

Since 1993, Jeanne Sarson and Linda MacDonald have supported mainly women who have suffered non-State torture perpetrated within intimate relationships. They have advocated nationally and internationally for the women’s human right and legal equality to be protected from such victimization. As independent scholars, and published authors they are privileged to be trusted with the women’s voices and sharing women’s narratives. They recently were honoured to receive the Women of Peace award for their work. www.nonstatetorture.org. Jeanne Sarson and Linda MacDonald live in Truro, Nova Scotia.

Endnote

¹Although Sara is not her real name, it is a name she chose. Other women who speak in this paper have chosen to

use their full names, their first names, a capital letter, or a pseudonym. Quotes from the women we spoke to are cited from interviews conducted between 1998-2000, as well as email and personal communications exchanged between 1993-2015.

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