

Non-State Torture and Sexualized Human Trafficking: A Grassroots Science Framework

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Abstract

This paper presents our individual/collective experiences and knowledge co-constructed through our involvement in non-State torture and anti-trafficking movements. The purpose of this paper is to help people critically understand torture and human trafficking of women in the Western countries using a case example from Canada presented in a webinar which is now reflected in this paper. Using grassroots science as a theoretical framework, we share our experiences and knowledge generated from our involvement in the anti-trafficking movement and the lived experiences in this critical reflective paper. Although we share some key findings from the research for in-depth discussion, we claim this paper is a reflective theoretical paper. In this article, we (Jeanne, Linda, Rita, and Jeanette) first begin by sharing our own social locations together with our collective journey to the anti-trafficking movement and the process of our involvement in the development of this paper which includes the social location of Jeanette Westbrook who attended the webinar. This paper is structured in five sections, and they include: (1) Historical and a brief review of non-State torture and sexualized human trafficking; (2) theoretical framework; (3) knowledge generation; (4) actions in practice; (5) discussion/conclusion

Keywords: Non-State torture, sexualized human trafficking, collective knowledge, grassroots science

A Process of Developing Collective Knowledge

In collaboration with two activists, Jeanne and Linda, working on anti-human trafficking movement, Dr. Dhungel, assistant professor with the University of the Fraser Valley, Abbotsford, in Canada, and her two social work undergraduate field placement students, organized a virtual human trafficking awareness event with an acknowledgment of International Women's Day (IWD) on 8 March, 2022. Based on the responses

from participants in attendance, our group decided to share our individual knowledge and experiences with larger communities, nationally and internationally, in a collective form as in this paper, with an aim to promote the understanding that human trafficking occurs in every country, regardless of north and south globes. However, the trend and the scope of human trafficking and its manifestations and forms are different from country to country. For the purpose of this paper, this paper

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will center our work experiences / lived experiences primarily in Canada.

Herstorical Review on Women and Girls Torture and Sexualized Human Trafficking

Back in 1910 there were 100 girls trafficked from Canada into Boston, USA, and one-third of them came from Nova Scotia (Roe, 1910). We are capturing this reality because 119 years later, in 2019, “Nova Scotia had the highest rate of police-reported human trafficking incidents in Canada” (Ibrahim, 2021), suggesting that Nova Scotia has a culture in which human trafficking of girls and women has potentially thrived. The old 1910 book describes the sexualized human trafficking of girls or young women within North America, and also exposed that traffickers were “hunting” for vulnerable girls from Asian countries, who when arriving in the USA were trafficked into USA brothels (Bell, 1910). Dr. Dhungel’s research of Nepalese women also explains that women and girls were trafficked outside of Nepal to brothels in India (2017a). These historical realities are affirmed in the *Organized Crime Index 2021* report (Global Initiative against Organized Crime, 2021). It explained that women and girls suffer sexualized exploitation not only within their country but risk being trafficked to other countries. The *Index* exposed that a leading cause of organized criminal groups’ ability to flourish, indirectly or directly, is by corrupting the institutional politics of a government by the involvement of State actors, as they were in 1910. According to the *Index*, criminal informal networks contribute to the organized crime of human trafficking of women and girls in Canada and Asia, including in Nepal, Dr. Dhungel’s country of origin.

A Brief Review: Sexualized Human Trafficking and Torture of Women and Girls

The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and specifically its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, established a global definition of human trafficking (United Nations General Assembly, 2000). The global definition can be understood as containing three elements (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2014):

a) Action which is the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons,

b) Means which refers to the methods used to achieve the “action” including, for instance, the use of

threats, force, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or a position of vulnerability, or the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve control over another person, and

c) Purpose which relates to exploitation which is why the “action” was committed using whatever “means” a trafficker deemed necessary.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2014 report, included State parties who agreed that consent is irrelevant when “means” methods are inflicted to achieve the “action” for the “purpose” of exploiting another human being—with women and girls being primarily exploited into forms of sexualized exploitation. The accepted principle identified in this study is that “consent of a child to any part of [the] trafficking process or outcome will always be irrelevant” (p. 8). This principle is relevant to the grassroots science shared in this paper which is predominately of the woman Sara (a pseudonym), who was tortured and trafficked beginning in toddlerhood, organized and perpetrated by family and non-family members (Sarson & MacDonald, 2011; 2016; 2018a; 2021). There can be no graver a violation of a “position of vulnerability” than being a girl child born into a torturer-trafficking family system (Sarson & MacDonald, 2011; 2016; 2018a, b; 2019a; 2021).

Canada ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol in 2002. However, it only incorporated into its national law the elements of “action” and the exploitative “purpose” in its definition of human trafficking (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2013). Therefore, defining human trafficking as: “recruiting, transporting, transferring, receiving, holding, concealing or harbouring a person, or exercising control, direction or influence over the movements of a person, for the purpose of exploiting them or facilitating their exploitation” (*Criminal Code of Canada*, 2022a). The 2013 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime report explained that in Canada’s law exploitation occurs if a person believes that their safety—physical, mental, psychological or emotional safety—or the safety of those they know is threatened if they do not comply with the demands of the trafficker.

Based on Sara’s story, when torture and human trafficking is perpetrated within a family system they harboured and exercised control over her. They engaged

in the “action” of transportation by trafficking Sara to like-minded others using a car, bus, boat, or plane. But the “action” of transportation organized by her parents for the purpose of exploitation also included prearrangements with buyers as Sara explains (Sarson & MacDonald, 2021):

My trafficking continued in school. In the morning before I left home I was ordered to walk home and not take the bus. I was given a code name and when a car pulled up beside me and the driver said the code name I got in the car (pp. 177-178).

Sara’s safety and vulnerability were constantly threatened by the positional power her parents exerted against her as a child, as it would likewise be for any child.

Private persons or groups including family members who commit acts of torture are identified as non-State torturers to distinguish them from State torturers who are employees of a government such as police or military personnel. The United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment defines, in part, that acts of torture includes the intentional infliction of severe pain or suffering, mental or physical for any reason including discrimination of any kind (1984). This Convention has been globally applied in laws of many countries including Canada in a discriminatory manner. For example, in Canada’s Criminal Code section 269.1 (2) on torture, only individuals who are representatives of a government, such as peace, public, or military officials, can be charged with committing acts of torture (2022b). This means that non-State actors are afforded impunity even though they commit similar acts of torture such as electric shocking, severe beatings, whippings, cutting, and burning those they torture (Jones, et al., 2018; Sarson & MacDonald, 2021). They also inflict water tortures, deprivations such as withholding food, warmth, and of bathroom facilities which leads to emotions of deep humiliation and degradations, as well as committing dehumanizing forms of sexualized and reproductive tortures including forced impregnations and abortions. This awareness that many State parties to the United Nations may, like Canada, have a law on torture that is discriminatory gives reason to suggest an intervention calling for an examination of country laws.

One example of efforts to eliminate this human rights and legal discrimination concerning torture

perpetrated by non-State actors occurred when the United Nations Committee against Torture stated in their 2008 report that there were forms of violence perpetrated against women, such as rape, human trafficking, and female genital mutilation, that manifested as torture perpetrated by non-State actors. This began expressing the human rights non-discrimination principle that “no one shall be subjected to torture” as written in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948). As Manfred Nowak, previous United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture, said, “In the year 2020, more and more acts of torture are committed by different types of non-state actors, rather than by states...I see [it] more important to recognize the states’ obligation to broaden the scope of the definition of torture in their domestic criminal codes”(2021). This reality of widespread non-State torture (NST) and exploitation of girls and women is further explained in the theoretical framework of our grassroots science.

Theoretical Framework: Grassroots Science of Global NST

Grounding on the theoretical lens of grassroots science requires unsilencing the voices of women using language that names NST victimizations (Sarson & MacDonald, 2021). We begin with the necessity to view NST victimization as a distinct form of violence perpetrated against women and girls. Although our work began with Sara’s disclosure in 1993, it expanded during 1998-2000, when initiating our “Kitchen-Table” research project (Sarson & MacDonald, 2021). This involved listening, for over two years, to six women in Nova Scotia who Self-identified as being tortured and trafficked in childhood or as adults within family relationships. Of the six women, four identified surviving similar acts of NST and trafficking.

Included in this research was a woman named Lynn. She differed from Sara and the other women in that she was not abused or tortured as a child. She suffered NST victimizations as an adult when she married a man, who six months after their marriage suggested they travel to another Canadian province where Lynn thought they were to build a new life. Instead, her husband with three male friends held her captive and tortured, trafficked, and exploited her into prostitution for four and one-half years before she escaped and fled back to Nova Scotia (Sarson & MacDonald, 2019b).

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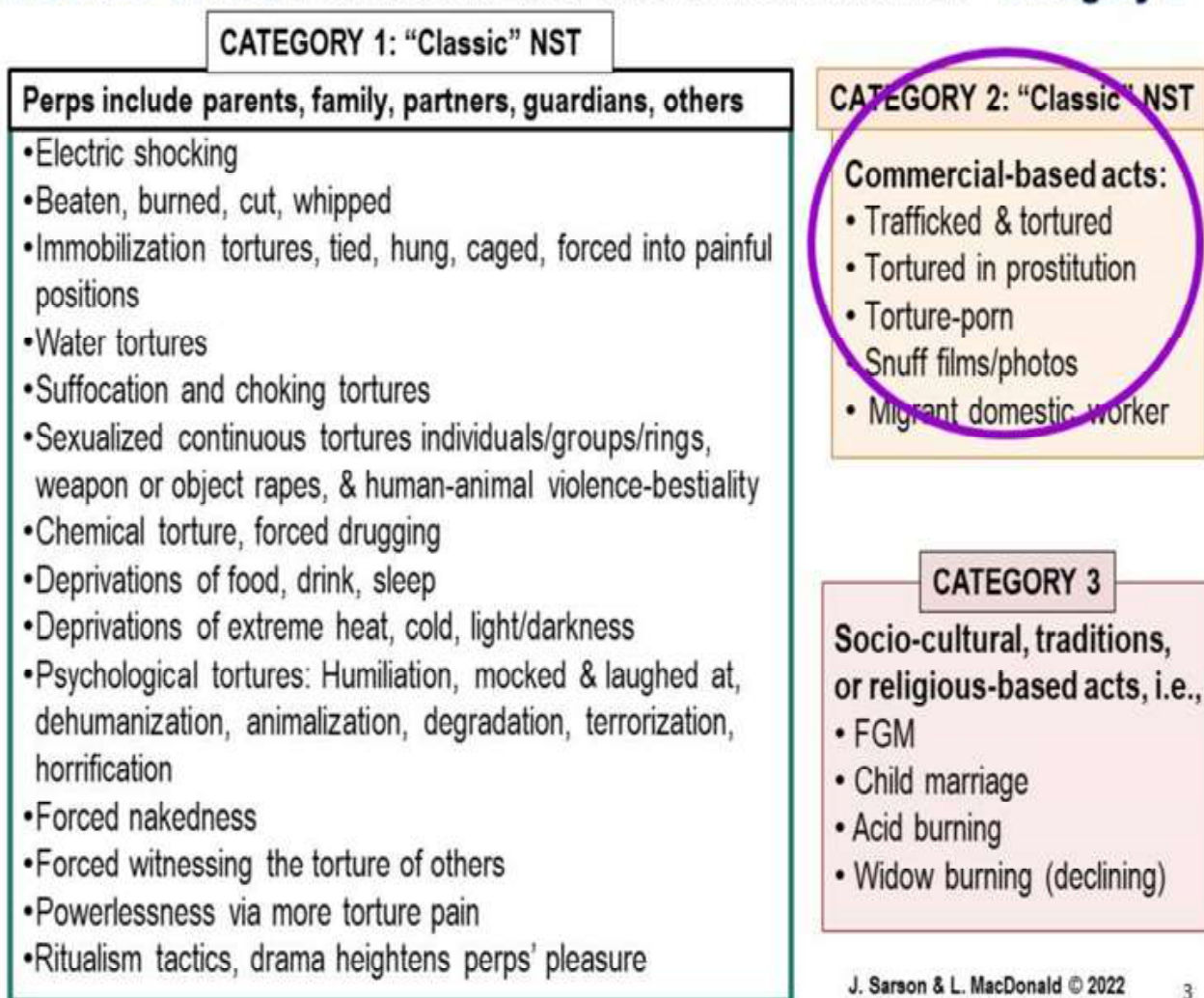
Our grassroots science framework was shaped on physicist and system theorist Fritj of Capra's definition of science (1988). Capra claimed that the historical traditional scientific method did not deal with the values and qualities of human experiences, suggesting instead, that the development of science occurs when these three fundamental criteria are met:

1. That developing knowledge is based on consistent, albeit limited, systematic observations;
2. That the developing knowledge illustrates patterns of shared experiences, and
3. That the systematic observations reveal patterns of subjective experiences that form logical and

interconnected concepts that can be transformed into appropriate model-making.

To ground our developing knowledge, theories, language, and model-making framework, we named our work "*grassroots science*" (Sarson & MacDonald, 2022a). Working everyday supporting women's painful recovery, shaped our systematic observations of women's shared ordeals, establishing concepts of knowledge we transformed into sharable models such as this "Model of the Three Categories of NST of Women and Girls." The three NST categories are described in Figure 1 as (Sarson & MacDonald, 2016, 2021):

The Raw Truth: 3 CATEGORIES OF NST of WOMEN/GIRLS – Category 2



1. **Category 1:** “Classic NST” lists acts of NST that Sara, and many other women defined surviving. The word “classic” is used because this list of NST acts are the same acts perpetrated by State actors such as police or military staff, which are often referred to a “classic” acts of State torture (Nowak, 2008).

2. **Category 2:** “Classic” NST commercial-based acts identify that perpetrator’s derived financial or other material benefits from the NST and exploitative victimizations they inflict. Women who complete our participatory research questionnaires disclose being tortured when exploited in sexualized trafficking, prostitution, and pornography. We include migrant domestic workers because employers may enslave and torture them (Human Rights Watch, 2008; OSCE Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings in partnership with the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights and the Helen Bamber Foundation, 2013). The purple circle highlights this category because NST and sexualized human trafficking was the focal topic of the webinar organized by the students of Dr. Dhungel.

3. **Category 3:** The socio-cultural, traditions, or religious-based acts are based on reports by United

Nations Special Rapporteurs (Méndez, 2011, 2016; Nowak, 2010; Rodney, 2000; United Nations Committee against Torture, 2008). We do not have working experience with the girls or women victimized listed under this category.

Knowledge Generation: The Raw Canadian and Global Truth

In August of 1993, when Sara began disclosing being born into a family and non-family system that had tortured and trafficked her since toddlerhood, we informed her we had no knowledge of NST and human trafficking but would seek knowledgeable support for her. This was a naïve statement. Because we learned that literature on domestic violence and child victimizations did not name torture and trafficking victimizations. Professionally and ethically we decided not to abandon Sara, informing her we would attempt to support her. This began transforming our knowledge about the forms of violence perpetrated against girls and woman within the domestic or so-called private or family sphere. This initiated the development of our grassroots science focused on NST victimization-traumatization informed care.

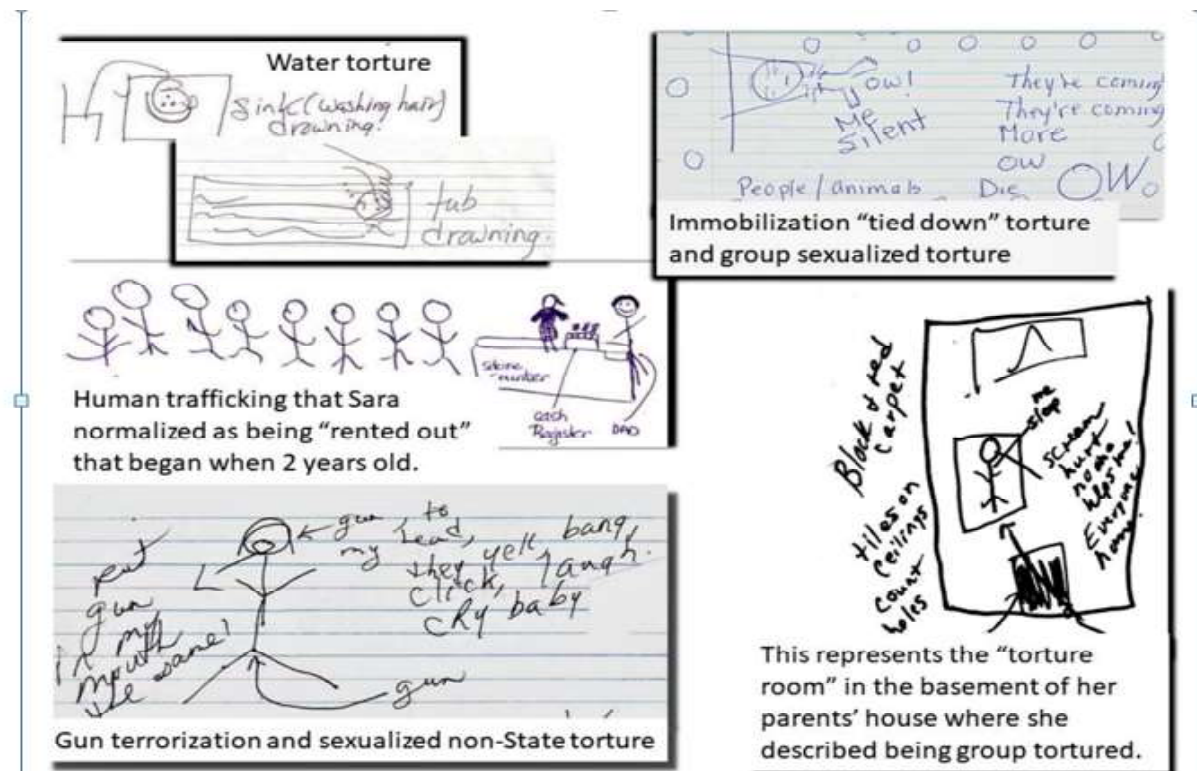


Figure 2: Sara’s collage of NST and sexualized human trafficking drawings

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Sara was university educated, but often she could only tell of her terror, horror, torture, and trafficking by drawing. A collage of her drawings is reflected in Figure 2. These speak to the wide range of organized torture and sexualized human trafficking victimizations inflicted against her. Sara's drawings told us she was intentionally water tortured in the sink and in the tub when forcibly held underwater. Three of Sara's drawings reveal planned group tortures involving immobilization "tied down" torture; physical and sexualized torture perpetrated with guns, and the group tortures organized by her parents with invited like-minded friends that Sara said were committed in the "little torture room" in the basement of her parents' house (Sarson & MacDonald, 2009). Sara was transported elsewhere when at two years she described that her parents owned a store and would dress her

up, sit her on the store counter to be "rented" to a line of perpetrators. In this explicit drawing Sara remarks hearing her father say to the perpetrators, "Bring her back when you're done."

In addition, the findings derived from our "Kitchen-Table" research project, led to developing our "NST Universal Questionnaire Model," shared in Figure 3 (Sarson & MacDonald, 2021). It provides a breakdown of the types of NST acts torturer-traffickers and others inflict. Sara endured all 48 acts listed in this model, estimating surviving over 24,000 torture rapes by age 20 years (Sarson & MacDonald, 2022b). Not including the torture-rapes inflicted with weapons, other objects, vaginal electric shocking, group/gang torture rapes, and bestiality rapes. She also stated that leap year added an extra day of torture (Sarson & MacDonald, 2009).

QUESTIONNAIRE: Harms inflicted in NST		
1. food/drink withheld ____	26. raped with a weapon (gun or knife) or other objects ____	
2. chained or handcuffed to a stationary object ____	27. raped with animals ____	
3. savagely and repeatedly beaten ____	28. prevented from using toilet ____	
4. savagely and repeatedly kicked ____	29. smeared with urine, feces, or blood ____	
5. hung by your limbs ____	30. forced under cold or burning hot water ____	
6. burnt ____	31. placed in a freezer ____	
7. cut ____	32. near drowned when held under water in the tub, toilet, bucket, stream ____	
8. whipped ____	33. drugged with alcohol ____	
9. soles of feet beaten (falanga) ____	34. drugged with pills ____	
10. fingers, toes, and limbs twisted ____	35. drugged with injections ____	
11. fingers, toes, and limbs broken ____	36. drugged with mask ____	
12. fingers, toes, and limbs dislocated ____	37. choked ____	
13. tied down naked for prolonged periods of time ____	38. suffocated by object placed over one's face ____	
14. sat on making breathing difficult ____	39. pornography pictures taken ____	
15. forced to lie naked on the floor/ground without bedding/warmth ____	40. pornography or snuff films made/used ____	
16. confined to a dark enclosed space ____	41. forced to harm others ____	
17. placed in a crate/box ____	42. forced to watch others being harmed ____	
18. caged ____	43. forced to watch pets being harmed or killed ____	
19. electric shocked ____	44. forced to harm or kill pets or animals ____	
20. forcibly impregnated ____	45. threatened to be killed ____	
21. forcedly aborted ____	46. called derogatory names ____	
22. forced to eat one's vomitus (throw-up) ____	47. put down ____	
23. forced to eat one's bowel movements ____	48. treated as non-human ____	
24. raped by one person ____	49. Comments	
25. raped by a family/group ____		

Figure 3: NST Universal Questionnaire Model

Lynn's questionnaire revealed that she had suffered 28 NST acts including five forced impregnations and five violent abortions; she was terrified she would haemorrhage to death when being knife-torture raped by a group of three men (Sarson & MacDonald, 2019b).

Starting our website in 2003 made it possible to continue developing participatory research questionnaires, furthering the opportunity to hear mainly from women, not only from Canada, but from the USA, Mexico, the UK, Western European countries, Israel, Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, and Indonesia. Utilizing our NST Universal Questionnaire Model validated its universality. It illustrated how women exploited in prostitution, in pornography, as domestic workers, and as girls forced into "child marriage" could all suffer acts defined as "classic" torture. Lilly Kolts Be'Soer in Papua New Guinea, working to prevent "sorcery violence" explains the NST inflicted against women and girls (Pacifans, n.d.). To conclude, the message delivered by women who complete the questionnaire is it validates the NST

crimes torturer-traffickers organized and perpetrated against them.

Actions in Practice: Unsilencing "Talking Torture"

As stated earlier, we had no previous knowledge or experience on how to offer supportive recovery care to a woman who had suffered torture and human trafficking victimizations. What we did have was a wealth of nursing knowledge, theoretical and experiential-based practices which Patricia Benner in her book, *From Novice to Expert*, (1984), explained may lead to a nurse developing a specific expertise. Reflecting on our many forms of nursing care—transformative, reintegrative, advocacy, participatory, problem-solving, and healing—we did develop expertise on NST as we constantly assessed the caring skills we utilized that were effectively moving Sara towards recovery and to other women's recovery. In our commitment to support women's hard-earned ability to survive and recover, framed our grassroots science of NST victimization-traumatization informed care.

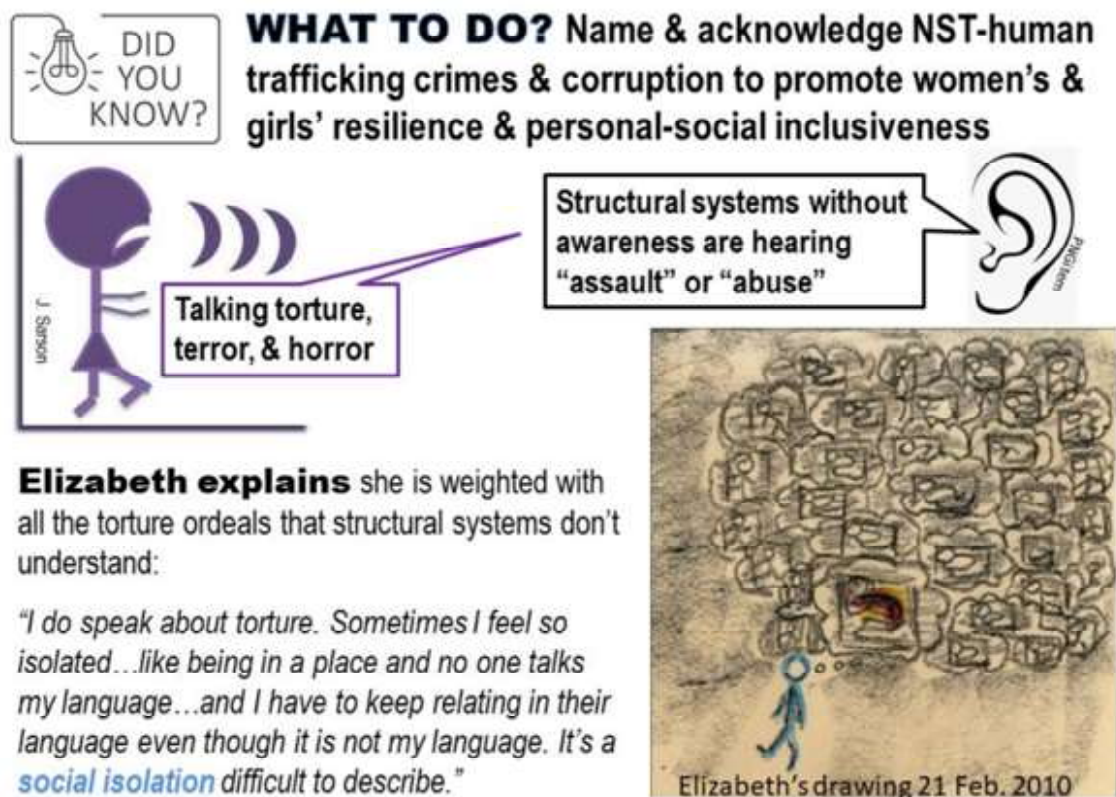


Figure 4: Elizabeth's "Talking torture" shared with consent

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Recovering from NST criminal victimizations also requires transformations of socio-cultural structures or institutions so these contribute to building women's resilience, healing, and social inclusion. A transformative example is what Elizabeth explains as "Talking torture," shared as Figure 4 (Sarson & MacDonald, 2020). Elizabeth explained that if social structures do not understand that torture crimes are committed against girls and women by family and non-family perpetrators, this means that when she tries to tell of the NST and trafficking ordeals she survived, structural systems without awareness incorrectly translate her NST victimizations as "assault" or "abuse." Consequently, she is misunderstood; left suffering alone with all the torture-trafficking ordeals in her mind, which is what Elizabeth expresses in her drawing. The outcome she suffers is social isolation. This reality is also spoken of later by Jeanette Westbrook who explains the importance of unsilencing NST language. The following preventive interventions are suggested as it relates to unsilencing NST language.

1. If a woman says she was tortured respond with: "I hear you're telling me you were tortured. I believe you. I am so very sorry." These reflective statements assist in nurturing her human dignity and human rights, validating she is being heard, and powerfully contribute to her personhood healing which the torturer-traffickers attempted to destroy.

2. When institutional records are kept write "torture" victimization if this is the information a woman or girl is speaking. Maintain ethical truth-telling—do not rename her disclosure by writing abuse or assault. When a woman's victimization is misnamed this can be considered a betrayal of institutional and professional trust which can cause a woman to experience:

- a. Demeaning put downs, disrespectfulness, invalidation, hurtfulness, and not being believed,
- b. Social anger or even rage given she is already hurting from being socially misunderstood, and
- c. Dismissiveness, because she says, this is similar to "*What the torturers did, they never listened to me.*"

3. Country laws need to include acts of torture committed by non-State actors, including by family and non-family torture-traffickers, because such a law names and acknowledges to the women so victimized that they and what happened to them matters. Women—Alexandra and Sara—said it this way:

- a. Alexandra Lane explained that "*As a victim it is so simple. Anyone who has been through or cares about someone who has been through non-State torture would say it is a crime. Period.*"

Unless this crime is named torture I won't be an actual person. I will always be the dirty object with no rights" (2016).

- b. Sara says: "*I don't want to die an 'it.'*" She means that she wants the law in Canada to criminalize acts of torture committed by non-State actors as torture so she knows she and the crimes she suffered matter.

Our NST victimization-traumatization informed care incorporates the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights articles, explicitly article 5 which declares that "no one shall be subjected to torture..." (1948). This Declaration has been an instrumental tool to assist women's learning that their family and non-family NST-human trafficking victimizations were never their fault. Knowing that the world made this statement sends the message that they had and have a human right not to be subjected to torture and that under article 7 they ought to expect that national laws would acknowledge their human and legal equality. The Declaration also helps women place responsibility on the perpetrators for the crimes they committed, offering women a possibility to let go of their "self-blame" and "self-shame", or hatred of their body—of their vagina—when they were told repeatedly that "you like this; say you want more" by the family and non-family torturer-traffickers when inflicting sexualized tortures. However, this knowledge also invites the painful challenge that women are confronted by the fact their parents or partner were criminals—a fact that society must also acknowledge.

Discussion/Conclusion: Women's Relational Reflections

We close this paper with relational reflections. Students Ashlee and Alyssa will voice the impacts they learned as organizers of the International Women's Day Celebration, about the torture and trafficking of women and girls, the power of language in developing this paper, and through Jeanette Westbrook's sharing of her lived realities when attending the webinar.

Jeanette: Language is the principal method of human communication. There are three known types of language: written, oral, and nonverbal (**I am also adding the language that is often conveyed through art, music and dance**). But what happens when none

of these forms are used to communicate? Silence. This silence is deafening, maddening, frustrating, and isolating, that can produce a hopelessness that in itself is silencing:

This is the silence I write of when describing my own hopelessness at not finding in any form, a description of my lived experience. I have come to understand my lived experience of torture, the torture of incest, of human trafficking for sexual exploitation, the torture of criminal acts that left unexplained, un-communicated, left me unable to make sense of my place in the world and of my place in family.

This hopelessness of not being able to communicate what had happened to me set me on a journey to find the roots and the explanation for torture. I read numerous books and research on family violence, on incest, domestic violence, on serial killers, but none gave me what I needed to hear and understand. The closest literature that described what torture is I found in the survivor accounts of the atrocities of The Holocaust. The planned brutality, the torturous experimentation, forced drugging, raping, and murder were familiar to me but for one thing: these horrors and atrocities were perpetrated by the state—a whole country—not by family members. I found no language, no description, no explanation for what I had endured and survived. Not until in 2004, forty four years after my last hands-on exploitation at age twenty- four, did I finally meet Jeanne Sarson and Linda MacDonald who possessed the language and knowledge that I had been seeking for many years. I met Jeanne and Linda on a bus that was in route to a conference that we all had registered to attend and give presentations. I first eyed Jeanne and Linda with latent distrust until I talked with them and later heard their presentation on ritualized torture and other crimes, later to be known as Non-State Torture. I was able to be put at ease because they were speaking a language I could understand.

For the first time I was hearing and understanding language that described, via their research with other survivors of family-based torture, what I had experienced. I was relieved, in tears, and felt free, free of the silence that surrounded the torture that many, many others had also experienced in their families of origin. I felt free to share my experiences, and went on to work and present on numerous panels and presentations with Jeanne and Linda. I now had the tools of education and language that freed me, and unsilenced me. The research and knowledge base of Non-State Torture has not only given me voice, it has

freed me from the sleepless nights, the endless searching, the endless asking of why, and the invisibility of my experiences of torture. Likewise, I have seen and heard other people's reactions that have not experienced torture become enlightened and informed for the first time. Using the correct language and information concerning torture, the how, what, when, and why, has been so very important in my life. It is like living in black and white and then living in full color. One of the continuing struggles is having acknowledgement that Non-State Torture is a specific crime and human rights violation most often perpetrated on women and girls that takes place all over the world, which needs specific laws, and policies at the highest levels of policy making. As more people become informed, more people have come to support the survivors of Non-State Torture and our allies that stand in support of full acknowledgement not only of its existence, but of the realities of torture as not uncommon in the lives of so many.

Alyssa Smith and Ashlee Unrau: We were privileged to have Dr. Rita Dhungel take us on as our Practicum Supervisor on a community development and research endeavor. Throughout this learning opportunity, we crossed paths with Jeanne Sarson, Linda MacDonald, and Jeanette Westbrook. Our first collaboration was an online Human Trafficking Awareness event in March of 2022, which initiated us to an unfamiliar term— Non-State Torture (NST). “Torture”, in a separate context, is depicted in fictitious videos as acts of violence void of mercy or humanity. From what we have ascertained, Non-State Torture is most commonly regarded as “abuse” or “assault” (Sarson & MacDonald, 2022b) but this seems to minimize the reaches of the heinous acts that encompass those words.

When we began the practicum, our understanding of human trafficking and its entrenchment in Canadian communities was minimal. We took these NST acts as third-world tragedies, or fiction displayed on popular television shows to draw intrigue towards what we perceive as “foreign” terrors. “Water tortures, electric shocking, trafficking”, and “torture porn” (Sarson & MacDonald, 2022b) could *not* occur here in my country...could they? The reality is: it's in our own backyards. Not only do these individuals face torture but they are often sold or pimped out not by a stranger but by people they trust — parents, husbands, boyfriends, neighbors and friends (Dhungel, 2017b). The resources available for these survivors do not meet the needs to

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reintegrate back into society successfully. Our lack of awareness allowed us to elude even the concept of local and national NST occurrences as if we were in our own individual bubbles of comfort and ignorance. We were quickly educated on the evil nature of some humans and how far they can grasp at vulnerable people, including children.

We predicted the retention of new knowledge during this stretch of our university journey. What caught us off guard was how real women's journeys of peril and torture opened our eyes to these truths. Their past was unrecognizable to ours – the struggles we face are trivial in comparison – yet they triumphed as survivors and advocates for change; speaking their truth by sharing their voices in a broad and empowering manner. At times we found ourselves tearing up or getting chills from the accounts of those voices, and although we feel inadequate as contributors on this topic, we want to normalize this feeling of not knowing where and how you can become an active advocate for the prevention and/or reintegration of trafficking victims. We encourage anyone feeling the same way as us to explore local resources, locate reliable literature including personal accounts, and do not allow yourself to stay in a zone of doubt in what you can contribute.

In conclusion, a quick review of what can be done individually, socially, legally, and at the United Nations' level includes to:

- Promote truth-telling to identify NST as a distinct form of violence against women and girls
- Incorporate legal accountability to ensure non-discriminatory torture law

- End non-State torturers' impunity by identifying NST as human right crimes
- Promote human dignity by normalizing women's and girls' survival responses
- Develop informed investigative skills to develop knowledge about the non-State torturers' MO
- Prevention development requires essential learning from women who survived NST victimizations
- End intergenerational NST crimes by protecting children from being NST victimized, and
- Offer resources.

Collectively, the IWD and human trafficking webinar, on which this paper builds, shared a brief insight into Jeanne and Linda's book, *Women Unsilenced: Our Refusal to Let Torturer-Traffickers Win* (2021). It provides others with an opportunity to learn from our journey. This paper and the book create a safe environment for women's truth-telling—being forever unsilenced. This paper progressively contributes grassroots knowledge and offers the larger community an opportunity to critically understand NST and human trafficking of women and girls in Canada.

Closing with the relational reflections of Alyssa Smith and Ashlee Unrau who “predicted the retention of new knowledge” offered by their Practicum and of Jeanette Westbrook who shared this relational reflection: “Using the correct language and information concerning torture, the how, what, when, and why, has been so very important in my life. It is like living in black and white and then living in full color.” Someday non-State torture will be acknowledged as the horrific crime it truly is.

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