

Ritual Abuse (RA)

Is systematic torture characterized by repetition.

Victims are often forced to take part in ceremonies or customs where violence and assault are normalized. Due to the routinely multi-perpetrator nature of these rituals, nearly all RA can be categorized as a form of organized abuse.

Spiritual RA

RA often has a spiritual aspect to it, as abusers may utilize religious dogma to ensure that their victims comply. Survivors may be told, “God wants you to be abused” or “Our holy scriptures say I must abuse you.” They may be tortured (or forced to torture others) as part of spiritual customs, such as worship ceremonies, feast days, prayer circles, religious holidays, etc.

Although most of the research done on religious RA focuses on Satanism, any religion can be twisted and used for abusers’ purposes. Groups often take spiritual concepts from many religions and combine them to create a bastardised religion that suits their needs. It is not uncommon, for example, for a non-Satanic group to use Satanic imagery to capitalise off of their victims’ fear of hell or demons. There are even cases of secular RA where religious themes are used to capitalize on moral panic.

Secular RA

RA can also be secular, or non-religious. Examples include the ritualistic celebrations of neo-Nazi groups on WWII anniversaries, initiation rituals held by gangs and cartels, self-mutilation rituals done in the name of personality cults, and more. Secular RA often relies on radical political ideologies, as seen in paramilitary groups and clandestine cells.

Some secular groups falsely purport their rituals as forms of behavior modification. Examples include rebirthing therapy rituals for children with Oppositional Defiant Disorder; the nonconsensual use of psychoactive drugs, such as LSD, in scheduled experiments on psychiatric patients; or extreme, nonconsensual aversion therapy sessions. These “therapeutic” rituals are often targeted at disabled children or people under care of the state. These experiences can make the idea of receiving actual therapy terrifying to survivors, hindering their ability to reach out for help.

Mind control, or Programming

Is the manipulation of a victim’s thoughts and beliefs.

Abusers use MC to train victims to act in accordance with their will. Through a combination of torture and extreme conditioning, victims are indoctrinated with group beliefs. These beliefs associated with said indoctrination vary depending on the perpetrator group or network (i.e. cult-manufactured religious programs, trafficker-manufactured sexual programs, paramilitary-manufactured violence programs, etc.).

Understanding Conditioning

Classical conditioning is the association between a behavior and an unrelated stimulus, such as a flashing light, a “harmless” or common trigger word, a color, or more. Abusers can use these stimuli to signal when they want a specific part to come out or to trigger specific programs within a victim.

Operant conditioning is the association between a behavior and its consequences. For example, a frightened child who is abused anytime she asks her father for help will stop asking her father for help, as she now associates this behavior with punishment. A hungry child who is rewarded with food every time he is abused will learn to wait for abuse, as he now associates surviving

the abuse with positive reinforcement. Programmers use punishment and reinforcement to discourage behaviors that imply resistance and encourage behaviors that indicate compliance.

It is important to note that conditioning alone is not considered a form of MC under the RAMCOA umbrella. Most forms of abuse contain some level of conditioning.

Understanding Programming

There are two definitions of programming in the context of OEA. First, there is the broad definition, used most often by adult cult survivors. Broadly, programming refers to the use of manipulation tactics and conditioning (i.e. MC) to discourage independent thinking and encourage loyalty to a specific group ideology. Adult survivors of high-control groups and insular communities may refer to the distorted beliefs they learned growing up as programming.

For survivors who experience complex dissociative disorders (i.e. DID, OSDD, UDD), programming refers more specifically to the intentional creation of dissociated parts via torture. Programmers abuse their victims until they reach a breaking point, causing the victims' minds to split to cope. The abuse continues until the victim splits a compliant part who is willing to do whatever the abuser requests. Programmers may or may not be aware that they are creating parts; they simply understand that the child is now willing to do whatever they're told. This form of programming has also been referred to as TBMC (torture-based mind control).

Organised Abuse

is carried out by multiple perpetrators and complicit bystanders in a network. Networks can vary in size from a small, ad-hoc gang of teenagers to an entire bureau of a nation's government. Networks can also be intra-familial, as seen in cases of transgenerational organized violence.

Victims of organized abuse may be forced to participate in sexual acts, unpaid labor, drug running, military combat, and more. Some may be transported against their will to unfamiliar places to serve multiple abusers within an organization. Those who attempt to leave their group are often threatened with violence or death.

Victims in institutions (hospitals, factories, daycares, etc.) may be trapped and isolated from outside help. Leaders within these institutions are often aware of repeat abusers, especially those that have been reported. But as complicit bystanders, they take little to no measures to stop the abuse. They may even try to silence victims, immediately dismissing them or otherwise punishing them for speaking out.

Survivors may have been trapped in familial networks, where OEA is normalized and promoted within cult-like families. In what is often an extreme form of generational trauma, parents and caregivers who were abused themselves torture the children in their care. Victims may be trafficked by their parents, ritually abused by various family members, and raised to perpetrate abuse on their siblings and cousins. Familial OA also occurs in families with no known history of generational trauma, especially in the case of sadistic caregivers who may torture their children for entertainment or money.

Traffickers, gang leaders, and abusive institution owners derive significant profit from OA. Child labor and the sexual exploitation of children are especially lucrative. Child sexual abuse material (CSAM) and pictures/videos of children engaging in violent acts are often sold and distributed within networks. These pictures and videos may be used to blackmail victims into staying with

their abusers and maintaining the secrecy of their abuse. Many cases of ritual abuse would also be considered organized abuse.