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STOCKHOLM SYNDROME

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ABSTRACT

Stockholm syndrome, psychological response wherein a captive begins to identify closely with his or her captors, as well as with their agenda and demands. Psychologists who have studied the syndrome believe that the bond is initially created when a captor threatens a captive's life, deliberates, and then chooses not to kill the captive. The captive's relief at the removal of the death threat is transposed into feelings of gratitude toward the captor for giving him or her life. credit hours based on the number "Contact Hours" per week in the class.

KEYWORDS: Abductors, Hostages, Victim, Feelings of Gratitude.

INTRODUCTION

The name "Stockholm syndrome" was derived from a 1973 bank robbery (Kreditbanken) in Stockholm, Sweden, where four hostages were held for six days. Throughout their imprisonment and while in harm's way, each hostage seemed to defend the actions of the robbers.

WHAT IS STOCKHOLM SYNDROME?

Stockholm syndrome is a term used to describe a paradoxical psychological phenomenon wherein hostages express excessive admiration or praise and positive feelings towards their captors (kidnappers/abductors). These appear to be irrational in light of the danger or risk endured by the victims, essentially mistaking a lack of abuse as an act of kindness.

WHAT CAUSES STOCKHOLM SYNDROME?

Individuals can succumb to Stockholm syndrome under the following circumstances:

When they believe that escape is impossible.

When they are isolated from everyone else and have contact only with the hostage takers.

When they believe that their persecutors have the ability to kill them, and are not afraid to do

Inability to engage in behaviors that may assist in their release or detachment

Psychological explanations

Cognitive dissonance: people don't like being unhappy for long periods of time, but when people are kidnapped for a long period of time, they will be unhappy for that time, unless they come to love their captors.

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Psychoanalytic explanations

The Stockholm Syndrome is a psychological shift that occurs in captives when they are threatened gravely but are shown acts of kindness by their captors.

Identification with an Attacker this is a defense mechanism theorized by Freud

Psychodynamic Explanation

According to Dr. Hacker, the victim internalizes the behavior of the aggressor, causing the victim to start taking on some of the same behaviors and perspectives. At this point the aggressor may start to feel a connection with the victim which leads to feelings of pity and empathy towards the victim. This new attitude from the aggressor may cause the victim to bring the aggressor down to a level of "co-victim."

The aggressor also may feel comfortable enough to open up to the victim and talk about his/her past. This may lead to the victim feeling sorry for the aggressor, which makes the victim feel the need to protect the aggressor. The victim seeing the aggressor as a victim leads both the victim and aggressor to form victim solidarity.

Physical proximity and exclusive interdependence between captors and captives promote budding emotions of belonging. (Victim solidarity leads to the finding of a common enemy, which in hostage situations is always the government, relatives and police. An "us" against "them" mentality is picked up by both the victim and aggressor.



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Behavioral Explanation

Behaviorists don't see Stockholm syndrome as having to do with anything unconscious.

Attachment is based on operant conditioning. The reinforcers are the biological necessities; water, food, and air. Certain behaviors lead to these reinforcements, which are ultimately in the hands of the aggressor.

These reinforcements lead to the victims having a change in attitude and feeling towards the aggressor

Cognitive Explanation

Victims would feel guilty if they were good to their captor; however, this is a necessity for survival.

Therefore, the victim must change their cognition so that it is acceptable to be nice to their captors.

If the victim changes their cognition so that they feel sorry for the captor instead of angry, the guilt is reduced. In addition, if the captor recognizes the victim as a human, there is a sympathy coming from both ends, which strengthens the attachment.

Social Psychological Explanation

Identification with the aggressor is mistaken for a halo of camaraderie and affection.

This camaraderie is developed from leader following, conformity and group dynamics.

Neurophysiological Explanation

The syndrome is a quasi-paradoxical brain behavior.

This means reversals of normal behavior as a consequence of prolonged stress. It has also been said that there is a transference relationship, but not in the psychodynamic sense.

The transference develops as sympathetic nervous system learning.

This learning occurs in highly adrenalized situations. Hippocampal encoding is rapid, highly detailed and intense.

SYMPTOMS

Positive feelings by the victim toward the abuser/controller.

2. Negative feelings by the victim toward family, friends, or authorities trying to rescue/support them or win their release.
3. Support of the abuser's reasons and behaviors.
4. Positive feelings by the abuser toward the victim.
5. Supportive behaviors by the victim, at times helping the abuser.

TREATMENT

Group therapy.

Isolation from stressful environments.

Sometimes prescriptions are given to help with nervousness.

On sever occasions, patients will have to be put into a group home because they cannot care for themselves.

Treatment of Stockholm syndrome is the same as for PTSD, most commonly a combination of medications for short-term sleep disturbances and psychotherapy for the longer-term symptoms.

REFLECTIONS OF STOCKHOLM SYNDROME...

"I know what he's done to me, but I still love him"

"This doesn't make sense. He's got a new girlfriend and he's abusing her too...but I'm jealous!"

"No, he said he's gonna kill me, but he's not a bad person"

"He fractured my ribs but I should understand that he had a depressing childhood"

"He hit me because he thought I was cheating on him but then he also got a card on our anniversary"

"I can't leave him; I don't know what he's going to do with me"

LET'S SEE SOME FAMOUS CASES OF STOCKHOLM SYNDROME

Normalmstorg robbery of Kreditbanken at Normalmstorg in Stockholm, Sweden

In August of 1973, in Stockholm, Sweden, two men held four employees of a bank hostage. It lasted for six days. During this time, one of the female employees began to develop an emotional attachment to one of her captors. She began to view her captors as protecting her from the police. She believed this despite the fact that she was held at gunpoint. Later in life, she became engaged to one of her captors.



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Patty Hearst case

Patty Hearst, the Californian newspaper heiress who was kidnapped by revolutionary militants in 1974. She appeared to develop sympathy with her captors and joined them in a robbery. She was eventually caught and received a prison sentence.

Natascha Kampusch case

Kampusch - kidnapped as a 10-year-old by Wolfgang Priklopil and held in a basement for eight years - was reported to have cried when she heard her captor had died and subsequently **lit a candle for him as he lay in the mortuary.**

Jaycee Lee Dugard case

On June 10, 1991, witnesses said they saw a man and a woman abduct 11-year-old Jaycee Lee Dugard by a school bus stop near her home in South Lake Tahoe, California. Her disappearance remained unsolved until August 27, 2009, when she walked into a California police station and introduced herself.

For 18 years she was held captive in a tent behind the home of her captors, Phillip and Nancy Garrido. There Dugard gave birth to two children, who were ages 11 and 15 at the time of her reappearance. Although the opportunity to escape was present at different times throughout her captivity, Jaycee Dugard bonded with the captors as a form of survival.

Elizabeth Smart case

In 2003, fourteen-year-old Elizabeth Smart was stolen from her Utah home. She was kept in a campsite about eight miles from her home. After a few months, she began to become attached to her captors.

STATISTICS

According to the FBI's Hostage Barricade System (HOBAS), a national database that contains data from over 1,200 reported federal, state, and local hostage/barricade incidents, 92 percent of the victims of such incidents reportedly showed no aspect of the Stockholm syndrome(before 1997).

KEY TAKEAWAYS: STOCKHOLM SYNDROME

People exhibiting Stockholm syndrome become protective of their captors, even to the point of foiling the police efforts at their rescue.

The syndrome is not a named disease in any manual but rather a description of people's behaviors who've been traumatized over a period of time.

While hostages and kidnapping victims can exhibit these behaviors, so can people in abusive relationships or members of cults.

CONCLUSION

By the 21st century, psychologists had expanded their understanding of the Stockholm syndrome from hostages to other groups, including victims of domestic violence, cult members, prisoners of war, procured prostitutes, and abused children. The American Psychiatric Association does not include Stockholm syndrome in its Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM).

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