

This article was downloaded by: [RANZCPI
RANZCPI]

On: 19 May 2007

Access Details: [subscription number 770001982]

Publisher: Informa Healthcare

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 10729554

Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK

Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
<http://www.informaworld.com/smp/title--content=758481832>

**Traumatic entrapment, appeasement and complex
post-traumatic stress disorder: evolutionary
perspectives of hostage reactions, domestic abuse and
the Stockholm syndrome**



To cite this Article: Cantor, Chris and Price, John, 'Traumatic entrapment, appeasement and complex post-traumatic stress disorder: evolutionary perspectives of hostage reactions, domestic abuse and the Stockholm syndrome', Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry, 41:5, 377 - 384

To link to this article: DOI: 10.1080/00048670701261178

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00048670701261178>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.informaworld.com/terms-and-conditions-of-access.pdf>

This article maybe used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

© Taylor and Francis 2007

Traumatic entrapment, appeasement and complex post-traumatic stress disorder: evolutionary perspectives of hostage reactions, domestic abuse and the Stockholm syndrome

Chris Cantor, John Price

Evolutionary theory and cross-species comparisons are explored to shed new insights into behavioural responses to traumatic entrapment, examining their relationships to the Stockholm syndrome (a specific response to traumatic entrapment) and complex post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). A selective literature review is undertaken examining responses to traumatic entrapment (including hostage, domestic abuse and similar situations) and the Stockholm syndrome, before examining mammalian, reptilian and other defensive responses to relevant threats. Chimpanzees, the closest relatives of humans, are closely examined from this perspective and commonalities in behavioural responses are highlighted. The neurobiological basis of defensive behaviours underlying PTSD is explored with reference to the triune brain model. Victims of protracted traumatic entrapment under certain circumstances may display the Stockholm syndrome, which involves paradoxically positive relationships with their oppressors that may persist beyond release. Similar responses are observed in many mammalian species, especially primates. Ethological concepts including dominance hierarchies, reverted escape, de-escalation and conditional reconciliation appear relevant and are illustrated. These phenomena are commonly encountered in victims of severe abuse and understanding these concepts may assist clinical management. Appeasement is the mammalian defence most relevant to the survival challenge presented by traumatic entrapment and appears to be the foundation of complex PTSD. Evolutionary perspectives have considerable potential to bridge and integrate neurobiology and the social sciences with respect to traumatic stress responses.

Key words: abuse, appeasement, complex PTSD, hostage, Stockholm.

Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry 2007; 41:377–384

Paradoxes initially appear absurd and conflict with conventional wisdom. Two of the greatest paradoxes in mental health are the Stockholm syndrome and the cooperative behaviours often shown by abused chil-

Chris Cantor, Senior Lecturer (Correspondence)

Department of Psychiatry, University of Queensland, PO Box 1216,
Noosa Heads, Qld 4567, Australia. Email: cantor98@powerup.com.au

John Price, Consultant Psychiatrist

South Downs Health NHS Trust, Brighton, United Kingdom.

Received 5 January 2007; accepted 7 January 2007.

dren and adults to their domestic abusers. These victims may not only comply with their abusers but idealize them, even beyond the point of release. A number of authors have noted both Stockholm and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) characteristics in victims of domestic abuse [1]. Judith Herman's landmark paper noted that '... prolonged, repeated trauma can occur only where the victim is in a state of captivity, unable to flee, and under the control of the perpetrator'. She described the result as 'complex PTSD' [2].