

CONTEMPORARY REVIEW OF EMPIRICAL AND CLINICAL STUDIES OF TRAUMA BONDING IN VIOLENT OR EXPLOITATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Joan A. Reid^{1}, Rachael A. Haskell²,
Christina Dillahunt-Aspillaga³ and Jennifer A. Thor³*

¹University of Massachusetts Lowell, MA, US

²Saint Leo University, FL, US

³University of South Florida, FL, US

ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of victims developing emotional attachments to their abusers or captors has been observed within situations involving intimate partner violence, child abuse, hostage situations, human trafficking, and cults. This psychological phenomenon labeled Stockholm syndrome or trauma bonding has been explained as a product of interpersonal trauma. Despite repeated observations of trauma bonding in victims of interpersonal violence, little research exists regarding its formation or persistence and even less is known about positive resolution in survivors. This review begins by presenting the existing theoretical conceptualizations and research findings on trauma bonding along with complexities of intervention and treatment. Next, critical concerns regarding methodological weaknesses of previous research focused on trauma bonding are addressed and several potential avenues for integrated theory and research are recommended. Lastly, implications for policy related to trauma bonding within the field of interpersonal violence are explored.

* E-mail: Joan_Reid@uml.edu