

# The Myth of “Stockholm Syndrome”: The Submissive-Irrational Victim as a Product in Professional Culture

Allan Wade, Ph.D.

Friday, February 20, 2015  
7:00pm – 9:30pm  
At CityU

## Abstract

"Stockholm syndrome" was invented in 1973 after a hostage taking at a bank in Stockholm, Sweden. One of the hostages, Kristin Enmark, criticized official responses and aligned tactically with the hostage takers. After the hostage taking, Kristin became the first person said to have "Stockholm Syndrome". Yet Nils Bejerot, the psychiatrist and criminologist who coined the term, never spoke with Kristin Enmark about the events of the hostage taking. Neither have any current experts.

Regardless, “Stockholm syndrome” has become received truth. It is widely taught in professional and academic settings and used routinely to explain the actions of victims of hostage takings and other forms of violence, such as intimate partner violence and child sexualized abuse. “Stockholm syndrome” is deeply rooted in western intellectual and professional traditions. It both reflects and perpetuates the practice of inventing mental states and disorders in the minds of victims.

Dr. Wade will describe his recent conversations with Kristin Enmark and others with direct knowledge of the events and present original material to develop a quite different view of the hostage taking and the notion of “Stockholm syndrome”. He will show how Kristin prudently resisted the violence of the hostage takers, protected and kept solidarity with the other hostages, worked through a disorganized and dangerous response from authorities, preserved her basic human dignity, and tried to manage a highly fluid situation.

From this analysis, Dr. Wade will show how "Stockholm syndrome" and related ideas (e.g., "traumatic bonding", "learned helplessness", “battered women’s syndrome”, “infantilization”, “repetition compulsion”, “internalized oppression”, “identification with the aggressor/oppressor”) shift the focus from actual events in context to invented problems in the minds of victims, particularly women. A product of professional culture, “Stockholm syndrome” ignores victim responses in context, works to discredit individuals who criticize official responses, and reproduces professional authority.

## Location: CityU

3<sup>rd</sup> floor - 789 W. Pender St., Vancouver, BC

Admission is \$49; (\$25 for current students, alumni and faculty)

Contact Andjelka to register at [VancouverBC@cityu.edu](mailto:VancouverBC@cityu.edu)

## About Allan

Allan Wade Ph.D. lives on Vancouver Island, where he works as a family therapist, researcher, consultant, and professor with City University of Seattle, Canadian programs. Allan works closely with local and international colleagues who share a primary interest in promoting socially just and effective responses in cases of violence and other forms of adversity.

Allan is best known for developing Response-Based Practice, with Linda Coates and Nick Todd. Response-Based Practice highlights the unending desire for dignity and justice apparent in “small acts of living”. It is a method of individual and family therapy and is readily applied in diverse practice settings and in research and policy; criminal justice, therapy/counseling with adults and children, psychiatry, research, policy, child protection, prevention, victim assistance, community coordination, education, criminal and family law.

Allan teaches locally and internationally and has published numerous articles and book chapters on research and practice, which can be viewed at the Centre for Response-Based Practice website,

[www.responsebasedpractice.com](http://www.responsebasedpractice.com)

