Fear or Love: Examining Stockholm Syndrome and the Elizabeth Smart Kidnapping Case

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FEAR OR LOVE: EXAMINING STOCKHOLM SYNDROME AND THE ELIZABETH SMART KIDNAPPING CASE

Honors Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice

In the College of Health and Human Services
at Salem State University

By

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Department of Criminal Justice

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Abstract

Imagine being taken from your home, family, friends and the entire life you once knew by a stranger. Now you are becoming the victim of constant violent and brutal assaults both physical and sexual. During this you are being denied proper sanitation, shelter, food and water by this person. Next imagine caring for this very same person to the extent that when you have an ability to escape and leave you chose not to do so. Does this sound insane? But that is the very essence of Stockholm syndrome. In this thesis I will examine the psychological phenomenon of Stockholm syndrome and how it applies to the kidnapping case of Elizabeth Smart.
Definition

The medical definition of Stockholm syndrome is “a group of psychological symptoms that occur in some persons in a captive or hostage situation”. This particular phenomenon has drawn much attention from the media in recent years being highlighted in various kidnapping cases such as Patty Hearst (1974), Elizabeth Smart (2002) and Jaycee Duggard (2009). The case of Elizabeth Smart will be the focus of this paper (The Medical Dictionary, "Stockholm Syndrome" 2015).

Little is known of many aspects of Stockholm syndrome as it would be unethical to test it in an experiment. It is considered a complex reaction to a frightening situation. Some but not all experts believe that certain people may be more susceptible to it than others. Experts do not even agree on all of the characteristics of the syndrome. Since the original case in 1973 data has been gathered from other various situations where this same type of phenomenon has occurred; such as other hostage taking situations, kidnapping cases and domestic violence cases. There is much variance in all of these situations, making it difficult to create one specific criteria. All of these cases vary in age of persons, gender, location, amount of people involved, types of abuse and time frame. Many researchers believe that Stockholm syndrome helps to explain certain behaviors of survivors of World War II concentration camps, members of religious cults, battered wives, incest survivors, physically or emotionally abused children and persons taken hostage by criminals or terrorists (The Medical Dictionary, "Stockholm Syndrome" 2015). Each of these situations vary greatly from one another. Yet this same phenomenon is present across all ages, races, genders, and situational spectrums.
Most experts agree on three specific central characteristics. The first is that the hostages have negative feelings about the police or other authorities. Second the hostages have positive feelings toward their captor or captors. Third and last the captors develop positive feelings toward the hostages (The Medical Dictionary, "Stockholm Syndrome" 2015).

Stockholm syndrome does not affect all hostages or those in similar situations. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) conducted a study of over 1200 hostage-taking incidents and found that 92% of the hostages did not develop Stockholm syndrome. FBI researchers also interviewed flight attendants who had been taken hostage during airplane hijackings, and concluded that three factors are necessary for the syndrome to develop. The first is that the crisis situation lasts for several days or longer. Second is that the hostage takers remain in contact with the hostages; that is, the hostages are not placed in a separate room. Third the hostage takers show some kindness toward the hostages or at least refrain from harming them. Hostages abused by captors typically feel anger toward them and do not usually develop the syndrome. In addition, people who often feel helpless in other stressful life situations or are willing to do anything in order to survive seem to be more susceptible to developing Stockholm syndrome if they are taken hostage (The Medical Dictionary, "Stockholm Syndrome" 2015).

People with Stockholm syndrome report the same symptoms as those diagnosed with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). These corresponding symptoms are insomnia, nightmares, general irritability, difficulty concentrating, being easily startled, feelings of unreality or confusion, inability to enjoy previously pleasurable experiences, increased distrust of others, and flashbacks (The Medical Dictionary, "Stockholm Syndrome").
Criteria

The criteria I will be using to evaluate Stockholm syndrome will be as follows. These criteria were created using the relationship traits and situational factors decided by the FBI and Medical Dictionary as being central to a case of Stockholm Syndrome.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship traits</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Negative feelings towards police or authority</strong></td>
<td>Thinking the police are wrong or bad, defending the criminal act occurring as morally acceptable, not seeking help from authorities when available.</td>
<td>Usually Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positive feelings towards captors</strong></td>
<td>Having feelings of affection to even love, defending captors, not wanting to leave captors, thinking the actions of the captors are morally acceptable or justified.</td>
<td>Must be present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positive feelings to hostages by captors</strong></td>
<td>Expressing love and affection to victims through words, gestures, gifts, or other acts or material items. (Proposing marriage, purchasing expensive items or even allowing victim to gain reasonable nutrition and hygiene after previous deprivation.)</td>
<td>Sometimes Present</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situational Traits</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shows kindness to victims</strong></td>
<td>Similar to positive feelings of captors to victims. Expressing affection or love in any way that would benefit the victims. This category is more specific to physical acts than just words or gestures.</td>
<td>Sometimes Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Situation lasts for a substantial period of time</strong></td>
<td>Situation continues for at least a few days but can be seen to last for months or years.</td>
<td>Usually Present</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Captors are in contact with victims

| Captors are in contact with victims | Victims are not isolated and engage in regular contact with captors, this contact may be positive or negative. | Usually Present |

In terms of the evaluation to state that a case has signs of Stockholm syndrome the victim must have positive feelings towards the captor, and would also have two of the relationship and situational traits.
History

The term originated in name from a bank robbery in Stockholm, Sweden, in August 1973. Four employees of the bank (three women and one man) were taken hostage by the robber and put into a vault with him and kept there for 131 hours. After release they appeared to have formed an emotional bond with their captor; telling various reporters that they saw the police as their enemy and not the bank robber. They also stated having had positive feelings toward the criminal. The syndrome was named by Nils Bejerot (1921–1988), a medical professor specializing in addiction research and served as a psychiatric consultant to the Swedish police during the standoff. Stockholm syndrome is also known as Survival Identification Syndrome (The Medical Dictionary, "Stockholm Syndrome").
Known cases

In this paper I will be examining the kidnapping of Elizabeth Smart and will be analyzing her case to decide if the media assumption that she has Stockholm syndrome is correct. In this section I will cite a few other known cases of Stockholm syndrome so the reader may get a feel for real life cases and the criteria used to evaluate them.

Jaycee Duggard

Jaycee Duggard was a case that shocked the world when she was found 18 years after her abduction. Jaycee was kidnapped at age 11 by convicted rapist Phillip Garrido and his wife Nancy Garrido. Jaycee’s name was changed to Alissa and she lived in a shed in their yard for many years. During this time Jaycee was repeatedly raped and gave birth to two daughters at age 14 and 17. Living in such violence with little knowledge of the outside world Jaycee fell into deep depression and soon cherished any human interaction, even that with her captors. Over time Jaycee was given more freedom to move about but by this time she had believed the lies Phillip had told, especially those claiming that her family no longer wanted her back nor was looking for her. Due to this belief Jaycee chose not to try any escape attempts. Garrido went to University of California at Berkley asking to give a presentation, a worker in the school activities found his behavior erratic and the behavior of the two girls with him (Jaycee’s daughters) to be unusual. She had Garrido return but brought a detective to sit in on the meeting who contacted his probation department. After a home investigation Jaycee and her children were found and reunited with Jaycee’s mother (Biography.com Editors, "Jaycee Duggard - Biography"). Jaycee
said that even though Garrido was a sex offender that he was a “changed man”. Her two children wept when they heard of his arrest (Gye 2013).

This case is often seen as meeting many criteria of Stockholm syndrome. Her situation lasted for longer than several days and she had constant contact with her captors. Jaycee also developed positive feelings for her captors and it can be assumed that they developed some positive feelings towards her in return. Jaycee’s inability to contact the police or other forms of authority when given the opportunity to shows that she may have had some mild negative feelings toward the police.

Pictured above: Jaycee before and after her 18 yearlong captivity. ¹ ²

http://thejaycfoundation.org/wp-content/assets/about-us.jpg
Natascha Kampusch

Natascha Kampusch, an Austrian resident was kidnapped in 1998 when she was ten years old. She was thrown into a delivery van while walking to school by her captor, Wolfgang Priklopil. She was held captive for eight years, and escaped in 2006 at age 18. She and Priklopil had an uncomplicated relationship originally, she was allowed visitors, and he brought her nice gifts. She found herself wanting to rebel as she matured and his presents turned “strange”. Priklopil decided to try and break her for her rebellious attitude so he beat her, starved her, and yelled insults at her all the time. She however claims that she suffered very little sexual abuse. At 18 she demanded he let her go. He refused and one day while she was left alone in the garden she escaped. Later on Prikopil laid down on train tracks and committed suicide; Natascha was devastated. She claims that having a relationship with someone who held her captive is not unusual or strange and wrote about it in her book, 3096 days. In later interviews she says “Back then I clung to even the tiniest human gesture because I needed to see the goodness in a world where I could change nothing” she claims this created normalcy for her in her world of abuse and cruelty (Gye 2013). She expressed to Prikopil that she forgave him because all people make mistakes, showing that his psychopathic fantasies had become her reality and her captor had become her new family (Gye 2013). This explains why she was so devastated at her captor’s death. In this case Natascha demonstrated many signs of Stockholm syndrome, she and her captor exchanged affectionate feelings for one another, were
together a lot and their circumstances went on for a lengthy period of time ("Natascha Kampusch").

Left: Natasha Kampusch


Colleen Stan

Colleen Stan left her home in Eugene, Oregon in 1977 at age 20 to visit a friend in North Carolina, having no money or vehicle she hitchhiked her way there. She was picked up by Cameron Hooker who was riding with his wife and child. He then took her hostage and placed a box over her head. He took her to his home where, as a sexual sadist, he would frequently beat her, rape her and perform other “kinky” sexual acts. He told Colleen that he had bought her through the “Slave Company” and that the company had bugged the house and was watching to make sure she obeyed, if she did not her family would be killed. Over time Colleen was given more freedom, she went out at
night, was left home alone during the day and even forced to work on the streets. Eventually he had her write letters home and make phone calls so her family would not search for her. Later on Cameron took her back to visit them. During this time Colleen made no attempt to escape; she had been broken by the violent sexual abuse and months spent in captivity, much of it in a wooden box. After 7 years Cameron’s wife Janice felt guilty for allowing this, she told Colleen that the “Slave Company” was not real and helped her escape home.

After her return Colleen continued to make phone calls to Janice and Cameron but had not yet decided to go to the police. Janice went to the police and told them about Cameron’s kidnapping and when asked Colleen corroborated the evidence but all were shocked that she never went to the police herself. After the trial Hooker was sentenced to 104 years. This case demonstrates Stockholm syndrome as Colleen, despite the horrific abuse, did not run away from or press charges against Cameron, showing she felt some affectionate feelings for him. Colleen and Janice, also had an amicable relationship despite Janice being her captor. The situation involved the captors and Colleen to be in close contact for much of the seven years that the situation went on ("True Crime XL").
Pictured above: Colleen Stan and the wooden box she was frequently kept in. 4

https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/736x/af/b9/95/afb99587bd7648a2faf85ea49a45e505.jpg

Patty Hearst

A second case that illustrates Stockholm syndrome is the case of Patty Hearst. Hearst was born in 1954 in Los Angeles, California, the granddaughter of William Randolph Hearst, founder of the Hearst media empire. She grew up with a very comfortable childhood and attended college at University of California at Berkley. At the age of 19 on February 4, 1974 Patty was kidnapped by members of the Symbioses Liberation Army, a left wing guerilla group. Originally she was taken to garner a large ransom from her wealthy family. She later announced that she had joined the SLA willingly on audio tape. She recorded several other tapes of her speaking with the group showing her active participation. She soon became involved with group lead criminal activity including robbery and extortion of up to $2 million dollars from her father. She was taken by the FBI in 1975 and convicted of bank robbery with a sentence of 35 years. President Jimmy Carter had her released in 1979 declaring her a victim and commuting her prison term.
Later on details of her stay with SLA were revealed including her “transition from victim to supporter” She showed many elements of Stockholm syndrome with her care and compassion for her captors who supposedly were returning this affections ("Patty Hearst"). Her negative feelings towards police and authority were seen through her criminal activity. Her situation also had the factors of her being in close contact with her captors and of the situation continuing for an extensive period of time.

Left: Patty Hearst with SLA symbol. 


John Q

The feature film John Q starring Denzel Washington features several elements of Stockholm syndrome. This story is of a young man John Quincy Archibald whose young son Michael collapses during a baseball game. Michael has an enlarged heart and needs a transplant but John’s job at a factory has been slow and has dropped him down to part time temporarily, unbeknownst to him this affects his insurance benefits. John’s
insurance will no longer pay for the expensive and lifesaving surgery for Michael so John and his wife try to raise money a variety of ways through charity and selling all of their furniture. Gathering the thousands of dollars needed is slow and they are running out of time. The hospital decides to release Michael which will result in his death, desperate John returns to the hospital and holds up the emergency room taking 11 hostages. He demands that he will let the people go in exchange for his son’s transplant. As negotiations continue John and the hostages communicate and share their stories; in exchange for Michaels name being placed on the transplant list he allows some of the hostage to go free. All of them when asked by media say John is a good man and a good father. Eventually a heart is available for his son and he lets the remaining hostages go, all of whom also continue to say that he is a good man. The movie closes with John’s son alive and healthy and him in trial for holding up the hospital. This story meets the criteria for Stockholm syndrome as John showed kindness to the hostages, and they showed it in return, as well as they were together the entire time and the situation went on for an extended period.
Elizabeth’s story

Elizabeth was days away from her 14th birthday when she went to bed on June 4th 2002. She had come home from a middle school award ceremony and would be going into her final days of school before the summer break. She was looking forward to her upcoming break and was happy about the awards she won at her school’s ceremony. During this time, she and her sister, Mary Katherine age 9, were sharing a queen sized bed. That night she was awakened by a strange dark figure who shook her awake and urged her to get out of bed, holding a cold metal knife towards her throat. Shocked and confused Elizabeth got out of bed and followed the dark figure’s instructions to put on shoes and follow him to the door, his knife nearby all the while. He urged her to be quiet and follow him or he would kill her and her family. She asked “why are you taking me?” he replied “for hostage or ransom” With that incomplete answer she left with him, being taken out the one unalarmed door in their home in Salt Lake City, Utah and away into the night. Her sister Mary Katherine, awoken by the noise, laid in bed. Horrified, unaware if she was dreaming but the empty spot next to her affirmed that that was untrue. After waiting long enough that she thought the man was gone she grabbed her blanket and rushed out of her bed to her parent’s room. She awakened them yelling “Elizabeth is gone! You won’t find her! A man came and took her! He had a gun!” Her parents, shocked, woke all of the siblings and searched the home. Then made many calls to 911 and immediate family members.

Meanwhile Elizabeth was taken blocks away and forced to hike a steep hill towards a campsite. She was forced to change out of her red pajamas and into a white robe. The man who had taken her was Brian David Mitchell, but no one, including
Elizabeth knew this at this time. As her family started one of the largest search efforts for a missing person in United States history, Elizabeth’s own personal nightmare was just beginning.

At the camp site she was introduced to Brian David Mitchell’s legal wife Wanda Barzee. She was only his “first” wife as it became known that Elizabeth would be his “second.” The next day Elizabeth was “married” in a ceremony to Mitchell. He then consummated their marriage by raping Elizabeth. Before this ordeal Elizabeth described herself as a “little girl who did not know about the world” After their marriage Elizabeth had a steel cable wrapped around her ankle which was tied in between two trees to stop her from escaping (Smart 2014).

As days filled with hunger, thirst, humiliation and sexual assault continued Elizabeth despaired. Days were passing and the odds of her being found were dwindling. One night Elizabeth heard men shouting her name in the brush behind them, Mitchell threatened to duct tape her mouth shut if she called out to them. Sitting on upturned bucket, Elizabeth heard her own uncle call her name. Mitchell branded a butcher knife and sat near the brush, stating he would slit the throat of any rescuer that came too close to them and might find her. Days later she heard helicopters in the air above her. But as Mitchell stood by with his knife she had no choice but to watch them pass by. He would say “If you ever try to run I will kill you” “He’s not kidding; he’ll kill you in a heartbeat!” Wanda would chime in (Smart 2014). Despite these setbacks Elizabeth planned escape attempts in her mind. She hoped for a rainy spring where she would be able to leave many footprints in the mud for possible rescuers. Still Elizabeth was losing
herself, she had been named Shearjashub and was only wearing white robes and the tennis shoes she took from her bedroom that night.

Eventually Mitchell left to go to the city to purchase food and alcohol. He returned and stated

“I saw my sweet Shearjashub’s face plastered all over the city. It’s in every store, on every lamppost, posters of her absolutely everywhere. And blue ribbons. Thousands of blue ribbons. And the whole time I was walking around the city, seeing sheaarjashub’s sweet face looking down on me, you want to know what I thought? I thought to myself I got the real McCoy. I get the most beautiful girl in the city. And that kind of made me proud” (Smart 2014 p. 112)

Elizabeth was feeling farther and farther from the life she had known before this. Originally she tried to fight off Mitchell’s sexual advances but soon had no choice to succumb to them as days went on. Mitchell believed in “descending below all things”

Elizabeth and her family were very religious, all devout members of the Mormon Church of Latter Day Saints, the same church Mitchell himself once belonged to. He made Elizabeth frequently partake in acts that were considered forbidden in the church. He forced her to engage in premarital sex but also voyeurism as he and Wanda would demonstrate sexual acts and make her watch. He also made Elizabeth partake in sexual acts that were banned in her religion. “Descending below all things” did not mean just sex acts, Elizabeth was forced to drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes and marijuana and use other forms of drugs such as absinthe. Drug and alcohol use are all strictly prohibited in the Mormon faith. As punishment once Mitchell forced Elizabeth to drink so much she blacked out and passed out in her own vomit. Mitchell tried to strip Elizabeth of any identity that she knew, frequently mocking her modesty and prior religious life. She
states “Everything I treasured was being robbed. And he was taking it from me with such pleasure.” (Smart 2014 p. 80)

As time went on Elizabeth felt hopeless. Frequently thinking “What if this goes on forever? Is this the only life I will ever know?” She found comfort in her faith and the love she had for her family. She claimed to often imagine her family besides her reaching for her hand, an image that brought her comfort during the toughest of times. Also bringing her morale was the song “Consider the Lilies” by Roger Hoffman “consider the sweet tender children, who must suffer on this earth, the pains of all of them he carried from the day of his birth” Elizabeth felt this song applied not only to her own suffering but to that of children everywhere (Smart 2014 p. 54).

Soon Elizabeth changed from hopelessness to a fierce determination to live. She realized her captors were fairly old and could not live forever, her new plan was to outlive them. She thought that it might take twenty or thirty years but they eventually would die, and she would be free to find her family and return to them. At this time Elizabeth was in it for the long haul. She began going deeper and deeper into survival mode, making all decisions in the context that it would allow her to live another day. Escape was no longer an option, Mitchell’s threats against her and her family were extreme.

“Police may keep your family safe for a while but not forever, I won’t forget you, I’ll never forget your family, every single one of them will be dead. And it will be your fault! Do you want that? Are you so selfish that you’d really kill your family just because you want to live me? Are you that kind of person? Do you want their blood on your hands?” (Smart 2014 p. 135)

Mitchell clearly played into Elizabeth’s love for her family and selflessness, the only threat worse than killing her was killing her family and making her live with it. He would
frequently go into detail of how he would kill her entire family if she returned especially her baby brother. Her new motto was “Think about your family. Remember that they love you. Do whatever it take to protect them. Whatever it takes to survive.” (Smart 2014 p. 81)

Soon Elizabeth was taken into the city away from the camp site, during this time she was heavily veiled so no one could see her face and identify her. While out she carved the word “help” into a public bathroom stall using a pin holding together her burka like veil, but this attempt was futile. Mitchell tried to brainwash Elizabeth into being more obedient and affectionate toward him, saying “Be good and I will reward you. I can be generous and kind. But you have to earn it. And you will owe me once I have given some freedoms to you” (Smart 2014 p. 99) Elizabeth tried to control her captors as well hoping they would realize how much they were hurting her and that they may eventually care about her and let her go.

This did not go as she hoped. Elizabeth was being treated like an animal. Being denied food and water, being tied up outside, subjected to constant sexual abuse. She alternated between determination to live and despair. She felt intimidated and outnumbered, a child against two adults. She clung to hope that others were still looking for her. At other times she felt that she had lost her life she had previously known and was too far gone to be saved, but chose to protect her family whom he threatened.

Once again out in public Elizabeth, Mitchell and Barzee went to the local library. While there a few people stared at the group, not unusual in their odd looking robes. Soon a police officer approached her and asked her if she was the missing girl Elizabeth.
Mitchell did the most of the talking as he was cunning, described as being good at lying and manipulating his way out of any situation. The officer kept probing and as he did Mitchell dug his hand into Elizabeth’s leg. His frequently uttered phrase “we will get you in the end” ringing in her mind (Smart 2014). To stop the probing Elizabeth said she was not that girl and the police officer left. This incident started many accusations of Elizabeth being a victim of Stockholm syndrome.

Soon Mitchell proclaimed the lord had come to him and wanted him to take another young bride. Elizabeth had accidentally mentioned her cousin Olivia was living close to Mitchell’s former home. He left and tried to kidnap her, claiming God told him this would be his next wife. He then failed and never spoke of her again. Several months later they relocated to California for the winter. While there Mitchell met a family at the church he attended and was offered lunch by a friendly family at church, similar to the way Elizabeth’s father offered him work on their house. He then proclaimed that God wanted him to take this young girl as his next wife. After several failed attempts he said that God had told him otherwise.

In terms of Mitchell she described her captor as selfish, angry, smart and intelligent. Psychologists declared him not insane due to professional analysis. She saw him as a manipulative, antisocial, narcissistic pedophile. He was not clinically psychotic or delusional, just an evil person (Smart 2014)

“He was his number one priority, followed by sex, drugs, and alcohol, but he used religion in all of those aspects to justify everything. Nine months of living with him and seeing him proclaim he was God’s servant and called to do God’s work and everything he did to me and my family is something that I know that God would not tell somebody
to do. God would never tell someone to kidnap her at knifepoint from their bed, from her sister’s side…never continue to rape her and sexually abuse her.” (Smart 2014 p. 116)

She describes Wanda as far from an innocent bystander. Elizabeth thought of Barzée as a monster, who was never kind and never showed her mercy.

Overall Elizabeth repeatedly states she never developed empathy or affection for her captors. There was no traumatic bonding and no emotional ties. She even goes as far as to state “Those that say otherwise don’t know what was going on inside my head.” She repeatedly mentions her dislike for them and in her conclusion states that she will not spend one second of her life worrying what happened to them; the only emotions she had for them were fear and disdain.

After approximately nine months in their captivity Mitchell wanted to return to Utah. During this time Elizabeth’s family had identified Mitchell as a possible suspect and had gone to the media in hope to find him. Mitchell’s own son and sister went to law enforcement agents and gave recent pictures and physical descriptions of him. Days after on March 12th, 2004 Elizabeth was found with her captives thumbing for a ride on a highway in Sandy Utah. State troopers brought a missing Elizabeth Smart flyer and separated her from Mitchell and Barzée. After being assured she was safe Elizabeth finally admitted to being herself and was brought home to her family. Mitchell and Barzée were arrested and held until their trial, which Elizabeth testified at.

Wanda faced a 15-year sentence for her role in Elizabeth’s kidnapping and another 1 – 15-year sentence for the attempted kidnapping of Elizabeth’s cousin Olivia. Mitchell tried to plead not guilty by reason of insanity, but the defense was shot; Mitchell is now serving a life sentence without the possibility of parole (Smart 2014).
Elizabeth talks about how much suffering is heaped upon children. Children hurt by fear, abuse, pain, starvation, hunger, slavery and sexual exploitation She feels like luckiest girl in the world for the search and rescue effort that so many provided for her. She at one point recalls the story of a prairie girl, walking miles and miles a day, whose shoes were destroyed, causing her feet to be cut up and covered with blisters, exposing them to frostbite. One day she walks by an open trunk, dumped by previous family and finds new shoes that fit her perfectly. At one time Elizabeth went days without water in the dry, arid mountains, nearing dehydration. At few nights later she awoke to find a glass of water inexplicitly placed outside of their tent. She thinks God sent her water because he loved her and wanted her to know, the same way God provided shoes for the young prairie girl. When in the darkest times Elizabeth felt God would find a way to provide, he “will not leave her comfortless” (Smart 2014 p. 75).

After her return home her parents offered her any form of help that she felt she needed to return to her normal life; medications, therapy, counseling whatever was needed. She actually chose not to seek counseling or therapy as it did not seem the right fit for her. She found comfort in her family, faith and her passions of playing the harp and horseback riding. Her mother said “Don’t let him steal one more second of your life. Not one more second! You be happy. You move on.” Elizabeth heeded her words and put the past behind her. She says she lived 307 months, 298 which were great and another 9 that were not so great, but those odds are not bad. She feels grateful for being returned to her family and not exploited in other ways such as online or in a brothel as many other children are. She owes incredible gratitude to all of those who expressed concern for her and wanted to bring her home. She has then started the Elizabeth Smart Foundation.
which works for change in child abduction and recovery programs. She promotes Adam Walsh’s National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, the Child Protection and Safety act, Amber Alert and other safety legislation. (Smart, 2014)

Pictured above: Elizabeth with Barzee and Mitchel at a California house party.  

Pictured below: Barzee and Mitchell’s mugshots.  
http://assets.nydailynews.com/polopoly_fs/1.1477087!/img/httpImage/image.jpg_gen/derivatives/article_970/elizabeth-smart.jpg
Her Family’s story

In this section I will discuss the book “In Plain Sight” written by Elizabeth’s uncle Tom Smart and “Bringing Elizabeth Home” written by her parents Lois and Ed Smart. These two stories provided a unique perspective to the investigation and search for Elizabeth, her previous life with her family and her life after return. Elizabeth’s Uncle Tom Smart’s book about the family’s long nine-month search for her while deflecting media claims that Elizabeth wanted to stay with her captors or that they themselves were responsible for her disappearance. Tom Smart worked for Desert Morning News, was happily married and had several children of his own. Life was nothing but ordinary to all of those in the Smart family (Smart 2005). The night of Elizabeth’s kidnapping Mary Katherine awoke her parents Ed and Lois at 4:00 am crying about Elizabeth’s disappearance. Moments later Ed made a 911 call urging police to come to their home. At 4:15 am the phone next to Tom’s bed rang, it was Ed exclaiming Elizabeth had been taken at gun point. Within the hour most of the Smart extended family was at their home, expressing concern and ready to start a search. Tom discusses how he chose to alert the media, time was the enemy right now and they needed eyes on Elizabeth as soon as possible. Statistically in 74% of kidnappings the child is dead within three hours (Smart 2005). As the police delayed the family panicked at the wasted time. The family went out to stop joggers and dog walkers in the area asking if they had seen anything. Calls and emails were being sent to whoever might know something.

Tom described the pain Elizabeth’s parents were experiencing as “agony” Lois was asked to identify which shoes Elizabeth had left in and broke down when she realized they were her own tennis shoes she had loaned to Elizabeth.
Help was not far away. The mayor offered a $250,000 reward to anyone who could give information about Elizabeth’s whereabouts. At 7:21 am more than three hours after the 911 call the state’s Rachel Alert system for missing children was put out. Mary Katherine was being interviewed by a police sergeant and by the Salt Lake City Police Department’s Sex Crimes Unit and by a specialist at the Children’s Justice Center. Soon after the search began with helicopters, a hundred officers and bloodhounds. The Laura Recovery center also contacted the family, a group that coordinated searches. The group was named after a Laura Smither was just days from her 13th birthday when she disappeared while jogging, over six thousand people searched for her with no avail, she was found two weeks later in a pond. Her parents started the nonprofit center and created a manual to help other families of missing children. The family started a large scale search with the help of the Laura Recovery center using Shriners children’s hospital as their base. The first day they registered several hundred volunteers, several businesses closed down or allowed their employees to join the search instead of working along with dozens of other locals, students and the high school football team. The next day over 800 volunteers showed up and local businesses were donating batteries, flashlights and sunscreen. Both the Red Cross and the Salvation Army set up booths to help out. Kinkos printed ten thousand copies of missing posters and several news centers including FOX and CNN started reporting on the case. AOL posted the missing Elizabeth Smart website link on their homepage. The family contacted Adam Walsh of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children and America’s Most Wanted. Walsh said about the family contacting so much media “Just keep doing it. We will get her back.” Tips came in from anywhere, with so few leads there were many possibly suspects, some of the
accused were the family’s gardener, a man who had attended all of Elizabeth’s harp recitals, a delivery man and several employees who worked on their home (Smart 2005).

The media was creating great interest in the case; Elizabeth was becoming everyone’s little girl, and many were feeling her plight. Thousands of volunteers arrived to help and even more donations and letters of concern poured in.

Far reaching were not only the media repercussions but the repercussions in the criminal justice system. The Utah crime rate that year would drop as many on probation and parole would be sent back for minor offenses, especially those who were sex offenders. Until Elizabeth was found the police would be stricter than ever. Abductions create a huge toll with fall out that extends too many different areas (Smart 2005).

With so few leads many reporters started doubting that Elizabeth would ever be found. On one of the first days after her kidnapping a family member overheard two camera men talking; one said to the other “In a few hour they will find her in a dumpster somewhere and we’ll all be able to go home” the other cameraman laughed in return (Smart 2005). The family was both losing hope and becoming more resolute in their search. Even worse many in the media started to turn on the family, blaming them for Elizabeth’s disappearance. When Elizabeth’s father met with a group of detectives they stated that they believed the kidnapping of Elizabeth was an inside job, and was most likely committed by a family member. He did not know what to believe, in an older FBI study 49% of kidnappings involve family members, and the statistics were not comforting (Smart 2005). To get suspicion off of the family they signed up for polygraph tests. This did little to stop suspicion as the Tribune published an article titled “SISTER
DIDN’T SEE THE FACE OF ABDUCTOR: Police ruling out nobody, including family members” (Smart 2005).

Meanwhile during this time Elizabeth was only 3.6 miles away from her home with Brian David Mitchel and Wanda Barzee. A few days later her Uncle David was out searching in the brush, the voice Elizabeth thought she recognized was in fact her uncle. It is mentioned in this book that Elizabeth once tried to escape from her captivity when Mitchell and Barzee were in an argument but he quickly caught up to her and forced her back. Later on Mitchell brought back newspaper clippings of Elizabeth’s distraught parents and made her burn them (Smart 2005).

Still her family’s devotion to her search continued. They had regular family meetings and organized press conferences at least once a week. Her uncle, Tom Smart, author of In Plain Sight was so devoted to the search he, along with other members of the family regular went days without sleep and devoted hours each day to searching, press conferences and communication about Elizabeth’s case. The search was taking an unfathomable emotional and physical toll on the family. Many worried as Elizabeth’s grandparents’ health steadily declined that the stress and grief of her loss would kill them. Lois was frequently distraught and felt that she needed to acknowledge the reality that Elizabeth was dead to move forward and continue providing for her family, the stress of worrying about Elizabeth’s whereabouts was destroying her. Later on Elizabeth’s parents met Adam Walsh and the families of other parents whose children were kidnapped and never found or found dead. This meeting brought comfort that others could understand their situation. Though in private Walsh told Elizabeth’s father that despite the odds, since 60% of children who make it the first week return home, after this many months the
odds of Elizabeth returning alive were slim, and the family should focus on caring for their remaining children (Smart 2005).

Soon the main suspect was a man who had frequently worked for the Smarts; Richard Ricci. The description Mary Katherine provided was of a man close to her brother’s height (5’8), was white, wearing a golf like hat, and between 30 and 40 years old. Ricci met this exact description, owned a golf hat and knew the house well since he had worked on it. He had an extensive criminal history including attempted murder and several break ins and was being held for unrelated charges. He also drove a white van that was in the shop at the time but was taken out for the same day Elizabeth was kidnapped, and returned later covered in dust and several hundred miles on it. After several months of searching and hope that Richard Ricci was the suspect, they were in for another plot twist. Ricci was dead from a ruptured aneurysm. With his death there were no more leads in the case (Smart 2005).

Out of the blue one day Elizabeth’s sister Mary Katherine finally realized who the kidnapper was, a man named Emmanuel who had raked leaves at the family’s home one day. Revelations like these are not unusual in traumatic cases, especially when witnesses are very young. Emmanuel was an alias that Brian David Mitchell went by. The family brought the new lead to the police and the search restarted with a new suspect. During this time Mitchell was arrested under his real identity for shoplifting, breaking and entering and public drunkenness in California. Under the name Emmanuel he was being displayed as wanted for questioning on News stations and America’s Most Wanted. These ads got the attention of Debbie, Mitchell’s ex-wife. She and her daughter Becky, who he had sexually abused, contacted the police. Soon Derrick Thompson, Mark, and
LouRee, Wanda’s children who had lived with Mitchell also contacted authorities. Revelation of Brian’s true identity and photos of him were an immense breakthrough in the case. Mitchell’s own sister, Lisa saw his description on America’s most wanted and rushed to the police the next day with her husband to provide information. The cooperation of these individuals who knew Mitchell and Barzee were essential invaluable for the rescue of Elizabeth (Smart 2005).

Hitchhiking back to Utah from California the whole’s nation eyes were on Mitchell and missing Elizabeth. Soon the police were contacted at the unusual sight of hitchhikers, oddly dressed, on the state highway in Sandy Utah. The police arrived and asked Elizabeth who she was separating her from her captors. At first she was afraid to speak claiming to be 18 and there on her own free will, their usual cover story. The police knew better than to listen to her, knowing her fear and that Mitchell was still very close by. The officers spoke of how she was safe now and that her family had never stopped looking, and wanted her back. They obtained a missing flyer and compared the image with Elizabeth, defiantly a match the officer pleaded for her to say she was Elizabeth. Her reply was “if thou sayeth”, the police took that as a yes and ushered her into a police vehicle, taking her back to their station (Smart 2005).

Elizabeth’s family got the call that there was a girl, possibly Elizabeth at the Sandy, Utah police station. Her father rushed out there and greeted her with joy. Elizabeth was brought home to her siblings, overwhelmed with happiness. She arrived to see many large binders lining a shelf in her home, all filled with prayers and kind words of people who were praying for her, hoping she would be safely found and returned home.
Elizabeth’s family did not say that she was a victim of Stockholm syndrome but rather was a victim of manipulation, pure and simple. Her uncle uses the example of Patty Hearst, who was kidnapped as a college student by the SLA; was beaten, raped, and kept in a closet by her captors but later went on to join them in their crime spree. Patty Hearst is a known Stockholm syndrome victim because she not only helped the SLA but advocated for them and stated that she joined their cause willingly after abduction. Her uncle uses this as an example not of Stockholm syndrome but of the manipulation kidnapping victims often face from their captors. He even states that Hearst joined those who hurt her and was a 19 year old college student, much more mature than Elizabeth was at 14. He states that Mitchell preyed on Elizabeth’s love for her family and religion and due to this she was a “pliable victim” for manipulation. (Smart, 2005)

Elizabeth’s parents Lois and Ed Smart also wrote a book about their experiences. This book was titled *Bringing Elizabeth Home* and was co-written with Laura Morton. This is a faith based telling of the Elizabeth’s kidnapping and the criminal investigation that followed but also the emotional journey of losing a child. This book is punctuated with various bible verses and letters written to Elizabeth during her disappearance. Ed and Lois discuss the need for sensitivity of victims’ rights and that all victims deserve fairness, dignity and respect. This book discussed the emotional journey for them and Elizabeth and their dedication to her recovery. There really was no mention of Stockholm syndrome or the public’s suspicion of it (Smart 2003).
Pictured Above: Elizabeth’s missing poster\(^8\)

http://www.planetpdf.com/planetpdf/images/elizabethsmart_pdfposter2.jpg


Pictured Below: Elizabeth the day she was rescued.\(^9\)
“Elizabeth Smart was 14 years old when someone crept into her bedroom, pressed a weapon into her body, and took her out of her bed. Brian Mitchell took Elizabeth into the woods, where his wife Wanda Barzee was waiting. He ‘married’ Smart in his own ceremony and raped her. She was held captive for the next nine months and moved across the country, tied to trees and starved for days at a time while he had sex with her repeatedly. Her sister Mary Katherine's witness testimony led to the capture of the kidnappers, and Elizabeth was returned home. In her testimony, Smart said she had opportunities to escape but did not take them. Psychologists have debated on whether or not she is a Stockholm syndrome sufferer.” (ALLday)

This excerpt was taken from an article on the website AllDay.com titled “Captive for Years: Famous cases of Stockholm syndrome.” This article lists Elizabeth as a possible Stockholm syndrome victim listing her amongst other well known cases. The article states that psychologists are “debating” whether or not she was a Stockholm syndrome sufferer, however listing her amongst other cases can lead to a public perception that she was a Stockholm syndrome. This website is not of an academic source, therefore it may not be accurate, but many individuals may click their way to this website and form their opinions off it (Morgan).

Web MD, an online medical website, has an article titled “Elizabeth Smart: What kept her from escaping? Subconscious Adapts to Horror in Order to Endure It” by Jeanie Lerche Davis. In this article Davis states that many psychologists have believed that Elizabeth Smart had Stockholm syndrome and that is what kept her from escaping. She quotes Alan Hilfer "Stockholm syndrome is not brainwashing -- it is a means to endure the violence, a survival technique that the brain uses," and that it “is not a conscious process”. Hilfer continues to explain how Elizabeth could have been
manipulated and formed a bond with her captors as part of an unconscious process of survival.

"It's not that she made a conscious decision that these people were right to kidnap me. It's her mind trying to understand the horror of the situation and justify the reasons for it. It's the mind's way of saying 'This is what I need to do survive. I need to believe there's a reason for this, that these people make sense in their demands.'" – Alan Hilfer

This quote I agree with; Elizabeth was a young girl trying to survive and return to her family. It is only rational that a person experiencing such horror would try to find a way to justify it. Next he states;

"It's a process of indoctrination. It's why a girl who appears to be a relatively bright, articulate 15-year-old doesn't run to a policeman in a town 15 miles away from her home. It's because there's a level of identification with her aggressors." – Alan Hilfer

I disagree with this quote because Elizabeth had made several escape attempts but spent the majority of her captivity with a metal cord tied around her ankle and to a tree. The option to run fifteen miles away to the police was simply not a physical option, not only due to her physical restraints, but that she was in hilly and wooded terrain, making it difficult for her to not only run, but to also get lost. Any attempts at escape that she did not make were because of Mitchell’s immediate threats of retribution such as when he waited by the bush with a knife or when the police officer spoke to them in the library and he had previously threatened to kill her family if she escaped. Hilfer then contradicts this statement saying that while indoctrinated she does not appear to be a Stockholm syndrome victim or a “typical” Stockholm syndrome victim. This is made clear with the assertion "she certainly wasn't ripped from her abductor's arms, kicking and screaming, saying 'no, I don't want to go back home.' There's no reason to believe she didn't want to go to her family." Elizabeth, once assured she was safe from retribution did go willingly with the police. Hilfer concludes that Elizabeth Smart was probably naïve as she was
only 14 when kidnapped and that her strict religious views could have been a major factor in her psychological manipulation. These statements are very accurate with her case. It is important to recognize while Hilfer is a psychologist and very well qualified, he has never interviewed or even met Elizabeth Smart and all of the statements he is making are purely speculation from news reports (Davis).

A New Yorker article entitled “Gone Girl: The extraordinary resilience of Elizabeth Smart” by Margaret Talbot was the best written and researched article I could find on this topic. Talbot describes a speech Smart gave to several hundred teenagers in Washington. Elizabeth used her life story to encourage others to “never be afraid to speak out. Never be afraid to live your life. Never let your past dictate your future.” Elizabeth’s story is indeed a rarity, very few women escape such an extensive captivity and are able to share their story. Elizabeth certainly tried to keep her speeches and interviews professional, generally focusing more on advocacy then on her own gruesome story. She states it is important for her to keep her story occasionally light and readable, not wanting others to focus on the bizarre acts and curiosities that happened to her. Elizabeth has dealt with her criticizers head on; rebutting claims that victims are forever damaged and that Stockholm syndrome explains her extended captivity, especially the assumption that other people would have resisted harder and escaped.

“Nobody should ever question why you didn’t do something,” Smart told Talbot. “They have no idea what they would have done, and they certainly have no right to judge you. Everything I did I did to survive. And I did. Maybe there were times that, had I done more, I would have been rescued. But maybe I wouldn’t have. So do I regret anything I did? No” (Talbot).

This is a very powerful statement. It seems safe to say that those criticizing Elizabeth and her escape attempts themselves have never been kidnapped or held
hostage; the claims they are making on her behavior and what a “normal reaction” would be are purely guessing and speculating. She also speaks out about victim blaming and misogynistic purity teachings that are seen in schools. After being blamed for not doing more to escape her kidnapping, Elizabeth has become a champion of advocacy against victim blaming and misogynistic myths, stating that no one has the ability to take away a person’s self-worth. An often preached philosophy in religious and abstinence only educational programs is once girls are no longer virgins they have lost their worth. She also challenges victim blaming rhetoric that rape victims should have behaved differently or that sex trafficking victims should have tried harder to escape. She also encourages bystander intervention in not only kidnapping cases but in domestic violence, child abuse and sexual assault (Talbot).

Elizabeth Smart has a Wikipedia page dedicated to her. This page discusses her kidnappers, abduction, and timeline of her kidnapping and briefly summarizes her media interviews. There is however no mention of Stockholm syndrome on the page or any links to information on Stockholm syndrome. (Elizabeth Smart Kidnapping)

A Mother Jones article *The Ongoing Mysteries of the Elizabeth Smart Case* outwardly addresses the question of Stockholm syndrome. Author Scott Carrier states that despite her father’s denials it may very well be that Elizabeth suffered from Stockholm syndrome. He describes Stockholm syndrome as

“A phenomenon in which victims display compassion for and even loyalty to their captors. It's common in cases of abused children, battered women, prisoners of war, cult members, incest victims, and concentration camp prisoners. The victim feels intense fear of physical harm. All control is in the hands of the captor. If the captor then shows the victim some kindness, the victim often begins to support and sympathize with the
abuser's reasons and behaviors, even at times helping him and not trying to escape” (Carrier).

Carrier states the cases of Jaycee Duggard and Patty Hearst as examples of Stockholm syndrome. He is not incorrect in his definition or examples. He cites the time Elizabeth was taken out to a party and didn’t reveal her identity or run away as a sign that she had Stockholm syndrome. He states that she chose to not try and run away or ask for help is indicative of her having Stockholm syndrome. He says that despite Smart’s statements about Mitchell being a bad person that she does have Stockholm syndrome. I feel that he is accurate in his understanding of Stockholm syndrome and what the disorder entails but he is not entirely clear on all components on the case which is not necessarily the author’s fault as her book was not yet published and limited information on her kidnapping has been released (Carrier).

The article “what is Stockholm Syndrome?” by Charles Montaldo gives a different perspective. He opens the article written for the About Crime website with this introduction:

“When men and women are placed in a situation where they no longer have any control over their fate, feel intense fear of physical harm, and believe all control is in the hands of their tormentor, a strategy for survival can result which can develop into a psychological response that can include sympathy and support for their captor's plight.”- Charles Montaldo

Here Montaldo is portraying Stockholm syndrome not as a conscious choice, but as a means for survival. He also details the history of Stockholm syndrome and where the name came from. It is discussed that this phenomenon intrigues behaviorists, which is
correct, but then stated that is fairly common. He gives no data for that assumption, especially when other sources claim that Stockholm syndrome is very rare, such as when a FBI study showed that 90% of those involved in a kidnapping or hostage event will not develop Stockholm syndrome. He examines the case of Jaycee Duggard and states that she bonded with her captors and developed the syndrome as a form of survival. Montaldo says that many believe Elizabeth Smart has Stockholm syndrome, yet he does not elaborate or say definitively if she does or does not have the syndrome. Montaldo then demonstrates a new criterion for Stockholm syndrome saying an individual is most likely to succumb to it under the following circumstances:

- Believing one’s captor can and will kill them.
- Isolation from anyone but the captors
- Belief that escape is impossible
- Inflating the captor’s acts of kindness into genuine care for each other’s welfare.

Smart shows two of the four elements and part of one other element. Smart believed that her captors would kill her as Mitchell was incredibly violent and was isolated from anyone but her captors. In terms of escape Elizabeth had the plan to simply outlive her captors and escape when they had passed away; so she did not think escape was impossible just that it was impossible back then. Lastly, the inflating of captor’s kindness into genuine care did not occur with Elizabeth. She did not ever think that Barzee and Mitchell cared for her at any time (Montaldo).

In a separate article, Montaldo profiles Patty Hears. He specifically discusses her progression in terms of her attitude toward her captors. At nine days after her capture, she
released an audio recording ensuring that she was safe but that the SLA was well armed and dangerous. Thirteen days into her kidnapping she said that she was not being mistreated by the SLA but was being treated in accordance with international codes of war. 34 days in she sounds aggressive and hostile to her parents, who donated food as part of her ransom and chastised them for giving food of low quality. At 59 days into capture she announces her name change to Tania and that she was now a member of the SLA. Soon after she was caught robbing a San Francisco bank with her comrades (Montaldo, "Profile of Patty Hearst"). Montaldo demonstrates the progression in Stockholm syndrome victims where they leave their previously life behind them and turn towards their captors. This is most evidently seen through his presentation of Hearst’s voice recordings at various days in captivity. This is most clearly evidenced in the case of Patty Hearst.

A *Daily Mail* article written by Hugo Gye took a more sensationalist view of kidnapping and Stockholm syndrome and focused entirely on the victims. Giving no history or criteria this article states that Stockholm syndrome is a psychological condition where those who are captured become attached to their tormentors, no matter how badly they are treated. This definition glosses over many aspects of Stockholm syndrome and the evidence that in most cases with extreme cruelty or atrocity towards the victims there is no bonding. This article also has many buzz term headlines with convoluted statements. One of these headlines reads “Elizabeth Smart reveals that many rape victims do not want to be rescued” upon reading the article one would realize that this is not what she says. Smart states that rape victims are often made to feel so worthless and “impure” especially due to their religious upbringings that she can understand why those feelings
could cause one to feel so empty, so alien from their previous selves that it could cause them to not try and escape, feeling that their former lives are now gone and they are living without any value. She describes her repeated rapes as “having her soul crushed” and that she “wasn’t even human anymore”. She recalls thinking “How could anyone love me, or want me or care about me?” these feelings are not exclusive to Stockholm syndrome but are seen in all rape victims. She describes in one of her speeches that religious upbringing and emphasis on virginity and purity are toxic to those who are victims of sexual assault. She at no point says she herself didn’t want to run away, in fact she says the opposite stating “no matter how many personal goals or standards I had to break, I would do it, if it meant that I would survive” (Gye 2013). Also not stating that all or many rape victims want to be rescued or that they like their captors as the headline implies but that they have become so overwhelmed with guilt, shame, and feelings of emptiness that escape may lose its priority.

Finally, I found an academic article on a google search of “Elizabeth Smart Stockholm Syndrome”. I wanted to make sure the sources I cited for the media section could be easily accessed by the average person. Higher quality sources found on a data base would be more in depth and accurate but the average person does not gather their information from sources such as that. Most understanding and information people have on criminal cases such as Elizabeth’s Smart case is gathered from online searchable sources or from other live news media sources. In the academic source “Stockholm syndrome: Psychiatric diagnosis or urban myth?” Namnyak, Tufton, Szekely, Toal, Sampson and Worbos discuss how Stockholm syndrome is not a recognized psychiatric disorder in the Medical Subject Heading (MeSH) but many widely publicized cases
discuss the syndrome and its reoccurring traits, conversely these traits may be highlighted due to reporting bias. They related Stockholm syndrome to the category of acute stress reaction, including transient disorders triggered by exceptionally stressful life events. Graham created a criterion in 1995 based on a study of nine separate groups. The criteria are as follows:

1. There exists a perceived threat to survival and the belief that the threat will be carried out.
2. That the captive perceives some small kindness from the captor in the context of terror.
3. That the hostages experience isolation from the perspectives of others than the captor.
4. The hostage has a perceived inability to escape.

This criterion are not unlike the one used by Montaldo. Here Elizabeth experiences three out of the four criteria. There is a threat to her life (Mitchell) and a reasonable belief that the threat will be carried out, she experiences isolation from everyone except her captive and has a perceived inability to escape. Smart says throughout her novel that she was waiting for her captors to die for her escape, as they repeatedly stated they would kill her family and herself if she left, along with the physical restraints frequently imposed on her. Elizabeth repeatedly states that while Mitchell occasionally provided her with food, water, and hygiene, he never showed her mercy and never showed her kindness, nor did Barzee (Namnyak 2007).

Using the criteria above 12 separate studies were analyzed for evidence of Stockholm syndrome and evidence that Stockholm syndrome is or is not a legitimate diagnosis and not just a form of media based pop psychology. Some of their findings were that Stockholm syndrome is usually linked to the severity of isolation and dehumanization of an experience but has no correlation on the development of PTSD.
Children are particularly susceptible to developing Stockholm syndrome. Strong state of arousal caused by fear can be misinterpreted as attraction or bonding, and labeling those feelings as love can provide hope for escape. In a case study only one out of the six held hostage developed Stockholm syndrome but that one person had the most positive interactions with the captor. The level of Stockholm syndrome increases with the better quality of treatment by the captors and that severe abuse discourages the development of Stockholm syndrome.

Elizabeth has also done some visual media interviews. Some of her most prominent interviews were Nancy Grace, Oprah Winfrey and Anderson Cooper (Elizabeth Smart Kidnapping).

In her Nancy Grace interview Elizabeth Smart was curt with Grace as she repeatedly had to state that she went on the show to discuss a legislative bill but was instead asked several personal questions about Elizabeth’s kidnapping. Elizabeth said that she was not brought on the show to answer personal questions and “didn’t appreciate Nancy continuing to bring them up. Some of the questions were almost demeaning; “Were you scared?” “Didn’t you once hear people calling your name?” Could you see out of that veil they made you wear?” these questions were all seemed to be sensational and to create a dramatic narrative of Smart’s story but she was not having it. Seemingly annoyed Miss Grace continued to ask Smart the questions about the legislation she was trying to pass but made a snarky comment that she thought Elizabeth would want to talk about her story and help others (Smart, E. (2006, July 19). [Online interview]).
Her interview with Anderson Cooper went significantly better. She really opened up and discussed the details of her kidnapping from her book. She says that she no longer is keeping silent on her experience since having done speaking engagements she has realized what a problem this is for many other young women like herself. Smart states that after almost every speaking engagement she is given disclosures in private from audience members about their own experiences with rape, kidnapping, sex trafficking and other related sex crimes. Elizabeth feels that it is important for her to discuss her story and spread the message that victims are not damaged and that it is possible to move forward and be happy without having those experiences define you, she states that criticisms of her loving her captors and that being why she did not escape are unfounded and that it is easy for people to “sit in their arm chairs and say what she, a child, should have done.” Again Elizabeth negates all claims of Stockholm syndrome and feels that those accusations and criticism of her escape attempts are simply victim blaming (Smart, E. (2013, January 1). [Personal interview]).

Elizabeth did an interview on the Oprah Winfrey show six years after her kidnapping in 2009. This was one of her first public interviews. There is only the short promotion of this episode available (Smart, E. (n.d.). [Personal interview]).
Pictured Left: Elizabeth bringing attention to a missing Salt Lake City girl.  

Conclusion

The finding from my research are as follows 1. Elizabeth Smart did not show signs indicative of a diagnosis of Stockholm syndrome 2. Media involvement and portrayal have led to overlook of Elizabeth’s clear psychological manipulation by Mitchell and rational fear from his threats. 3. Victim blaming and victimization of those affected by sex crimes was a major factor in the claims of Stockholm syndrome.

Taking information from her book, her families’ books and her media interviews one can form a pretty solid understanding of Elizabeth’s kidnapping and psychological state. Using the criteria previously stated for Stockholm syndrome created from the FBI and Medical Dictionary Elizabeth is missing the most crucial element of the syndrome which is affection toward captors. Regarding the other criteria Elizabeth never really showed negative feelings towards police or authorities. During her rescue she showed trepidation at leaving with the police but this fear was mostly due to Mitchell’s threats and not the police themselves. Her kidnapping does demonstrate the situational factors of contact between captor and captive and situation going on for an extensive period of time but these factors would only encourage the development of Stockholm syndrome and must be accompanied by mutual affection. The trait of captor showing kindness to captives is debated in this situation. Elizabeth claims that Barzee and Mitchell never showed her mercy or cared for her in any way. While they did provide her with enough food and water to survive it is difficult to say that this was showing kindness if she did not interpret these acts in that way. In Elizabeth’s view Barzee and Mitchell only cared for themselves and she was only kept alive by Mitchell for his own pride and sexual purposes.
The media reports on this case are often sensational and working with little information. Many of the journalists and writers who were reporting on her case had no previous knowledge or experience working with kidnapping victims or with the topic of Stockholm syndrome. Making such a diagnosis of a syndrome as complicated as Stockholm syndrome is difficult for a trained psychiatrist working one on one with a client, for a journalist with just part of the story and a barely understood definition much more so. There is also the aspect of sensationalism, journalists need to get readers and need different and provocative headlines and stories to do so. Discussing a kidnapping case is interested, discussing a kidnapping case where the victim wanted to stay is much more compelling.

Besides the need for journalism to be sensational is the constant underlying victim blaming that women who are subjected to sex crimes often feel. It is much more comforting for one to say that a person brought a crime on themselves or made the situation worse through their own actions than it is to state that these atrocities happen and can happen to anyone.
Letter to Elizabeth

Dear Elizabeth Smart,

First I should introduce myself. My name is Christen McLaughlin and I am a senior at Salem State University in Salem Massachusetts. I am majoring in Criminal Justice and had to complete a senior thesis. I chose to examine your kidnapping case and the media coverage of it for signs of Stockholm syndrome.

The conclusion of the project was the same as your own personal conclusion, you never showed any signs of Stockholm syndrome. After doing so much research on this topic and the media coverage I feel that I actually did my project on the wrong topic. The real topic that I should have covered was victim blaming. The speculation that you had Stockholm syndrome was based in criticisms from the press and others who were assuming what a kidnapping victim would do and how they would behave. Instead of focusing on the atrocity of the crime the discussion turned to victimization.

Your experiences were horrifying, and no one has the right to assume how another person, never the less a child, would behave in such circumstances. Your journey from victim to survivor is inspiring and incredible. The work you have done after is even more so. What I learned from this research is that victims of crimes need to be treated with dignity and respect, and should never be held responsible for their own victimization. Embodying your message of strength, courage, survival and that those who are victims of such crimes have the ability to not be seen as forever changed but are able to move on and be happy has become the most important part of my project and my future work in this field. I would like to thank you for conceiving such a powerful message through your own life experiences and work and I truly hope I did this message justice in my project.
Pictured Above: Elizabeth with her husband Matthew Gilmour, a Scottish missionary on their wedding day. They now have a young daughter, Chloe Gilmour.  

http://i.dailymail.co.uk/i/pix/2013/10/05/article-2444192-1888C6F000000578-160_636x387.jpg  

Pictured Below: Elizabeth Revisiting the site where she was held in Utah.  

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