

## **Evidence-Based Understanding of Empathy and Sexual Offending**

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Track: Sex Offender/Clinical

Level: Intermediate

Room: TBD

CE: CPA/BBS/BRN (1.5)

### Narrative

Sexual offenders are commonly assumed to lack, or have limited empathy – otherwise, how could they commit such horrendous acts? Likewise, many sexual offender treatment programs maintain that development of “victim empathy” is imperative for rehabilitation. However, researchers have continually found this intervention to have limited impact on reducing sexual recidivism. This presentation provides evidence-based information about the relationship between empathy and sexual offending. Presenters describe the history of this topic, giving an overview of theories, research, and practices. Most notably, results from a meta-analysis completed by the presenters in 2018 are delineated, including significant differences found between sexual offenders and the general population for general and cognitive empathy, but not affective empathy. In light of these findings, implications for effective management of sexual offenders are explored, including evidence-based treatment.

### BIO

#### **Elijah Morrow, PsyD**

Elijah is employed as a bilingual Psychologist at the Department of State Hospitals – Coalinga where he performs psychological assessments, conducts treatment planning, and conducts group psychotherapy for individuals deemed by the state of California to be Sexually Violent Predators. His graduate work was completed at The Chicago School of Professional Psychology, where he studied clinical forensic psychology. In 2019, the Journal of Sexual Abuse published a meta-analysis conducted by Elijah investigating the levels of empathy within individuals convicted of a sex offense compared with the general population. Elijah has a history of working on a variety of forensic psychological assessments, including risk assessments, workers’ compensation evaluations, competency to stand trial evaluations, and not guilty by reason of insanity evaluations.

#### **Adam Yerke, PsyD**

Adam is a licensed psychologist in California and specializes in topics related to gender and sexuality. He is currently Interim Department Chair of the Clinical Forensic Psychology Program at the Chicago School of Professional Psychology in Los Angeles. Adam first began working with sexual offenders over a decade ago at SHARPER FUTURE where he conducted evaluations and treatment with individuals mandated by probation or parole. Adam was also responsible for supervising clinicians and overseeing assessment services provided at the Los Angeles SHARPER FUTURE clinic. Further, Adam is a SARATSO-appointed risk assessment trainer and has enjoyed teaching the STABLE-2007/ACUTE-2007 and LS/CMI to practitioners and evaluators throughout California. Currently, Adam assesses Sexually Violent Predators (SVPs) as a Liaison Evaluator for Liberty Healthcare’s Conditional Release Program (CONREP) and serves as Chair of the South Los Angeles CCOSO Chapter.

### Learning Objectives

1. Identify and describe the three available models explaining empathy in sexual offender populations.
2. Describe cognitive, affective, and general empathy.
3. Identify two ways in which current research on empathy in sexual offender populations influences risk assessment.