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2018 ATSA Conference | Friday October 19 | 1:30 PM – 3:00 PM

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Prosocial Assessment and Treatment Methods for Juveniles

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Abstract: Prosocial methods of assessment and treatment are one useful approach, among many, for use with juveniles who sexually offend. The prosocial model has substantial research supporting its effectiveness and practical utility. It is based on significant research on neuropsychological development for juvenile justice populations, and how probation youth specifically, and adolescents generally, grow and develop regarding prosocial reasoning and skills.

The presentation will review developmentally oriented neuropsychological theory as it relates to prosocial reasoning in adolescence, including youth who have sexually offended. Research regarding neuropsychological and brain development during adolescence will be presented, including Jensen's and Steinberg's work, and its relationship to age-related epidemiological measures such as the "crime-age curve", and the "accident curve".

Practical methods for assessing prosocial reasoning in juvenile populations will be discussed, including the Roberts Apperception Test for Children 2, and the Washington Sentence Completion Test. A newly developed practical measure of prosocial reasoning developed by the presenter, the Prosocial Reasoning Outcomes, and several research publications related to its effectiveness for these populations, is discussed.

There is a large literature suggesting that prosocial methods of treatment, which target social skills and reasoning, and have high fidelity, are effective with the general probation population, and also the subset of youth who have sexually offended. Prosocial methods for juveniles will be discussed including Reasoning and Rehabilitation 2 for Youth (RR2), Aggression Replacement Training (ART), and Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT). Relevant research from these prosocial treatment models will be discussed, including three published researches by the author with juveniles who sexually offended which showed positive outcomes.

Also a new prosocial treatment method developed by the presenter, Being a Pro, will be discussed. Its methods are based on an extensive review of existing developmentally-oriented neuropsychological and forensic research. Also initial positive results from a field trial assessing its effectiveness in promoting prosocial reasoning will be discussed. The use of this method was associated with an increase in prosocial behaviors and reasoning. The theoretical foundation of this model in the moral development of Piaget, Kohlberg, and Loevinger, and the developmental theories of Vygotsky, Jerome Brunner, and Fivush. Relevant development concepts such as the co-construction of narratives, scaffolding, and the proximal zones of development as discussed relative to the model of prosocial therapy

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are delineated.

The model of general prosocial development in adolescence is discussed relevant to other approaches of treatment including relapse prevention, mindfulness, and dialectical behavior therapy. The goals and mechanism of change for each approach can be described using the prosocial paradigm as a general model of development during adolescence. Also practical clinical examples will be discussed of who the prosocial model can be used in dealing with various types of clinical issues encountered in outpatient and residential treatment with these youth.

These prosocial assessment and treatment models are useful and practical for outpatient and residential programs. The training time and cost of using these methods is modest and easily affordable, while being effective. They also have a high favorable rating by counseling staff and adolescent clients, and research showing its effectiveness with juveniles who sexually offend. These favorable ratings are in part related to the fact that both the assessment and treatment methods are developed from "grounded theory" where theory and every day clinical experiences are closely linked. These approaches describe important characteristics of these youth which can be easily observed and be part of useful interventions in every day clinical work. These prosocial methods of treatment also have a demonstrated effectiveness in reducing nonsexual recidivism, which Caldwell (2016) suggests is as much as 10 times higher than sexual recidivism.

Learning Goals:

Participants will be able to:

- Identify three methods to assess prosocial reasoning in juveniles who sexually offend.
- Identify three evidence-based theories describing prosocial development in adolescence.
- Identify three treatment approaches to increase prosocial reasoning for probation youth.
- Describe three advantages of prosocial treatment models.

Dr. Ralph is a clinical psychologist at the Juvenile Justice Center in San Francisco, Coordinator of the Juvenile Sexual Responsibility Program, Coordinator for the Juvenile Court Alienist Panel, and Chair of the Competency Evaluation Committee. Dr. Ralph is also a psychiatric epidemiologist and neuropsychologist, who has authored over 30 articles, book chapters, or books. He was formerly Associate Clinical Professor in Family Practice, University of California School of Medicine at Davis, and Lecturer and Research Biostatistician in the Program in Maternal and Child Health, School of Public Health, at the University of California, Berkeley. He is a Trainer for Aggression Replacement Training, through the California Institute for Mental Health. He is certified as a practitioner for Moral Reconciliation Therapy. He is one of four trainers certified by the California for the Juvenile Sexual Offense Recidivism Risk Assessment Tool - II for the California Sex Offender Management Board. He is a board member, the Chair of the Research Committee for the

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California Coalition on Sexual Offending, and also Chair of their Bay Area Chapter. His a member of the Quality Management Committee, AllCare Independent Physicians Association. His a founding board member and Treasurer of the East Bay Children's Law Offices which provides legal services to 1,800 foster children in Alameda County. He is also a member of the ATSA Prevention Committee. He provided consultation and training for the Center for Families, Children & the Courts, Judicial Council of California.

References available upon request: