CIRCLES OF SUPPORT AND ACCOUNTABILITY (CoSA) IN REGINA,

SASKATCHEWAN, 1997-2011:

EXPLORING THE PERCEPTIONS OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS.

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ABSTRACT

Sex offenders are typically ostracized by both the media and public, rather than seen as individuals in need of support upon their release into the community. There are services such as restorative justice programs that exist which provide support for their successful reintegration. This study sought to understand the personal views of sex offenders and community volunteers concerning the efficacy associated with such restorative initiatives. The study examined a selected group of sex offenders who were deemed high risk at the time of their incarceration and then released, as well as, volunteers and professionals who are actively involved with the program *Circles of Support and Accountability* (CoSA) in Regina. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted. By providing an understanding from the core members' (participants') point of view, this study will assist future program providers to increase the effectiveness of restorative programs for these individuals and their communities.

Keywords: Sex offenders, restorative justice, reintegration, interviews

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<u>DEDICATION</u>

I would like to dedicate this thesis to both my grandmothers and my mother, who have instilled in me the value of family and have taught to be strong and independent. I am so blessed to have had such amazing women be part of my life. I love you.

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CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction

In 1997, there were 30,735 sex offences reported to the police in Canada,

representing 10% of all violent crimes (Statistics Canada, 1999). This number has

steadily decreased in the last 14 years as approximately 23,000 incidents were reported to

police in 2005 (Gannon, 2006), and 21,800 incidents reported in 2011 (Brennan, 2012).

Indeed, most provinces revealed a decrease in the rate of sexual assault during 2011, the

last year of the study period for this thesis (Brennan, 2012; Cotter, 2014; Cotter and

Beaupré, 2014; Boyce, Cotter and Perrault, 2014).

Most sexual offences in Canada are level one offences, which is the least serious

type of the three sexual assault offences classified under the *Criminal Code of Canada,*

R.S. 1985, c. C-46 (Brennan, 2012; Dauvergne & Turner, 2010). However, it has been

reported that the national rate of 'other sexual offences' such as sexual interference,

invitation to sexual touching, sexual exploitation and luring a child via a computer and

incest has increased (Dauvergne & Turner, 2010; Gannon, 2006). In 2009 about 2,600

sex offences against children were reported by police as well as approximately 1,600

incidents of child pornography, a 13% increase from 2008 (Dauvergne & Turner, 2010;

Cotter, 2014; Cotter and Beaupre, 2014, Boyce *et al*, 2014). It should be noted that the

number of sexual assaults actually reported to police undercounts the true number as

most sexual assaults according to the 2009 General Social Survey are not reported to police (Brennan, 2012; Perreault & Brennan, 2010).

Adults convicted of sex offences are predominantly middle-aged males. In 2002, 97% of persons accused of sexual offences were male and somewhat older than other violent offenders. The mean age of individuals charged by police with sexual offences was 33 years as compared to 31 years for those charged with other violent offences (Kong, Johnson, Beattie & Cardillo, 2003) and similar results were reported by Brennan and Taylor-Butts (2008).

According to Brennan and Taylor-Butts (2008), the majority of convictions in adult court cases involved sexual assault level one, and while sexual offences were less likely to result in a finding of guilt, those who were found guilty were sanctioned more harshly by judges than those convicted for other types of violent offences (Brennan & Taylor-Butts, 2008). It was reported that prison terms were handed out in more than one-half of adult court convictions for sexual offences, compared to less than one-third of convictions for other types of violent offences (Brennan & Taylor-Butts, 2008). Dauvergne (2012) reported that in 2011 cases involving violent offences were less likely to result in a finding of guilt in comparison to administration of justice or property offences. Still, 42% of sexual assault cases and 68% of "other" sexual offence cases resulted in a finding of guilt. The most common sanctions used for 'sexual assault' offences in 2010/11 were custodial sentences (53%) and probation (68%). Similar findings were reported for 'other sexual offences' in 2010/11; custodial sentences (63%) and probation (75%). It should be noted that the cases reported in Dauvergne's (2012)

study may involve more the one type of sentence, thus percentages do not total 100%.[1]

The release from prison of high-risk sexual offenders at the end of their warrant expiry date (the legal end of their sentence) is sometimes followed by community outrage and protest where community members stigmatize, isolate and alienate the offenders (Jeglic & Schiavone, 2009). Tewksbury and Lees (2006) argue that sex offenders who are ostracized by enraged community members experience high levels of stress, depression, and hopelessness. Thus, sexual offender registration and community notification policies may increase recidivism (Jeglic & Schiavone, 2009; Tewksbury & Lees, 2006).

Most citizens do not understand the nature of the offences being committed and rely upon the media for their information (Holmes & Holmes, 2002). For example, one general misconception is that all pedophiles are child molesters. Pedophilia, however, is a psychosexual disorder whereby an individual's sexual fantasies and erotic imagery are focused on children but that does not necessarily mean that they will engage in sexual acts with children (Schultz, 2005). Not only are there different types of sexual offenders and severity of sexual assaults, but differing treatments and programming are available to reduce recidivism in these convicted offenders.

Media outlets are inclined to show hostile broadcasts about sex offenders in the community, thereby enhancing public intolerance of their offences (McGuicken & Brown, 2001). A mistaken view is that all sex offenders pose the same risk to public safety is often encouraged (Serin, Barbaree, Seto, Malcom & Peacock, 1997). There are

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[1] Cases may involve more than one type of sentence and/or other sentence not shown, therefore, percentages do not total 100%. A case is one or more charge against an accused person or company that were processed by the courts at the same time and received a final disposition (see Dauvergne, 2012, Table 5).

various subgroups within the global sexual offender classification and the recidivism rates differ between these groups. For instance, according to Harris and Hanson (2004) 'boy victim' child molesters have a higher likelihood to reoffend than any other sub-group. The recidivism risks that these different subgroups pose are explored further in Chapter Two.

Getting tough on sex offenders has become a common criminal justice policy in recent years. Legislation has been introduced that allows for extended custodial sentences and introducing community strategies such as registration, enhanced supervision and surveillance. For example, civil commitment laws in the United States allow courts to hold sex offenders who are perceived to be at high-risk past their prison release date in a secure facility (Washington Department of Corrections, 2012). Many of these sanctions have significant implications for the post-release environment of sex offenders because they allow legal conditions to be placed on their behaviours, which in turn influences their living arrangements and activities (Matravers, 2003). Within most U.S. jurisdictions, sex offenders returned to the community are required to register with the police leaving rehabilitation, and re-entry into the community to take a secondary role. Interventions for these offenders are often based on surveillance and supervision rather than supporting their re-entry into the community (Lieb, Kemshall, & Thomas, 2011). The criminal justice system justifies these sanctions not as punishment but rather 'public protection' (Matravers, 2003).

When some high-risk sex offenders have finished serving their sentences and are released they are harassed by community members, besieged by the media and have fewer opportunities to reintegrate after serving their sentence (Levenson, Brannon,

Forney & Baker, 2007). A public opinion survey in Washington State found that a majority of respondents felt safer knowing where convicted sex offenders resided and felt that notification may help the offender manage their behaviour because they were being watched (Levenson et al., 2007). However, these investigators also noted that about one-half of the respondents acknowledged a potential risk for vigilantism and 75% agreed that notifications would make it more difficult for offenders to reintegrate into a community successfully with regard to finding suitable housing, meaningful employment and social supports that would reduce their social isolation (Levenson et al., 2007).

The lack of community acceptance may have a negative impact on an offender's recovery and reduce public safety. This was noted by Wilson, McWhinnie, Picheca and Prinzo (2007) who stated that,

> Essentially, the day they [sexual offenders] reach the expiry of their warrant is the day they are no longer the jurisdiction of the government – they revert to being 'free' citizens. In a cruel system of logic that beggars description, the safety of both the community and the offender are jeopardized by a failure of the system to account for the ongoing needs of such offenders (p. 6).

It is plausible that public rejection of these ex-prisoners might increase feelings of social isolation, and decrease the possibility of finding a stable job, acceptable residence or a network of persons who could support their community re-entry. This lack of stability and social capital may in turn result in a greater likelihood of re-offending (Settles, 2009).

Sexual offender recidivism rates are often cited to support tough sanctions for sex offenders. Studies conducted by Canadian and American researchers have found that recidivism rates among sex offenders are much lower than what is generally believed by the public (Levenson et al., 2007). Letourneau, Levenson, Bandyopadhyay, Sinha and Armstrong (2010) found that 5.3%, of a sample of 9,000 sex offenders living in the

community, were convicted of a new sexual offence. The average re-offending rates reported in Hanson and Morton-Bourgon's (2004) meta-analysis of sexual offender recidivism studies ranged from 10 to 15%. Given those findings, four out of five sexual offenders will not be rearrested for sexual offences (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2004).

Some sexual offenders may be at elevated risk of recidivism (Hanson & Harris, 2004). Failure to complete sexual offender treatment programs was a predictor of sexual re-offending (Hanson & Bussiere, 1998). Hanson and Bussiere's (1998) research that followed released ex-prisoners for 15 years established that 76% of sex offenders were not rearrested for a new sexual offence. However, it should be acknowledged that an offender could commit an offence and not be arrested (Hanson & Harris, 2004). Recent research conducted by Olver, Nickolaichuk, Gu, and Wong (2013) revealed similar findings in terms of recidivism rates between treated and untreated offenders. Offenders who completed treatment had a longer period before a subsequent conviction, and when they did re-offend, they were convicted of less serious offences.

2. The Research Problem

Canadian sex offenders may be categorized as high-risk under the *Sex Offender Information Registration Act S.C.* 2004, c10. This legislation allows Crown Prosecutors to apply for registration of an offender in the National Sex Registry after their conviction. The *Act* requires sexual offenders to provide police with an "up-to-date address, telephone numbers, aliases and identifying marks" (Kong *et al,* 2003, p. 10). Registration was intended to aid the police in solving sexual offences by identifying possible suspects living within the surrounding area of an offence (Kong et al., *2003*). Herein lays the problem faced by this population. Sex offender management is predominantly focused

on registration and surveillance. Though these strategies are meant for public protection, rehabilitation and treatment for these individuals becomes less important in some jurisdictions (Matravers, 2003). The failure of relying on conventional punishments such as imprisonment to deter crime has largely been ignored.

The more effective option to deal with crime is to focus on the rehabilitation of offenders and instead of searching for harsher punishments (Andrews & Bonta, 2010). The Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) model looks at three principals: risk, need, and responsivity. Risk looks at the offender's risk to reoffend. The need principle, by contrast, identifies the individual's unmet needs that contribute to offending/reoffending and targets factors correlated with criminal behaviours. Responsivity is the degree to which the interventions are matched to the offender's needs, such as their social skills, literacy and motivation for treatment (Andrews & Bonta, 2007, 2010). Andrews and Bonta (2010) observe that programs for offenders that follow the RNR model have shown to reduce offender recidivism by 35%.

There are a number of obstacles that stand in the way of sex offenders who want to desist from crime. Specifically, there are societal expectations that individuals need to be held accountable for their actions. Holmes and Holmes (2002, p. 231) noted that, "many believe that treatment programs designed for the rehabilitation of sex offenders constitute an unrealistic approach." Additionally, many respondents in surveys of the general public feel it is a waste of taxpayer's money to provide treatment and support for these individuals (Holmes & Holmes, 2002). These beliefs make it difficult for agencies that provide services for sexual offenders to obtain financial support from the government. It is essential that the public be properly educated about the nature of sex

offences, offenders and the efficacy of treatment rather than simply stigmatizing the individuals, which often results in more harm than good (Braithwaite, 1989).

There are various types of treatments offered to sex offenders both during and after incarceration. Different treatment approaches include cognitive therapy, which encourages the offenders to change the manner in which he/she perceives their own life and their external social environment. Behavioural therapy, by contrast, entails rewards and punishments to influence the offender's behaviour. Last, in some cases medical therapy is used, where the offenders are given medications to help them control their sexual tendencies (Holmes & Holmes, 2002). There are outpatient preventative programs as well, such as maintenance and high-risk offender programs offered by the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) that are intended to assist offenders with their reintegration and rehabilitation. The most effective sex offender treatment programs aim to change cognitive behavioural and thought patterns associated with deviant sexual behaviour, and encourage positive behaviours, and skills necessary to manage the risk factors connected to recidivism (Hanson & Yates, 2013).

Community-based programs are necessary for the successful reintegration of sexual offenders and, for the most part, those who participate in such programs are less likely to sexually reoffend (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2004). Circles of Support and Accountability (hereafter CoSA) are an emerging response to sex offender reintegration. This approach has shown success in reducing rates of reoffending with high-risk sex offenders by creating community support for these individuals (Bates et al., 2007; Wilson et al., 2007; Wilson, 2009). CoSA's goals align with reducing risk factors by using social supports and creating friendship networks and ultimately increasing social capital

(Hanson & Yates, 2013). CoSA has generated a positive reputation, both nationally and internationally and similar programs have been established in the United Kingdom and United States (Haslewood-Pócsik, Smith, and Spencer, 2008; Wilson, Bates, and Völlm, 2010; Hanvey & Hoing, 2012).

The goal of CoSA is to provide sex offenders with support, encouragement, and a meaningful way to be held accountable in exchange for living safely in the community (Wilson *et al*, 2007). CoSA promotes safety for victims (past or potential) by recognizing the ex-offender's needs for healing and security. At the same time, ex-offenders are able to receive much needed and meaningful support and are held accountable for behaving irresponsibly. As a result, the rights of both the community and ex-offenders are being respected (Wilson et al., 2007; 2009).

CoSA circles consist of a group of trained volunteers who meet regularly with the ex-prisoner who is called a "core member" (CM). The CM is held accountable for past offending though a caring and supportive relationship with the volunteers. The circle members develop intervention plans, and formulate personal goals that help the CM attain a more fulfilling and healthy lifestyle (Wilson et al., 2010). By participating in a circle, the CM develops a network of persons willing to help them and this builds the core member's social capital.

While correctional services may label CoSA as an aftercare program in keeping with their traditional definitions, it is also both an intervention and a process in the same context as most successful support groups (such as Alcoholics/Narcotics Anonymous) which also hold their members accountable for their actions. CoSA circle volunteers provide support for high-risk sexual offenders by utilizing restorative and reintegrative

practices.

Restorative justice is an alternative to regular forms of punitive justice policies because these approaches attempt to reintegrate the offender, address harms done to the victims and the community without the use of stigmatization or isolating the ex-offender (Roach, 2000). Braithwaite (1989) wrote about reintegrative shaming as a key component of restorative justice. He highlighted a distinction between reintegrative shaming and disintegrative shaming or *stigmatization*. Braithwaite (1989) argued that stigmatization divides the community by creating a class of outsiders, whereas reintegrative shaming is social process that expresses disapproval of a sanctioned act intended to evoke moral regret in the person being shamed. Unlike stigmatizing shame, the reintegrative shaming process is accompanied by measures taken to reintegrate the offender into the community by separating the offender from the behaviour.

Reintegrative shaming, unlike punishments based on deterrence "sets out to moralize with the offender to communicate reasons for the evil of his actions" (Braithwaite, 1989, p. 100). Conventional justice systems tend to punish and humiliate (stigmatize) offenders without providing a way to right the wrong and shed the label that they have obtained (Braithwaite, 1989). Braithwaite explained that for all crimes, shaming runs the risk of counter productivity when it turns into stigmatization (Braithwaite, 1989, p. 55).

This thesis examines the operations of CoSA in Regina, Saskatchewan during its formative years between 1997 and 2011. It seeks to understand if CoSA was an effective restorative justice program that utilized the ideals of Braithwaite's reintegrative shaming approach during that time period by exploring the perspectives of the key stakeholders

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directly involved with the program. It is important to examine this program to determine its efficacy as well as why it has reduced the recidivism among sex offenders.

3. Research Questions

a. Primary Research Question

From the perspectives of a selected group of stakeholders, how effective were the Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) as a program for sex offenders in Regina between 1997 and 2011?

b. Secondary Research Questions

1. What are the program goals of COSA?

2. What role does CoSA play in crime prevention?

3. What constitutes an 'effective' program according to the perceptions of CoSA stakeholders?

4. Operational Definitions

a. CoSA Organization in Canada

After a decade of lobbying the federal government by CoSA stakeholders, Public Safety Canada provided $7.4 million in seed money to help establish CoSA and evaluate the efficacy of the program. At present there are 18 CoSA sites throughout the nation and each of these sites have a paid project coordinator and data collector positions. The Church Council on Justice and Corrections (CCJC) acts as an 'umbrella' organization that disperses funds, provides some support to individual CoSA sites, and hosts an annual gathering of CoSA site staff and stakeholders. Most CoSA sites operate independently (although the three Southwestern Ontario sites share the same governance structure) and sites have different degrees of formal and informal relationships with the CCJC.

Prior research by Rugge and Gutierrez (2010) has shown that CoSA sites have somewhat distinct policies or procedures, and articulate slightly different philosophies about the nature of their services (e.g., the balance between accountability and support). Rugge and Gutierrez found variation in the nature of interventions delivered at different CoSA sites and some placed a greater emphasis on holding CM accountable, while others had more of a supportive orientation. There may also be differences *within* a CoSA site based on the needs of individual ex-offenders with some circles holding CM more accountable than others.

   b. *Stakeholders - Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA)*

CoSA was founded in Hamilton Ontario in 1994, when Mennonite Pastor Harry Nigh came into contact with a repeat sex offender in need of assistance. This offender had been in and out of correctional institutions for a large portion of his life with no meaningful community support system. Pastor Nigh and some of his parishioners formed a support group for this individual that proved effective, as the man did not re-offend (Wilson, 2005). Months later, a similar situation arose in Toronto, when another sex offender had been released and a public outcry ensued. A circle was formed for this individual as well and it, too, proved effective in preventing future sexual offences. From these two 'circles' emerged what has since become a world-renowned initiative embraced by faith-based and non-faith-based groups (Wilson et al., 2007).

CoSA training identifies three groups: the CM, the inner circle (volunteers) and the outer circle, which is comprised of local, community based professionals who offer support, guidance and mentoring to the volunteers. These inner and outer circle members are supported by the 18 local CoSA sites that typically have a steering committee,

advisory board or board of directors, although that structure varies somewhat throughout the nation. Effective May 1, 2013, there were 144 CM receiving services from the 17 federally-funded, demonstration sites (Church Council on Justice and Corrections, 2013). According to CCJC Monthly Indicator Report for May 2013, all CM were males and a majority were between the ages of 40-59 years. Ninety-three percent of CMs were charged with previous crimes or convictions, a majority of which were of a sexual nature. A large proportion of CMs, compared to non-offenders, were reported to have a drug (9%) or alcohol (19%) abuse problem, or both (33%).

Core members are ex-prisoners who have been convicted of a sex offense, admit to committing the offence, and voluntarily request CoSA's help to prevent further offending. Core members have often been held in prison to the end of their sentence, have been assessed as being at a high-risk to reoffend and have little or no community support (Wilson et al., 2005, 2007, 2009).

Circle volunteers are members of the community who, although it is not a necessary requirement, have typically come from faith-based backgrounds. Today, volunteers go through a training period that varies in length depending on where the circles are located. Training provides the volunteers with a basic working knowledge regarding the dynamics of sex offending, establishing boundaries with core member as well as how to recognize high-risk behaviours in core members. Initial orientation for volunteers is two days in length, is offered by the local CoSA site, and delivered by representatives from the CSC's Chaplaincy Branch (CSC, 2007).

Volunteers learn how to recognize the signs of impending relapse (e.g., escalating risk-taking behaviours), intervention techniques and when to involve professional

assistance in order to reduce or respond to risk (Wilson et al., 2005). Formal follow-up or refresher training may also be provided for volunteers, although they could also receive training and support from the outer circle members when required. There is diversity among circle sites whereby some circles may operate with volunteers receiving relatively little training while others utilize volunteers who have received both initial and refresher training, although that difference could also be a function of when the volunteers started (Rugge & Gutierrez, 2010 and see Chapter Four for a description of volunteer training in Regina).

The third group directly involved with the circles is the community-based professionals. These individuals are often psychologists, law enforcement or correctional officials, or social service workers who also volunteer their time to support the program (Wilson et al., 2007; CCJC, 2012). These professionals form what CoSA calls an outer circle and these professionals are intended to support the activities of the circle volunteers.

Each circle has a life cycle that involves preparing, beginning the circle, a maintenance phase, and closing the circle (CCJC, 2011). During phase 1, circles meet at least once a week and meetings will last between one to one and a half hours. These meetings tend to focus on the CM immediate needs such as housing, employment or financial support. Once these immediate needs are addressed, the content of the meetings will often shift to the CM sharing his story, describing past criminal behaviours, and developing a relapse prevention plan (CCJC, 2012). Throughout this process, the volunteers form support groups or surrogate families for the CM. The meetings become a safe environment for the CM and allow them to interact positively with these

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community members (Wilson et al., 2007). As the CM's risks stabilize, and trust has been established, less attention is needed toward the CM's needs or risk management and the circle transitions into phase 2, or the maintenance phase. The number of circle meetings is often reduced and sometimes the number of circle volunteers also decreases over time (CCJC, 2011). Known as the 'closing of the circle,' circles can end because of a reconviction, if the CM moves away, or when there is no more perceived need for the group. Some circles, such as those located in Regina, have lasted for over a decade and they tend to become less formal and more oriented towards support or friendship than accountability. The closing of a circle is marked by the transition from formal circles to more informal support oriented groups (CCJC, 2011).

    c. Sexual Offences

Sex offences include all sexual acts that have been defined as criminal and can range from unwanted touching to sexual violence toward both adults and children (Kong et al., 2003). The *Criminal Code of Canada, R.S. 1985, c. C-46,* defines three sexual assault levels. Level 1 is a hybrid offence, meaning that it can be prosecuted either by indictment or by way of summary conviction. Level 2 and 3 are indictable offences and carry a mandatory minimum sentence of four years if a firearm is used. Level 2 can carry up to a maximum of 14 years of imprisonment and level 3 has a maximum penalty of life imprisonment (Criminal Code of Canada, 1985).

Other sexual offences are meant to protect children from sexual abuse and include:

- Sexual interference - Direct or indirect touching of a person under the age of 14 years.
- Invitation to sexual touching - Inviting or insisting a person under the age of 14 years to touch the body of any person for sexual purposes.

- Sexual exploitation - A person in a position of authority or trust who commits sexual interference or invitation to sexual touching.
- Incest- Sexual intercourse with a person of blood relationship.
- Bestiality- Indictable offence and is liable to imprisonment term not exceeding 10 years. (Criminal Code of Canada, 1985)

It is important to note that sanctions for individuals convicted of sexual offences were increased in 2012 as part of the *Safe Streets and Communities Act, S.C. 2012, c. 1* (hereafter Safe Communities Act).

d. *Sex Offenders*

Convicted sex offenders often have personality or mental disorders (Terry, 2006). McKibben (1999) explained that, "sex offenders are not a homogeneous group of individuals" (p. 1). Many sex offenders exhibit poor social and interpersonal skills with most of them having had poor relationships with their parents and may have been sexually abused themselves as children (Terry, 2006). According to Terry (2006), there are three main classifications of sex offenders:

- Rapists typically have negative views towards women, endorse rape myths, excuse violence and display a hyper identification with the masculine role. They also display low self-esteem, may have substance abuse problems and are not able to control their aggression.
- Similar to rapists, child molesters also exhibit low self-esteem and a sense of worthlessness. They also have poor social skills and are unable to have normal adult relationships. They display feelings of inadequacy, humiliation and loneliness.
- The third category of offenders 'other' includes types of offenders that do not fall into the first two categories. This may include female, juvenile, and cyber offenders.

e. *High-Risk Sex Offenders:*

There are a number of legislative tools to ensure public safety when a sexual offender is deemed high-risk upon release from prison and they are manifested in

sanctions such as peace bonds, long-term offender designation, DNA data bank, and the national sex offender registry. While all inmates receive an initial risk assessment upon admission to a CSC penitentiary, those inmates applying for conditional release, such as day or full parole, may receive additional assessments prior to being granted by the Parole Board of Canada (formerly 'National Parole Board'). Predictors of higher risk for sexual offenders are refusal to participate in or non-completion of treatment programs, and psychological assessments and/or psychiatric evaluations that indicate a probability of recidivism. In a meta-analysis conducted for Public Safety Canada, Hanson and Morton-Bourgon (2004) concluded that the best predictor of recidivism was the offender's criminal history followed by antisocial personality and cognitions. Their study showed that many indicators of sexual recidivism were similar to the predictors of non-sexual recidivism, with two exceptions, deviant sexual interests and sexual preoccupations.

An offender released from prison who carries a high-risk classification is eligible and encouraged to participate in CoSA. As noted above, the CCJC and CoSA sites refers to these individuals as 'core members' (CM) and has their own set of criteria for who is classified as high-risk. According to CCJC (2012, 2013) CM are sex offenders who admit to committing these offences and voluntarily request CoSA's help to prevent further offending. Most CMs have been held in prison until the end of their sentence, typically have little or no community support, and are considered to be at a high-risk to re-offend (Wilson et al., 2007).

f. Restorative Justice

Restorative justice is rooted in ancient Arab, Greek, Roman and indigenous

civilizations as a response to injustice (Braithwaite, 2002; Walgrave, 2008) and elements

of this approach are also evident in many traditional religions. Judaism, Christianity,

Islam, Confucianism, Buddhism and Hinduism all promote the notion of compassion,

apology and forgiveness which are crucial values in restorative justice (Walgrave, 2008).

The popularity of restorative justice increased in the late 1970s due to dissatisfaction with

the inability of first-world justice systems to respond to the needs of victims, offenders,

or communities adequately. It became an important factor in practice and policy,

predominantly in Australia and the United Kingdom, in the 1990s (Walgrave, 2008).

Restorative justice is one of four justice paradigms that articulate the notion that

something must be done to address the inequality and harms resulting from crime. The

four justice paradigms are: restitutive, corrective, retributive and restorative. Restitution

and corrective justice both focus on a transfer between the offender and the victim as the

measure of this redress, in order for balance to be restored. Retributive justice and

restorative justice, by contrast, are based on the notion of restoring equality of

relationships between the offender and the victim. Restorative justice shares many of

aspects of the other paradigms (Llewellyn & Howse, 1999), but is an umbrella term under

which many definitions can be found. Eglash, Christie, Zehr, Marshall and Braithwaite

are scholars who have advocated that restorative justice be used as a different way to

view criminality and our responses to crime.

Restorative justice was articulated by Eglash during the 1970s when he

developed the concept of creative restitution as a response to what he argued was an

ineffective justice system. This approach allowed the offender to make amends for their

offense and gave them the freedom to determine how this could be done. Later, Christie

(1977) described "conflicts as property," maintaining the need to return ownership of the

conflict back to those impacted by it, allowing the offender and the victim to play a more

active role instead of handing the conflict to professionals. Zehr (1990) later argued that

responses to crime are determined by the *lens* in which it is viewed. He argued for a

paradigmatic shift from defining justice based on a retributive lens to a restorative lens.

Building on the concepts articulated above, Braithwaite (2007) observed that,

> Restorative justice comprises the idea that because crime hurts, justice
> should heal, and especially heal relationships. It is a process in which all
> stakeholders have an opportunity to discuss the hurts of a crime, how
> they might be repaired, how recurrence might be prevented, and how
> other needs of stakeholders can be met. (p. 689)

For Braithwaite, restorative justice is further beneficial because it fosters a culture

of apology.

Lastly, Marshall (1999) defined restorative justice as "a process whereby all the

parties with a stake in a particular offence come together to resolve collectively how to

deal with the aftermath of the offence and its implications for the future" (p. 5). Marshall

(1999) maintained that restorative justice should attend fully to victim's needs, prevent

re-offending, enable offenders to take active responsibility for their actions, to recreate a

working community that supports rehabilitation and provide the means to avoid the

financial and time delays associated with legal justice system.

For the purpose of this thesis, Braithwaite's definition of restorative justice and

reintegrative shaming will be utilized. It is hypothesized that this definition best explains

the process employed by CoSA since they are trying to provide both the community and

core member with an opportunity to repair relationships that were damaged by sexual

offending. In this case, Braithwaite would argue that restorative justice increases and

intensifies social controls by exposing offenders to the concerns of those who care for them. Though victims do not play a significant or formal role in CoSA, this definition still supports those stakeholders (in this case offenders and community) who have the opportunity to restore balance to the community and meet the goal of preventing reoffending. Indeed, the mission statement of CoSA sites is no more victims (Saskatchewan Justice Institute, 2012).

g. *Recidivism*

Recidivism is a broad term that can be defined in a number of ways. For instance, in some cases recidivism involves the return to prison or a conviction for a new offence. This may or may not include technical violations, such as failure to report or breach of curfew (Beck, 2001, p. 1). Flaherty (2004) defines recidivism on a spectrum by stating that it is a, "return to the custody of a state correctional institution for any reason" (p. 1). The Correctional Service of Canada (2009) defined recidivism as, "the percentage of released offenders readmitted to federal custody during a particular period of study." But as Harris and Hanson (2004) point out "the broader the definition, the larger the recidivism estimate should appear. Consequently, it is important to specify the recidivism criteria in any recidivism estimate" (p. 1).

However, sexual recidivism is still a broad term. Some have interpreted sexual recidivism as a reconviction of a sexual offence, whereas others included all new sexual charges, whether they were convicted of that offence or not (Harris & Hanson, 2004). Langan, Schmitt and Durose (2003) defined sex offender recidivism in four ways, "the percent rearrested for any type of crime; percent reconvicted for any type of crime; percent returned to prison with a new prison sentence for any type of crime; percent

returned to prison with or without a new prison sentence" (p. 13). Following that definition in this study recidivism will include re-arrest, reconviction, and re-incarceration for any sexual offences.

Harris and Hanson (2004) identified a second factor that needs to be taken into account in recidivism studies as "the length of the follow-up period. As the follow-up period increases, the cumulative number of recidivists can only increase" (p. 1). They explained that for all crimes, the likelihood that criminal behaviours will reappear decreases the longer that person has abstained from the behaviour (Harris & Hanson, 2004). These investigators noted that, "the recidivism rate within the first two years after release from prison is much higher than the recidivism rate between years 10 and 12 after release from prison (Harris & Hanson, 2004.). Their research examined sex offenders who had been in the community for 5, 10 and 15 years (Harris & Hanson, 2004). Because recidivism rates within the first few years of offenders of being released from prison are higher, a three-year period will be utilized for this study, which is consistent with other sexual offender research (Langan et al., 2003).

5. **Organization of the Thesis**

Chapter One outlined the research questions in the context of CoSA programming in place in Regina during its formative years of 1997-2011. The chapter presented an overview of the various sexual offences and categorizations that exist and also reviews the challenges that sexual offenders face upon being released back into the community after they have served their sentence. It also provided a brief overview of CoSA in Canada, including its structure and the demographic and offence-related characteristics of core members. The primary and secondary research questions examined in this thesis

were described, as were the operational definitions of terms used in this study.

Chapter Two presents a review of the extant literature on sexual offenders and their return to the community. It examines the concepts of restorative justice with specific attention paid to the usefulness of Braithwaite's reintegrative shaming approach to re-integrating sexual offenders. This chapter also describes typologies of sex offenders, offence cycles and treatment options. The literature surrounding CoSA as a restorative intervention for high-risk sex offenders is also presented.

Chapter Three presents the methodology employed in this study. This chapter provides a rationalization for using qualitative research methods and describes the strengths and limitations of the methods employed in the research, which was the analysis of semi-structured interviews. It also outlines the interview process, the study population, and provides an overview of how the data were collected, and analyzed using thematic network analysis.

Chapter Four presents the results of the thematic network analyses of the transcribed interviews. This chapter describes the patterns and themes identified in the analysis.

Chapter Five presents the summary and conclusion. This chapter includes a discussion of the findings and the effectiveness of CoSA to reduce sexual offender recidivism in Regina, Saskatchewan between 1997 and 2011. This chapter also identifies areas for future research and describes implications for policy and practice.

CHAPTER TWO – LITERATURE REVIEW

1. **Introduction**

This chapter presents a review of the extant literature with respect to sex offenders, restorative justice, and Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA). First, the chapter provides a review of sex offences and characteristics of offenders. A review of current legislation with respect to sexual offences in Canada is provided. This chapter also examines the patterns and cycles of sexual offenders. The risk, needs, and responsivity (RNR) model of sex offender treatment is also described and the obstacles that CMs face upon being released into the community from prison. The next section describes the key elements of CoSA as a support program for high-risk sex offenders in the community. This section outlines the CoSA model and presents research that has been conducted with respect to the efficacy of the program in reducing recidivism among sexual offenders.

The next section describes how restorative justice (RJ) can be used as a means to respond to crime and three key models are described: the 'maximalist' and 'purist' models and 'reintegrative shaming.' The chapter ends with a discussion of how the principles of CoSA are aligned with both the dynamic risk model and restorative justice approach and how these three models can be combined.

2. **Sex Offences in Canada**

Media attention has often focused on "a relatively few number of sensational sex crimes" (Serin, Barbaree, Seto, Malcom & Peacock, 1997, p. 1), which are primarily committed by a small group of repeat sex offenders. It has been established in U.S. studies that the general attitude toward sex offenders are punitive (Mancini, Mears &

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Pickett, 2013; Willis, Levenson, & Ward, 2010). In Levenson et al. (2007) and Levenson, Sheilds and Singleton (2012) it was noted that members of the public supported severely retributive and stigmatizing laws to punish sex offenders even if there was no evidence that such policies are effective in controlling sex offender recidivism. In fact, evidence that shows many punitive sex offender laws are not effective and might contribute to recidivism (Mancini et al., 2013), even though the public supports these policies (Levenson et al., 2007)

Mancini et al., (2013) attempted to explain public opinion about sex offenders by developing three models; the victim-oriented model, the sex offender stereotypes model and the risk-management concerns model. The first model depicts the popular concerns that sex crime victims tend to be female, young and permanently damaged by their victimization. The sex offender stereotypes model identifies the common labels or typecasts that characterize sex offenders as monsters or evil persons who cannot be reformed. The risk-management model emphasizes concerns about the rates of sexual recidivism. Their analyses revealed that individuals who supported punitive measures towards sex offenders: 1) perceived that a larger proportion of sex crime victims are young children, 2) believed that such victims suffer more than victims of other crimes, 3) endorsed stereotypes of sex offenders as incapable of reform and driven to crime by immorality, and 4) judged that sex crimes have increased over the previous five years (Mancini et al., 2013, pp. 749-750).

Sensationalized portrayals of sex offenders as dangerous offenders by the media can be devastating for a newly released ex-offender who is trying to re-enter society because this public attention and identification may increase their social isolation and this

attention makes it difficult for them to find a stable job, support or friendship networks, or housing, which are key factors in reducing recidivism (Saskatchewan Justice Institute, 2012). This is also reflected within the prison system where sex offenders are at higher risk of victimization as other inmates believe that the lives of sex offenders are of little worth. Indeed, many prison inmates state that they want sex offenders punished severely and some will even go as far to suggest that physical punishments such as castration are deserved (Holmes & Holmes, 2002).

The majority of sex offences that are reported to the police are less severe than the general public may believe. Most sex crimes reported in 2010-2011 consisted of Level 1 offences, which are the least serious of the three sexual assault offences. Brennan (2012) reported that 21,283 cases of sexual assault reported were Level 1, whereas 398 cases were reported for Level 2 and 140 cases for Level 3. There were 3,822 reported cases of sexual violence against children. In 2012, it was reported that 72% of offences against children were level 1. Level 2 and level 3 comprised 1 % while the remaining 27% were victims of made up of other offences specific to youth, such as sexual interference (Cotter & Beaupre, 2012). As all CoSA participants have been assessed as high-risk sexual offenders, all would have committed Level 2 and 3 offences.

3. **Patterns and Cycles of Sex Offending**

In order to shed light on the needs that sexual offenders have in terms of community re-entry in Canada, the following section describes the patterns and cycles of sexual offending and how that relates to contemporary models of sex offender treatment. Offence cycles describe the patterns of an offender's thoughts, feelings and behaviours. Sex offences do not just happen. In order to carry out these acts, sexual offenders must

select, stalk, and assault their victims. Of course, some offenders are opportunistic but for the most part, there is a certain amount of planning required to complete the act undetected (Bonta & Andrews, 2003).

The risks of re-offending depend on a number of factors. Sexual offences usually involve a pattern of perceptions, rationalizations, justifications and behaviours that take place before the actual act is committed. The cycle of sexual offending often includes planning the offence, fantasizing about the victim, grooming the victim, and then making decisions to commit the offence. Terry (2006) explained that the cycle of offending behaviour often starts when the offender's thoughts involve self-pity, anger and frustration. These patterns often result in withdrawal from others that create additional frustration and anger that remains unresolved. This frustration and social isolation increases the risks of recidivism (Terry, 2006).

After the offence has taken place, the offender must rationalize it in order to continue the criminal behaviour (McAlinden, 2006). As Terry explained earlier, many have cognitive disorders that allow them to justify their behaviour. Cognitive disorders are explained as 'neutralization,' where an individual will try to minimize their feelings of shame and guilt through excuses and justifications (Terry, 2006, p. 58). They are able to disown the responsibility.

Denial is also a common behaviour among sex offenders (Harkins, Beech & Goodwill, 2010) and Barbaree (1991) identified three forms: 1) complete denial; 2) acknowledgment of the sexual activity, but denial that an offence occurred; and 3) acknowledgement of physical contact but denial of sexual content. Schneider and Wright (2004) also explained that denial in sex offenders is multifaceted and falls under three

categories of accountability: refutation, minimization, and depersonalization. Refutation means that the sex offender will often deny the offense altogether by saying the victim fabricated the story or they do not accurately remember what happened (Terry, 2006). Some offenders will admit their guilt but not take responsibility by minimizing the harms of the offence and instead rationalize or justify the act. Offenders might also depersonalize the criminal act by saying that they committed the offence, but are reluctant to admit that they are vulnerable to committing sexual offenses (Harkins et al., 2010).

In order to disrupt the cycle of sexual offending and reduce recidivism, a number of correctional treatments that take place in institutions or the community have been introduced. Many of those interventions centre on confronting offender refutation, minimization and depersonalization. The following section describes these treatment programs, and this serves as a theoretical foundation for the description of the CoSA model.

4. Sex Offender Treatment Programs

There are a number of treatment programs developed to respond to the special needs of sex offenders while they are incarcerated or serving their sentences in the community. Historically, most sexual offender treatment was based on cognitive-behavioural models. These approaches identify the habits, values and social influences that contribute to offending and teach offenders the self-management skills they need to manage high-risk situations (Hanson & Thornton, 2002).

Hanson and Thornton (2002) found that community treatment programs were as effective as institutional programs and offenders who failed to complete any treatment

programs were at higher risk of reoffending. Further research demonstrated that the two

most significant factors associated with recidivism in sex offenders are sexual deviancy,

which is a static factor while daily routine, instability, and criminality are dynamic factors

(Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2004). As sexual offender treatment models evolved, there

was growing attention paid to the risk, needs and responsivity (RNR) model. In their

summary of the sexual offender literature, Hanson and Yates (2013) noted that this

approach has been shown to be the most effective sex offender treatment strategy. The

focus on dynamic risk principles in this model make it very consistent with CoSA

interventions although the laypersons who originally introduced CoSA did not have this

approach in mind. Following is a detailed description of the RNR model.

   a. *The Risk, Needs, and Responsivity (RNR) Model*

       The RNR model is an approach designed to guide the assessment and treatment of

offenders. Andrews and Bonta (2007) described the three main principles: risk, need and

responsivity. RNR principles have influenced the development of risk assessment tools,

as well as treatment and rehabilitation programs available for offenders. The model

allows for the assessment of dynamic risks, allows practitioners to identify the offender's

unmet needs, and posits that treatment should be guided by responsivity (e.g., tailoring

the interventions to the unique needs of the offender) (Andrews & Bonta, 2007). Hanson

and Yates (2013) applied the RNR model to sex offenders and sexual offending.

       The risk principle maintains that recidivism can be reduced if the level of

treatment is proportional to the offender's risk of recidivism. This principal has two

elements: 1) matching the level of treatment to an offender's risk and 2) the offender's

risk to re-offend. There is no current research depicting an effective program length for

sex offenders, and it varies across jurisdictions. In Canada, federal high risk offenders

receive on average of 300 contact hours and moderate-risk sex offenders receive between

approximately 160 to 195 contact hours. All offenders involved in CSC programs receive

additional programming that addresses criminogenic needs (Hanson & Yates, 2013).

The need principle focuses correction treatment on responding to 'criminogenic

needs' also known as dynamic risk factors that are directly correlated with criminal

behaviours. Unlike static risk factors, which are things that cannot be changed (such as

age at first arrest), criminogenic needs can be modified as they are risk-relevant and

potentially changeable (Andrews & Bonta, 2007; Hanson & Yates, 2013). Hanson and

Yates (2013) identified the main risk factors that have shown to have a significant

statistical impact on sexual recidivism, and these are presented in Table 2-1.

Table 2-1 Established Risk Factors for Sexual Recidivism.

<u>Sexual deviance</u>
Any deviant sexual preference
Sexual preference for children
Sexualized violence
Multiple paraphilias
Sexual preoccupations
Attitudes tolerant of sexual assault
<u>Lifestyle instability/criminality</u>
Childhood behaviour problems (e.g., running away, grade failure)
Juvenile delinquency
Any prior offences
Lifestyle instability (reckless behaviour, employment instability)
Personality disorder (antisocial, psychopathy)
Grievance/hostility
<u>Social problems/intimacy deficits</u>
Single (never married)
Conflicts with intimate partners
Hostility toward women
Emotional congruence with children
Negative social influences
<u>Response to treatment/supervision</u>
Treatment drop-out
Non-compliance with supervision
Violation of conditional release
<u>Poor cognitive problem-solving</u>
<u>Age (young)</u>

 (Source: Hanson and Yates, 2013, p. 4)

According to Hanson and Yates (2013), most treatment programs whose goals are to reduce criminal offending focus on providing the offender with skills to recognize and take steps to deal with these risk factors. The responsivity principle refers to the fact that cognitive social learning interventions are the most effective way for offenders to learn new behaviours. By tailoring the intervention to the learning style, motivation, abilities and disabilities and strengths of the offender, it can influence successful engagement (Andrews & Bonta, 2007; Hanson & Yates, 2013).

When considering treatment for sex offenders the fundamental features of cognitive behavioural treatment should be considered. Such features include cognitive and behavioural self-regulation, skills building, practice and rehearsal (Hanson & Yates, 2013). CoSA seeks to reduce the impact of many of these dynamic risk factors by providing a supportive network in which the volunteers can intervene.

b. *Prison-Based Sexual Offender Treatment Programs*

There have been a number of developments in the treatment of incarcerated sex offenders. One specific program is the cognitive behavioural-based *Sex Offender Treatment Program* (SOTP) implemented in English prisons (Friendship, Mann & Beech, 2003). The program was initially intended for offenders serving sentences of four or more years, but accepted all inmates who volunteered to participate. Many of the principles of this approach have since been incorporated into Canadian sex offender programs.

The Correctional Service of Canada currently delivers the National Sex Offender Program (NaSOP). The program consists of three levels of programming for incarcerated male sex offenders based on whether their risk to re-offend is high, medium or low

intensity. Each program level consists of a set of modules that target the specific, primary needs of the offender. Modules include interventions based on addressing cognitive distortions and management strategies, emotion management, intimacy, relationship and social functioning skills, empathy and victim awareness; and deviant sexual fantasy and arousal (CSC, 2009).

c. *Community-Based Sexual Offender Programs*

The Correctional Service of Canada operates two programs for parolees: for high-risk offenders and a maintenance program. The high-risk offender program is a cognitive-behaviour oriented program that is based upon individual and group counselling. The program focuses on therapy addressing sex offender's feelings, fantasy, future, and follow through (also known as the 'four F's'). The program involves parole and psychiatric treatment staff, the program director and offender. The treatment team meet at a monthly case conference where the goal is to address problems with supervision, such as employment, relationships and the offender's attitude. The offender's progress is assessed and any necessary changes are made (Griffiths, Dandurand & Murdoch, 2007). Descriptions of CoSA, reported below, show that this 'program' addresses many of these same problem areas using volunteers rather than paid professionals.

The maintenance program is offered to offenders who have admitted to the sexual offence and require a relapse prevention intervention of lower intensity than the high-risk offenders. The maintenance program is comprised of three stages: the first consists of individual and group therapy that focuses on maintaining institutional treatment gains. The next phase includes bi-monthly group meetings, which are offered to offenders who

have successfully completed two 12-week cycles of the initial stage. The third stage is a monthly group meeting that focuses on long-term maintenance (Griffiths et al., 2007).

A number of U.S. jurisdictions have used a containment strategy, which is a multifaceted approach that focuses on community and victim safety through a management and control plan developed for each offender (English, Pullen, & Jones, 1997). This approach is designed to identify key risk factors and behaviours to stop the offender committing any additional offences. For example, the Massachusetts Intensive Parole for Sex Offender's Program (IPSO) provides a holistic approach to manage sex offenders in the community. IPSO uses intensive supervision with strict enforcement techniques provided by trained parole officers. The program uses components such as unannounced visits, sex offence specific treatment, electronic monitoring, curfews, polygraph testing, internet use restrictions, and mandatory daily diaries to name a few. The program is tailored to the offender's specific offending behaviours (Cain & MacLellan, 2008).

Not all practitioners and community members are entirely satisfied with traditional sexual offender treatment approaches, in either institutions or the community. Some offenders with mental illnesses or who are developmentally delayed might not respond well to cognitive-behavioural approaches. The living and employment circumstances of others might be so disorganized that they cannot focus on their treatment. CoSA is intended to respond to the unmet needs of those high-risk offenders. The following section describes the CoSA model and its relationship to contemporary sexual offender treatment models.

5. Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA)

During the mid-1990s, public attention was drawn to a small number of high-risk sex offenders being released at warrant expiry. Because they have been denied parole, they were no longer under supervision and few had meaningful support systems (Hannem & Petrunik, 2004). As a result, their risks of recidivism were higher than offenders who had higher levels of social support. There is a long history of holding sexual offenders until their warrant expiry. In 1986, Bill C-67 denied parole to offenders who were considered to be at high-risk of committing offences causing death or other serious harms such as sexual offence against a child. This legislation, however, created a gap in the system in which high-risk sex offenders were released after serving their full sentence with no formal supervision or support in the community (Hammem & Putrunik, 2004).

CoSA emerged as an alternative approach to enhance community protection by taking a restorative approach that combines both public safety concerns and offender reintegration after their release from incarceration (Hannem & Petrunik, 2004; Wilson et al., 2005). CoSA is operated by non-government organizations and was founded by laypersons without professional training. CoSA has two objectives, and the first is to prevent further victimization and the second is to help the offenders (CMs) function in the community (Hammen & Petrunik, 2004). These aims are reflected in the CoSA mission statement, "To substantially reduce the risk of future sexual victimization of community members by assisting and supporting released men in their task of integrating with the community and leading responsible, productive, and accountable lives" (Wilson et al., 2007, p. 7). According to the Saskatchewan Justice Institute (2012), the model has a set of core beliefs (values) that guide the process: "No one is disposable; No one does this alone; No more victims; Community is responsible for its victims and its offenders;

Community safety is primary" (p. 12). The goal of the CCJC and CoSA sites is to promote the successful integration of released sex offenders into the community by providing support, advocacy, and a way to be meaningfully accountable in exchange for living safely in the community (Wilson et al., 2007).

According to CoSA, CMs are offenders released from prison who have been convicted of a sex offense, admit to committing the offence, and voluntarily request for CoSAs help to prevent further offending. Core members typically have been held in prison to the end of their sentence and have little or no community support upon release. As a result, they are considered high-risk to re-offend by the CSC and the Parole Board of Canada (PBC) (Wilson et al., 2007).

Circles consist of four to seven volunteers who enter into a covenant with the core member who are at the centre of the circle (Hemman & Petrunik, 2004). In the beginning phases of the circle, the meetings focus primarily on the Core Members and their immediate needs (safety, housing, finances). In the following meetings the focus will shift as the Core Member`s needs are met. They will shift to story sharing, criminal history and establishing a relapse prevention plan (CCJC, 2013). The covenant is document that is signed by the core member and volunteers (a sample copy is presented in the Appendices). The covenant specifies the obligations each member has to the other and the principles each must follow.

Circles pass through a series of phases where the intensity of volunteer involvement decreases. As the circle matures, and the core member becomes more independent, volunteers will play a less formal and supportive relationship until the circle closes. As noted in Chapter One, there are three phases in a circle's lifecycle. Depending

on the needs of the core member, the circles will meet once a week or more during the first phase. Often during this time the core member has many unmet needs in terms of re-entry into the community. Few have employment, a stable residence or access to health care. Some core members require identification or documents such as driver's licenses. Core members who have few friends, family members or positive people in their lives need more support during this phase. In some cases, individual volunteers will meet with the CM on a daily basis just to talk (Hemman & Petrunik, 2004). The volunteer's primary job is to listen to CM concerns, assist him in developing constructive solutions to their problems, hold him accountable for any lapses in judgment and support him in maintaining a proper routine.

In some cases, the volunteers will essentially form a core member's entire social network or pseudo family. The meetings themselves become a safe environment for the CM and allow them to interact positively with a proxy community or network provided by the circle volunteers (Hemman & Petrunik, 2004; Wilson et al., 2005). The circles will meet less frequently with the ex-offender in what is called phase two, or the maintenance phase (CCJC, 2012). However, if the CM continues to have major needs or their risks increase then the circles will meet on a longer-term basis or more frequently (CCJC, 2012; Hemman & Petrunik, 2004). The progression from phase one to three can be interrupted by a crisis or if the CM is experiencing problems, and the high intensity of the meeting might cause a delay in the progression as the CM may require a longer period of time to deal with those problems. In such a case, the circle has the flexibility to meet more often. As time passes, core members require less support and in the third phase of a circle's life, the frequency of meetings decrease substantially (CCJC, 2012).

The circle volunteers, or inner circle, are members of the community and in the past many came from faith-based backgrounds (although this is not a requirement). These volunteers go through a two-day training program provided by CoSA. This enables them to 1) become more knowledgeable members of the community about sexual offenders, and 2) to recognize the signs of impending relapse and know when to involve professional assistance in the risk management process (Wilson et al., 2007). Volunteers are asked to commit to circles for one year and typically do not play a supervisory or formal therapeutic role. They walk with the CM as he confronts factors that place him at risk of reoffending and attempts to develop a meaningful life and self-worth (Hemman & Petrunik, 2004).

The last group directly involved with the circles are the community-based professionals or 'outer circle.' This group typically consists of psychologists, law enforcement officers, correctional officials or social service workers who also volunteer their time for the program (Wilson et al., 2005). As noted in Chapter One, this group of professionals provide support and assistance to the inner circle members and are available for consultation.

a. *The Efficacy of the CoSA Model*

From its origins in the 1990s until the present, there have been a number of empirical studies that have evaluated the effectiveness of the CoSA model. These studies suggest that this model reduces sexual offender recidivism (Armstrong, Chistyakova, Mackenzie & Malloch, 2008; Bates, Saunders and Wilson, 2007; Cesaroni, 2001; Kirkwood & Richley, 2008; Quaker Peace and Social Justice, 2005; Wilson et al., 2005). The following paragraphs report the main findings of these studies.

In an early examination of the CoSA model Wilson et al. (2005) compared two groups of sex offenders. The first group was comprised of 60 offenders who were involved in a circle after having been released at warrant expiry. The second group consisted of a matched comparison sample of 60 offenders who were also released at sentence completion, but did not participate in CoSA. Analysis of the data revealed that the comparison group recidivated more frequently and quickly then the core members. Sexual recidivism by CoSA participants was 70% lower than that of the comparison group. Eighteen offenders in the CoSA group recidivated with an average time-at-failure of 22.10 months while 26 of the comparison subjects reoffending with an average time-at-failure of 18.54 months (Wilson et al., 2005). Moreover, of those CM who did re-offend the analyses determined that the offences were less severe than for which they were originally imprisoned (i.e., obscene phone calls rather than violent sexual assault) (Wilson et al., 2005; Kirkwood & Richley, 2008). The study also indicated that participation in CoSA enhanced the core member's well-being and helped them successfully integrate into the community. Additionally, the core members reported that the circles reduced their chances of reoffending (Wilson et al., 2005; Kirkwood & Richley, 2008). A follow-up study by Wilson et al. (2009) produced similar results and CoSA participants had reduced recidivism: CMs recidivated at a lower rate and among those who did re-offend, their time from release to failure was significantly longer than non-participants (Wilson et al., 2009).

Bates et al. (2010) looked at 19 studies of CoSA effectiveness and their impacts on sex offenders, volunteers and other stakeholders conducted prior to 2009. They grouped their findings in terms of core members, volunteers, professionals, and

recidivism. Most of these studies revealed that core members were motivated by having

someone with whom to talk, help with daily problems, learning to socialize, and having a

sense of acceptance rather than stigmatization or rejection. Conversely, these same CMs

reported having specific fears over being prejudged, concerns over possible breaches of

confidentiality, and a generalized fear that the circles might not work. Volunteers

generally reported that they were motivated by a sense of giving something back to

community, make a difference in the lives of the offenders, and prevent future

victimization. While most volunteers initially feared that they might not be making a

difference, they noted that most CMs would likely have reoffended without the support of

the circles. Professionals involved with the circles generally reported significant benefits

for both the offender (support, practical and emotional help with reintegrating) and the

community (increased monitoring, risk management, and sense of community safety); the

latter group also revealed the need for increased structure and/or boundaries within the

circles and the need for additional support for them to operate.

In terms of recidivism, Bates *et al*. (2010, pp. 53-53) review indicated lower rates

of recidivism among CMs compared to sex offenders not participating in circles:

- Overall recidivism: 11.4-28.3% among CMs compared to 38.6-43.4%
  of non-participants;
- Sexual recidivism: 2.3-5.0% among CMs compared to 13.7-16.7% in
  the control groups and;
- Violent recidivism: 9.1-15.0% among CMs compared to 34.1-35.0% of
  the non-participants.

Stemming from the success of CoSA in Canada, projects were established in

Belgium, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The Thames

Valley (U.K.) circles project has reported similar success to studies of CoSA in Canada

(Kirkwood & Richley, 2008). In an initial evaluation, Quaker Peace and Social Justice

(2005) found that within a three-year period, none of the 20 core members in their study had recidivated sexually though eight of the core members did show signs of recidivist behaviour. Bates, Saunders and Wilson (2007) found that none of 16 core members had recidivated while ten exhibited signs of recidivist behaviours, and six cases were detected by circle volunteers and referred to professionals with the aim of preventing further victimisation. Armstrong et al. (2008), concluded that "An approach like Circles may provide an example of how communities can shift from the view that serious crime is someone else's problem to the view that it is an area where they can and even should make a difference" (pp. 78-79).

The most recent study by Hoing, Bogaerts and Vogelvang (2013) looked at the CoSA intervention model using a grounded theory analysis on 38 transcripts of interviews of circle members. This study determined four strategies that appeared to be essential in successful circles: they were inclusive, promoted change, reduced risks and had a process orientation. The following paragraphs describe these four strategies.

Inclusion is a function of a circle that is not just achieved by support alone, but is achieved through the frequency of activities and strategies. The most important activity is the regular meeting and the discussions that take place in the meetings. Core members, and their issues, are normally the centre of discussions. Topics include the offence and its outcomes, treatment, negative emotions, personal issues, and everyday topics of interest. Inclusion promotes positive group characteristics such as trust, openness belonging, acceptance and equity. Inclusion was seen as the most important of the strategies and essential for circle effectiveness.

Change promoting activities are geared towards building the social and problem-

solving skills of the ex-prisoners. Circle members are able to give advice, tips and methods to solve problems and role model positive and pro-social behaviours. Circles allow the core members to learn more effective ways to cope with daily issues and life events.

Risk-reducing strategies consist of four measures: 1) developing and discussing relapse prevention plans; 2) monitoring the core members' behaviour outside the circle; 3) confronting the core member with risk-related advice; and 4) reporting risk concerns to the professionals. Through discussions with the core member about behaviours outside the circle coupled with using the advice that was given to them often reminds the core member to stay conscious for risk.

CoSA circles are process-oriented and seek to employ a balanced approach using the previously mentioned strategies and while maintaining a positive group dynamic. In order to produce this balance, there must be pre-circle meetings in which the strategies are discussed and action plans evaluated (Hoing, 2013).

6. Social Capital

Most prisoners will eventually be released to the community. Thus, imprisonment and re-entry can have a significant effect on communities, as most prisoners released into the community will leave unprepared to fully engage in community life. If nothing is done to prepare these newly released individuals for the transition from prison to community it is the entire community that suffers the burden (Settles, 2009).

The concept of social capital, according to Coleman (1988) and revisited by Settles (2009) is "anything that causes or results in collective action, even when that collective action is limited to those affected by a criminal episode" (p. 288). It is thought

that if the social ties that bind communities together are strengthened those within the community will live happier and more productive lives and there will be less opportunity for crime to damage the community. Braithwaite (2002) maintains that social capital is "becoming progressively more important to economic development than physical capital" (p. 214).

This same notion can be applied to incarcerated individuals. Because most prisoners will eventually be released there is a need to support this newly released offender population and policy makers are looking to restorative justice to accomplish this goal. Settles (2009) argues that increasing capital could have positive benefits for the re-entry process. The risks to victims, communities and offenders can be minimized if offenders develop a greater degree of social capital in the reintegration process. However, in order for this to happen the offender must re-establish social ties and communities must model positive behaviour.

When initially released from prison, there is a small window of opportunity to maximize the use of restorative justice principles and social capital to promote successful reintegration into the community for the offender (see Petersilia, 2001; Settles, 2009). This window of opportunity is limited since most released offenders return to their homes and families, which are overwhelmingly in poor inner-city neighbourhoods where it is difficult to avoid reoffending due to a lack of opportunities and the prevalence of gangs, the temptations of drugs and a lack of positive role models (Settles, 2009).

7. Justice Paradigms

There are four justice paradigms: restitutive, corrective, retributive and restorative. The general notion of justice, underlying each paradigm, requires that

something must be done to address the effects of the crime. The difference between the paradigms is the way by which justice is to be achieved. This is important for the analyses of CoSA because that model was based on principles of restorative justice (RJ).

According to Llewellyn and Howse (1999), restitution and corrective justice both focus on a transfer, returning what was lost between the offender and the victim, after a crime occurred in order for balance to be restored. Restitution requires that an offender somehow repay or return what was taken from the sufferer: "The idea being that through her actions the wrongdoer has been enriched at the expense of the sufferer of wrong" (Llewellyn & Howse, 1999, p. 23). However, restitution focuses more so on the physical/material harm that was caused while corrective justice focuses on the intangible harms that were caused that a material transfer cannot address. Retributive justice emphasizes an amount of punishment equal to the harm done as the correct response to crime (Jones & Patenaude, 2011).

Proponents of RJ argue that it is best achieved through looking at recent events with a view to transform the relationship for a better future. Restorative justice, therefore, shares many of aspects of the other paradigms. It is necessary to identify and understand the underlying relationships to the other paradigms of justice, to fully understand the necessary elements of a restorative justice approach (Llewellyn & Howse, 1999). The following paragraphs expand on these definitions and compare them to the principles of restorative justice.

The notion of justice demands that something must be done. Such actions might include restoration whereby the situation is returned to the way things were before the offence, a return to the "status quo ante." This concept may be applied three ways within

the justice system. First, it can be retributive or punitive – this can mean that an offender participates in hard labour in prison or community service to compensate society for the wrong (Llewellyn & Howse, 1999). Second, it can also be understood as a type of deterrence, emphasizing the notion that crime does not pay. "Restitution is no different than seizing boats and cars that have been purchased with criminal money, or the idea that criminals should not be able to profit by writing bestsellers about their criminal exploits" (Llewellyn & Howse, 1999, p. 22). Restitution can also be rehabilitative by teaching the offender a sense of responsibility. For example, restitution may occur when a victim's physical therapy expenses are paid by the offender who assaulted him or her or compensating for emotional distress.

Restitution is focused more so on the sufferer, placing the victim in the centre of any attempt to restore justice; it is both process and outcome-oriented. Restorative justice shares this focus and restitution is often used as part of restorative response. However, because restitution requires quantification, it cannot account for non-material harms often suffered by the victim or the community (e.g. injury). Restorative justice also does not focus entirely on the victim, nor does it solely focus on fixing a wrong through a transfer between the victim and the offender, rather the aim is to restore relationships between the parties. However, it is important to note the endpoint within restorative justice should be different than that of the status quo ante; it should seek to make things better, as the prior conditions were conducive to crime (Llewellyn & Howse, 1999).

Corrective justice is similar to restitution in the sense that it seeks a transfer from the wrongdoer to the sufferer. The underling notion of this approach is that by punishing the wrongdoer the victim's situation will improve (Llewellyn & Howse, 1999). However,

unlike restitution which focuses on the physical/material harm, corrective justice takes

into account intangible or non-material aspects of harm caused by the wrongdoer –

"through the use of compensatory damages corrective justice seeks to correct the

inequality created through the interference with the sufferer's rights" (Llewellyn &

Howse, 1999, p. 30). Unlike corrective justice, restorative justice shares a recognition

that harm to the victims are more than simply a material or physical loss – "that, first and

foremost, wrongdoing is a wrong against the rights of the victim" (Llewellyn & Howse,

1999, p. 31). The difference between restorative and corrective justice is that the former

is not concerned with the notion of transfer to achieve equality but, rather it focuses on

restoring relationships with the parties involved to provide a way in which the rights of

all parties, not just the victim's, are respected (Llewellyn & Howse, 1999).

Retributive justice, unlike restitution and corrective justice, is not limited to the

notion of transfer to achieve restoration or equality. Instead, retributive justice is based

on the notion of establishing/re-establishing social equality between the offender and the

victim (Llewellyn & Howse, 1999). In order to achieve this, the notion of punishment is

necessary. Retributive justice "identifies the very idea of restoration with punishment. It

attempts to restore social equality through retribution against the wrongdoer; exercised

through isolating punishment" (Llewellyn & Howse, 1999, p. 32). Thus, punishment is

the means to achieve restoration.

The aim of restorative justice, like retributive justice, is to restore relationships

through establishing or re-establishing social equality in relationships. However, it

differs from the other paradigms because it is inherently relational. Advocates for this

paradigm of justice posit that if justice is to be meaningful it needs to take into account

human nature. Thus, restoration of relationships is established when a person's right's to

equal dignity, concern and respect are fulfilled (Llewellyn & Howse, 1999). It takes into

account what practices are needed to restore the relationship, which must be situational.

In order to be successful, it is necessary to take into account the nature of the

relationships between all parties involved; restorative justice must be concerned with

both the harm caused and its context and causes (Llewellyn & Howse, 1999). Where

retributive justice assumes punitive practices are needed, restorative justice asks what is

required to restore social equality (Llewellyn & Howse, 1999).

There is a debate within the restorative justice literature concerning how harm is

addressed for both the victim and offender. Prominent within the debate are the 'purist'

and 'maximalist' models (see McCold [2000] and Walgrave [2008] respectively). An

overview of the paradigm of restorative justice as well as an extensive discussion of these

models is presented in the following section.

8. Restorative Justice

Restorative justice emerged as a concept within the administration of justice

during the late 1970s and became an important factor in practice and policy in some

nations throughout the 1990s. This movement aimed at developing new practices to

correct the failures of the current justice system, such as the lack of victim participation

within the criminal justice process (Walgrave, 2008). Restorative justice is not one single

theory of crime, but rather a paradigm which incorporates attempts to resolve conflict and

restore harmony as a method to successfully to address crime The approach that emerged

recognized that two or more stakeholders needed to be engaged in solving the problem

caused by the commission of a crime (Marshall, 1999). Practitioners of restorative

justice have found that the same underlying principles are common to these different

types of interventions, including personal participation, community involvement,

problem solving, and flexibility (Marshall, 1999).

    a. Classical Origins of Restorative Justice

        It is important to note that the contemporary criminal justice system has not

always focused primarily on the relationships between the offender and the state. Some

principles adopted by restorative justice practitioners are strongly rooted in indigenous

traditions. Particularly, New Zealand Maori and North American Aboriginal traditions

are evident through the incorporation of objectives such as encounter[2], community and

reparation, as seen, for example, in the practice of sentencing circles (Patenaude, Wood &

Griffiths, 1992; Ryan, 1995; Walgrave, 2008). In such indigenous cultures justice is not

understood as a process that can be institutionalized in the same adversarial manner

observed in the Canadian criminal justice system. It is a problem solving mechanism that

is drawn from their culture and surroundings (Ryan, 1995; Vaandering, 2010). Wonshe

(2004) observed that restorative justice should be reflected as "a thread woven into the

fabric of their lives" (p. 257). However, as explained by Daly (2002), the present

criminal justice system is not based on this same ideology. Many restorative sanctions

seen today include traditional aspects of indigenous culture, but the reality is that these

restorative practices are still bureaucratic practices based on Western/European notions of

justice that are essentially flexible and accommodating toward culture differences. This

does not mean that they are purely indigenous justice practice (Daly, 2002).

        Restorative justice is also found in practices of Christianity. In the sixth century

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[2]   According to Van Ness and Strong (2010, p. 73), an encounter is defined as, a meeting of the relevant
    stakeholders considers five elements conducive to restoration: 1) meeting, 2) shared narratives, 3)
    emotion exhibited in the communication, 4) understanding and 5) achievement of an agreement.

A.D., Celtic monks developed a manner of reconciliation with God through confession and private penance. This heightened notions of taking personal responsibility of crime (Braithwaite, 2002). However, while early Christian practices underlined forgiveness, reconciliation and redemption, secular Christian rulers started to favour corporal punishment, justifying that practice by maintaining that crime was not committed against a person but rather the moral order of the church and state.

According to Braithwaite (2002), the formation of the state with its centralizing power gradually shifted reparation for the victim to law enforcement and compliance. The shift from restorative justice to the current model of criminal justice came at the end of the Dark Ages. Crime was transformed into a matter of a transgression against the king instead of a wrong done to another person. This shift was a central part of the monarch's program of domination over their subjects.

The incorporation of restorative justice practices in the modern paradigm of justice shifted from disputes between individuals to offences against the state (Daly, 2002). Many restorative sanctions seen today include traditional or spiritual aspects, but the reality is that these restorative practices are still rooted in common law judicial practices that are attempting to be flexible and accommodating toward cultural differences (e.g., the influence of the *Gladue* decision on Canadian courts).

b. *Modern Origins of Restorative Justice*

The evolution of restorative justice was in part due to social movements that aimed to address the existing failures of and to reform the current criminal justice system (see Llwellyn & Howse, 1999). These social movements contributed to the development of restorative justice as a paradigm (Walgrave, 2008). The leaders of movements wanted

to see more recognition for the victim as too much attention was paid to the offender's

rights and needs, and victims were often excluded from the process. To advocates of

restorative justice, the traditional criminal justice system is counterproductive from the

victim's perspectives (Walgrave, 2008). Van Ness and Strong (1997) identified five key

movements that have influenced the development of restorative justice:

1) The *informal justice movement:* this emphasized the need for informal procedures that enable access and participation in the legal process.
2) *Restitution as a response to crime:* This approach emphasized that meeting the needs of victims would better serve the interests of society.
3) The *victim's rights movement* focused on allowing victims to participate in the legal process and to recognize their rights throughout the process.
4) There are two major strands in the *Reconciliation/conferencing movement*:
a. *victim/offender mediation-* this process allows victims and offenders to come together with a mediator to address the situation.
b. *Family group conferencing movement in New Zealand* – the police bring together victims, supporters and offenders with their families to achieve resolution and restoration.
5) *The social justice movement*: This refers to groups that worked for a justice that is concerned with social well-being.

Communitarianism is a precondition that provides a context that is conducive for

restorative justice to flourish (Braithwaite, 1989). Walgrave (2008) explained, "They are

an end because it is believed that achieving restorative processes in a community is

constructive to the revival of the community" (p. 618). According to Braithwaite (1989),

there are three elements to communitarianism: "(1) densely enmeshed interdependency,

where the interdependencies are characterized by (2) mutual obligation and trust, and (3)

are interpreted as a matter of group loyalty rather than individual convenience" (p. 88).

Shaming in communitarian societies has more effect than in individualistic societies.

Shaming by a loved one can be more potent than impersonal shaming from the state. Not

only do communitarian societies provide more meaningful shaming, they are also better

equipped to deliver shaming that is reintegrative, and with a support system, communities

are better able to provide practical support (Braithwaite, 1989).

c. *An Evolving Definition of Restorative Justice*

Defining restorative justice has proven difficult. There have been many

definitions proffered. As McCold (2001) explained, "restorative justice has become to

mean all things to all people" (p. 358). Like Eglash, Christie and Zehr, scholars have also

used restorative justice as a different way to view criminality and the criminal justice

system. Van Ness and Strong (1997) suggested:

> It is a different way of thinking about crime and our response to it; it
> focuses on the harm caused by crime; repairing the harm done to
> victims and reducing future harm by preventing crime; it requires
> offenders to take responsibility for their actions and for the harm they
> have caused; it seeks redress for victims, recompense by offenders and
> reintegration of both within the community; and it is achieved through a
> cooperative effort by communities and the government. (p. 42)

They asserted that restorative justice looks at the bigger picture, and is able to involve

more parties. Van Ness and Strong (1997) emphasized that, "It recognizes the importance

of community involvement and initiative in responding to and reducing crime" (p. 24).

In other words, the state no longer plays a primary role in the resolution of victimization.

Braithwaite's (2007) view of restorative justice suggests its superiority to

conventional forms of retributive justice and he stated that,

> Restorative justice comprises the idea that because crime hurts, justice
> should heal, and especially heal relationships. It is a process in which
> all stakeholders have an opportunity to discuss the hurts of a crime,
> how they might be repaired, how recurrence might be prevented, and
> how other needs of stakeholders can be met. (p. 689)
> For Braithwaite, restorative justice is superior to regular forms of punitive justice

because it attempts to normalize relationships by reintegrating the offender, the victim

and the community without the use of stigmatization or isolation (Roach, 2000).

Restorative justice is argued to be beneficial because it fosters a culture of apology.

Braithwaite has coined the term 'reintegrative shaming' thereby providing a theoretical

model within the paradigm of restorative justice.

Marshall (1999) defined restorative justice as, "a process whereby all the parties

with a stake in a particular offence come together to resolve collectively how to deal with

the aftermath of the offence and its implications for the future" (p. 5). He identified the

primary objectives of a restorative justice response. Restorative justice should attend

fully to victims' needs, prevent re-offending, enable offenders to take responsibility for

their actions, to recreate a working community that supports rehabilitation and provide

the means to avoid the financial and time delays associated with the formal justice system

(Marshall, 1999).

Bazemore and Walgrave (1999, p. 48) criticized this definition of restorative

justice by stating that, "the definition at once is too broad and too narrow." To them, the

definition has two problems. First, it does not describe whether the outcome of the

process must be reparative or restorative and it excludes actions that may lead to

reparative outcomes (Walgrave, 2008). Bazemore and Walgrave (1999) argued that

sanctions must be included with the restorative justice definition, as long as they are

restorative in nature. As such, they developed their own model of restorative justice

called the 'maximalist model' that asserts; "Restorative justice is every action that is

primarily oriented towards doing justice by repairing the harm that has been caused by a

crime" (Bazemore & Walgrave, 1999, p. 48).

The definition is reduced to its most crucial element, "the aim of reparation"

(Walgrave, 2008, p. 620). By identifying this goal Bazemore and Walgrave were able to maximize the number of crimes in an infinite number of possible situations and contexts that will result in restorative outcomes. Basically, "The restorative justice approach considers in principle all kinds of harm" (Bazemore & Walgrave, 1999, p. 49). This includes any harm caused whether it is material losses, physical injuries, or psychological consequences, as long as they have been caused by the act of an offence. Bazemore and Walgrave (1999) explained that, what enables the process to be restorative is the extent to which the process is aimed at repairing the harm committed (p. 50). In doing this, the goal is to "to distinguish between and also harmonize the legal authority of the state and the moral authority of the community" (Bazemore & Walgrave, 1999, p. 50).

Ultimately, the maximalist model allows courts to function as they do now but instead of utilizing punitive sanctions they should shift the outcomes toward restitution of victims and communities in a way that allows offenders to right a wrong (Boyes-Watson, 2000). Not all scholars agree with the maximalist approach. McCold (2000) criticized this model by explaining that it takes away the voluntary aspect of restorative justice.

As a response to the maximalist model, McCold (2000) introduced what he termed as a 'purist model' of restorative justice, which "includes only those elements of the restorative paradigm without elements of the obedience (retributive/deterrent) and treatment paradigms" (p. 358). He endorsed this approach because he posits that "theory needs to be based on correct thinking and not expectancy" (p. 358). McCold (2000) proposed that justice is established when the needs of the primary stakeholders are met as best as possible. He explained that, "it utilizes a cooperative problem solving approach involving recognition, reparation, reconciliation and reintegration of victims, offenders

and others personally affected" (McCold, 2000, p. 372).

Within the purist model, it is important to distinguish between primary and secondary stakeholders. Primary stakeholders are those directly or indirectly affected by the crime that was committed. According to McCold (2000), primary stakeholders include:

- Offenders: Primary offenders - those individuals who accept primary responsibility for the act committed; Secondary offenders – those who accept some responsibility for contributing to the crime committed;
- Victims: Direct Victims who are directly affected or harmed by the crime committed; indirect victims – those who suffered indirect financial loss because of their relationship to the victim or offender.
- Micro communities: Secondary victims - those who suffer because of a personal relationship to the victim or offender; Communities of support: those who have ongoing relationships of concern for the victim or offender.

Distinct from those individuals who are directly or indirectly affected by the offence, secondary stakeholders include the wider community and those who are not directly affected by the crime committed. Secondary stakeholders include:

- Macro communities: Local residents - those who are not personally connected to the victim or offender; Society/governments – society and governments that are responsible for justice policy. (p. 365)

McCold (2000) emphasized that only elements of restorative justice should be utilized and methods of social control should not be used. Therefore, secondary stakeholders do not play a significant role. Furthermore, he sets out guidelines for what a restorative program should include. He explained that programs must involve the primary stakeholders (victims, offenders and their communities) in face-to-face meetings where they (the stakeholders) determine the outcome and McCold (2000) stated that:

> As an empowerment strategy restorative justice depends upon the active engagement of the parties. The primary stakeholders are engaged in a collaborative process to bring victim reparation, require

the offender to take responsibility for the behaviour and reinforce the social and emotional support system of both the victims and the offenders. (p. 373)

In response, Walgrave (2008) suggested adapting the earlier maximalist definition, and he considers restorative justice as "an option on doing justice after the occurrence of an offense that is primarily oriented towards repairing the individual, relational, and social harm that is caused by that offense (p. 621). Walgrave shifts the focus from 'action' to 'option.' This definition allows the option to inspire a degree of initiatives, programs and systems, but maintains that the simple definition still limits restorative justice to a response to an offense and its goal to repair. The definition is still outcome based, whereas other approaches, such as the one proposed by McCold are process-based.

Walgrave proposed that a process-based approach is flawed for two reasons. First, he stated, "the process cannot be defined and valued without referring to the purpose it is undertaken" (Walgrave, 2008, p. 622). He established that the process is valued because of the outcome it sets out to achieve. Secondly, as brought to the readers' attention in the first definition, restricting restorative justice to voluntary considerations limits the scope of any restorative initiatives in the criminal justice system. This could have the effect of sidelining restorative justice within the system and relegating it to pre-trial diversion rather than incorporating it into post-conviction remedies (Walgrave, 2008).

9. Reintegrative Shaming

Braithwaite (1989) introduced the concept of reintegrative shaming as the reaffirmation of the morality of the offender by expressing a personal disapproval of the

act that the offender has done. Morality in this context refers to the act rather than the actor being seen as bad. Shaming is reintegrative when it accounts for the community's dissatisfaction with the offender's behaviour, imposes a reintegrative sanction followed by a reintegrative ceremony which illustrates the community's satisfaction that the offender has restored himself or herself and is now a member of the community once again. This occurs best when a connection exists between the parties and can be strengthened by a restorative intervention. As mentioned earlier, with respect to communitarian societies, reintegrative shaming produces a greater interconnectedness that dissolves stigmatization and allows for a more positive relationship following reintegration. For Braithwaite (1989), societies that effectively communicate shame in crime will have lower crime rates.

Braithwaite (1989) identified six key components associated with reintegrative shaming: interdependency, communitarianism, shaming, reintegrative shaming, stigmatization and criminal subcultures. Interdependency stipulates that people are part of networks in which they depend on others to achieve valued ends and others depend on them. This notion of interdependency runs parallel to social bonding, attachment and commitment demonstrated in Hirschi's (1969) social control theory. There are a number of circumstances in life that create greater degrees of interdependency such as marriage and employment. Individuals in these interdependent relationships are more likely to respond to shaming. Moreover, the societies in which these individuals reside are more likely to be communitarian where shaming is widespread (Braithwaite, 1989).

Communitarianism is based upon interdependencies of mutual help and respect. In communitarian societies, group loyalties preside over personal interests. This is not

seen as a weakness but rather it emphasized the need of interdependency or "to be both dependent and dependable" (Braithwaite, 1989, p. 100).

The key variable within Braithwaite's (1989) theory of reintegrative shaming is *shaming*, which refers to social processes where disapproval is expressed and this invokes remorse in the wrong doer. The aim is to "moralize with the offender to communicate reasons for the evil of his/her actions" (Braithwaite, 1989, p. 100). Braithwaite's (1989) theory suggests that Western society's current strategies for responding to crime may actually be doing more harm than good. Mainstream common-law justice processes tend to punish and humiliate offenders without providing a way to right the wrong and shed the label they have obtained. Braithwaite (1989) explained that for all crimes, shaming runs the risk of counterproductively when it turns into stigmatization (p. 55).

There is a distinction between reintegrative shaming and disintegrative shaming (also known as stigmatization). Disintegrative shaming (stigmatization), divides the community by creating a class of outsiders. Offenders are labelled deviant and little attention is paid to creating opportunities to shed the deviant title and signify society's forgiveness and reintegration. The label is applied to the person rather than the behaviour (Braithwaite, 1989). This opens the door for criminal subcultures to weaken or neutralize conventional values. The criminal subcultures that emerge in Western nations provide systematic social support for crime and reinforce criminogenic values. This might include providing individuals with criminal opportunities (Braithwaite, 1989). Alternatively, reintegrative shaming involves community disapproval, which could be any expressions ranging from "mild rebuke to degradation ceremonies… followed by

gestures of reacceptance into the community of law abiding citizens" (Braithwaite, 1989, p. 55). These gestures can vary from simple acts (such as a smile) that establish forgiveness to formal ceremonies to shed the offender's deviant label(s). Criminal subcultures, by contrast, that arise from segmentation and labelling of the offender, create an environment conducive to offending; reintegrative shaming returns the offender to a more prosocial environment.

Braithwaite (2002) predicted that reintegrative shaming and restorative processes are more effective than those used in contemporary justice systems with respect to reducing crime. If the problem rather than the person is put in the centre, the process is able to avoid criticism from someone who holds no personal attachment to the offender; someone the offender does not respect (such as a judge or police officer). Rather, if the offender is able to talk through the consequences and the harm caused with the victims, family members and community members, shame is difficult to avoid, therefore the presence of individuals who hold a personal stake in the act committed enables reintegration into take place in the process (Braithwaite, 2002).

10. Integration Between the Restorative Justice, Dynamic Risk, and CoSA Models

The CoSA approach is based on restorative justice principles. The circle volunteers take into account the needs of core members by offering support that enhances social capital; this is unlike most responses to sex offences where the central component is public notification. Though the primary purpose of these legislations is not to humiliate, but rather reduce further victimization, this is often not the case as these sanctions often further isolate the offender (McAlinden, 2005). The Saskatchewan Justice institute (2012) explains "ex-offenders often lack a network of positive role

models who can support their efforts at reintegration and this makes it difficult for them to learn about or access opportunities for employment or housing" (p. 28).

While not a stated goal of the CoSA program, the core member is building social capital through their relationships with the circle members. Involvement in the circle leads to the building of social capital, which is based on trust and reciprocity. The CoSA model focuses on building a network of support around the core member by bringing community members together in a way that holds the offender for their past actions but in a manner that promotes reintegration (McAlinden, 2005). Establishing support systems enable core members to partake in social activities with individuals who model healthy and responsible lifestyles. This encourages the core member to become involved in pro-social activities that can, in turn, reduce feelings of isolation and powerlessness (Saskatchewan Justice Institute, 2012). There are a large selection of supports provided to core members including; spirituality, addressing emotions, housing, medical/mental health, issues related to addictions, life skills, identification, socialization, education, employment, job training, parenting skills, as well as recreational and cultural activities. Figure 2-1 signifies the supports provided and the time spent on each, some of which activities have a higher significance in lowering the challenges associated with re-entry to the community (Saskatchewan Justice Institute, 2012).

Figure 2-1: Percentage of Time Supporting CM: March 2012
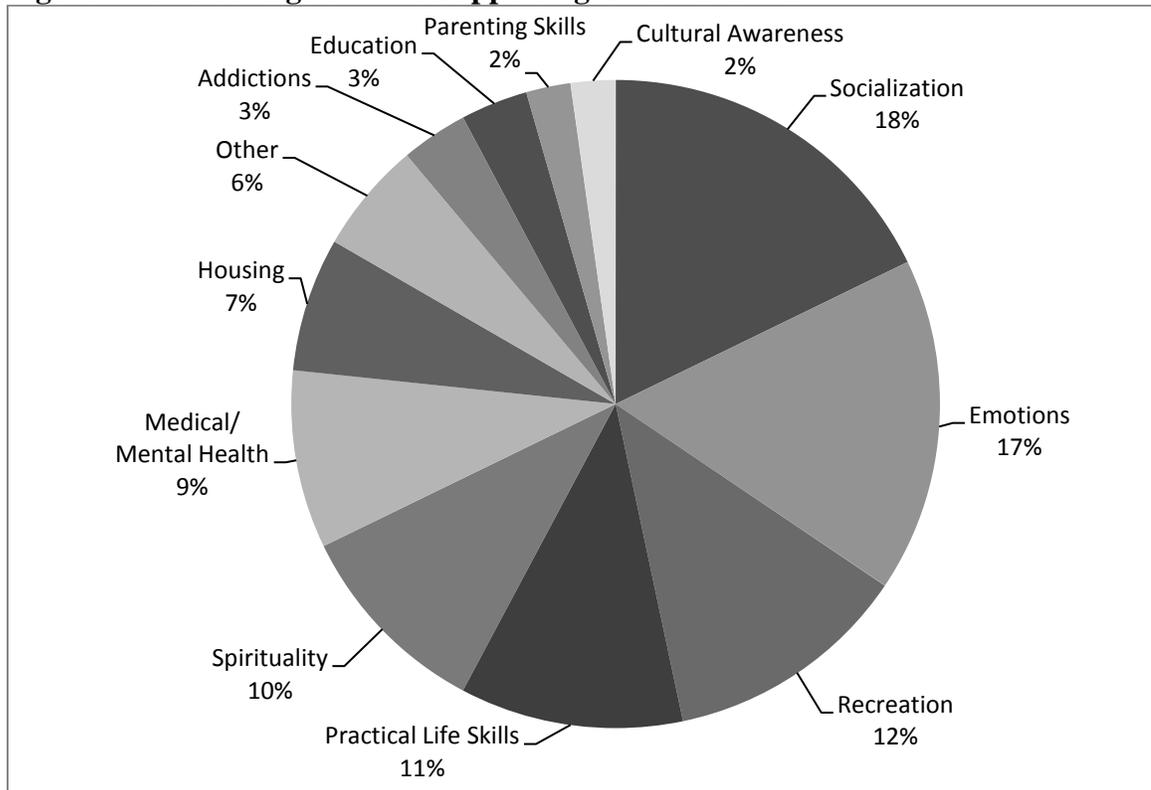
(Saskatchewan Justice Institute, 2012, p. 10).

Mills (2012) explains, "Achieving better resettlement outcomes requires a broader debate about the costs and benefits of the current arrangements governing this group and the contribution such practices make to support individuals to lead better and safer lives" (p. 51). CoSA's aim is not only to protect the community from further victimization but to reintegrate into the community individuals who would otherwise be stigmatized and marginalized. While CoSA practices risk management, it does so in a manner that provides a sense of belonging and acceptance (Hannem, 2011; Hoing et al., 2013).

The most effective treatment initiatives for sex offenders aim to change cognitive and behavioural patterns associated with sexual offending. These types of interventions allow the development of new skills that help manage the dynamic risk factors associated with sexual recidivism such as poor problem solving skills, social and intimacy skill and

sexual deviancies (Hanson & Yates, 2013). CoSA uses restorative justice principles to do this by giving community volunteers the necessary tools to assist core members in developing basic skills and developing prevention plans to assist them in reintegrating to the community. Reintegrative shaming allows the community volunteers to reprimand the offence and hold the core members responsible for the acts they have committed but still sees the core member as a valued member of the community (Bryson, 2010; Hannem & Petrunik, 2007).

Summary

This chapter identified and provided a brief overview of sex offenders typologies, patterns and behaviours as well as treatment and programming based of the RNR model. The chapter also examined CoSA as a restorative initiative for high-risk sex offenders which included a brief history and provided overview of the major studies looking at the effectiveness of CoSA in community reintegration for sex offenders.

CHAPTER THREE - METHODOLOGY

1. Methodological Paradigm

This study utilizes a social constructionist ontological position in which researchers seek to understand the world around in which they live and work. The individual researcher develops an understanding and meaning of the participants experiences. These meanings are what Creswell (2009) described as varied and multiple and led the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than reducing them into smaller categories.

Social constructionists decide what to include or not include from their observations and interviews with the participants. This decision is based on previous literature and theoretical bases (Burr, 1995; Creswell, 2007, 2009). Typically this process is followed by similar decisions on how to construct the discourse.

Burr (1995, pp. 3-5) described four key assumptions as a foundation for the constructionist approach:

1. *A critical stance towards taken for granted knowledge*: This illustrates that individuals take a critical stance towards taken-for-granted ways of understanding the world. This allows individuals to be suspicious of their assumptions about how the world appears to be.
2. *Historical and cultural specificity*: This illustrates that the way the world is commonly understood is both historically and culturally specific. The way one views the world depends on where and when one lived in the world. This also means that all ways of understanding are relative; one should not assume that one way (our way) of understanding is necessarily better or closer to the truth.
3. *Knowledge is sustained by social processes*: This assumption depicts that one's knowledge of the world is fabricated from daily interactions between people in the course of social life. Thus, social interactions and language is significant to social constructionists.
4. *Knowledge and social action go together*: Since there are numerous possible social constructions of the world, there numerous kinds of actions from human beings to go along with it. Thus, constructions of the world sustain some patterns of social action and exclude others.

Since a constructionist approach was employed, it was essential that this thesis draws

from the perspectives of the participants as much as possible, and addressed Burr`s

(1995) four criteria. In terms of positing, the researcher looked at the participants as

equals in the research process. In that regard, the researcher assumed the role of the

learner and empowered the participants to become the experts. Thus, it was the

researcher's responsibility to represent their experiences and perceptions in as accurate as

possible within an academic environment.

Thus, the research methodology employed was qualitative. The reason for this

choice was based on the primary research question, which is an evaluation of CoSA from

the perspectives of the stakeholders. Using a qualitative method allowed the researcher

an opportunity to obtain the most in-depth and extensive information in order to gain the

fullest understanding of the program, its strengths and weaknesses, and how it works

from the stakeholders' perspective (Geertz, 1973, 1983). The CoSA program is centered

on delivery of services to the core members and thus, their points of view are essential in

creating a program that works for them (Creswell, 2009; Geertz, 1973, 1983).

a. *Emic versus Etic*

There are two approaches to understanding and analyzing research: emic and etic.

Both perspectives have equal value but utilize different methodological approaches and

have different goals. The emic perspective describes data from the actors'/participants'

self-understanding, whereas the etic approach describes data in constructs that apply

across cultures (Pike, 1967). In other words, the emic approach gives an insider's

perspective and an etic approach provides an outsider's perspective. Table 3-1 illustrates

the differences in both emic and etic approaches, depicting the differences in assumptions

and goals as well as methods and study types associated with each model. For example, emic approaches are typically qualitative in nature, whereas etic approaches tend to focus on measurable variables. Emic approaches typically use interviews and observations to gain rich in-depth data, whereas etic will use surveys and cross-sectional comparisons to gain a larger and broader understanding (Morris, Leung, Ames, & Lickel, 1999).

Table 3-1: Assumptions of Emic and Etic Perspectives and Associated Methods

Features	Émic/Inside View	Etic/Outside View
Defining assumptions and goals	Behavior described as seen from the perspective of cultural insiders, in constructs drawn from their self-understandings.	Behavior described from a vantage external to the culture, in constructs that apply equally well to other cultures.
	Describe the cultural system as a working whole.	Describe the ways in which cultural variables fit into general causal models of a particular behaviour.
Typical features of methods associated with this view	Observations recorded in a rich qualitative form that avoids imposition of the researchers' constructs. Long-standing, wide-ranging observation of one setting or a few settings	Focus on external, measurable features that can be assessed by parallel procedures at different cultural sites. Brief, narrow observations of more than one setting, often a large number of settings.
Examples of typical study types	Ethnographic fieldwork; participant observations along with interviews; Content analysis of text providing a window into indigenous thinking about justice.	Multi-setting survey; cross-sectional comparison of responses to instruments measuring justice perceptions and related variables. Comparative experiment treating culture as a quasi-experimental manipulation to assess whether the impact of particular factors varies across cultures.

(Source: Morris et al. 1999, p. 783)

Because the basis of this study is an interpretation of the viewpoints of CoSA participants, this study analyzes the data from an emic standpoint, meaning that the data will be reported from the participants' (insiders) perspective rather than the researcher's (Pelto & Pelto, 1978). This allows for the participant's voices and ideas not only to be heard, but also to be in the forefront of the analysis.

2. Methodology

a. Method:

This research employed face-to-face interviews with those stakeholders directly involved in nine circles operating within Regina, Saskatchewan in 2011. The purpose of the interviews was to identify the efficacy of the program in Regina from its inception in 1997 to 2011 based on the perceptions of core members and volunteers.

Semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were conducted in a number of locations where both the investigator and subjects felt comfortable. An interview guide consisting of 8-10 open-ended questions (see Appendix A) provided structure for the interviews, which ranged in length from 60-90 minutes. This approach was flexible enough to answer the research questions while allowing the views and opinions of the participants to be heard.

This qualitative method enabled the researcher to access personal insights into the program which other methods, such as surveys, are unable to provide. From a methodological perspective, this study was informed by the work of Cesaroni (2001) who conducted interviews of both core members and volunteers using the same questions to determine if they held similar perceptions and Armstrong et al. (2008) whose interviews also employed similar questions to identify the perspectives of both core members and volunteers concerning the impact of CoSA on the former as well as the processes involved in a successful circle.

Given the numbers involved, 9-12 core members and up to 45 volunteers, the possibility of employing focus groups to gather data was initially examined although

rejected due to the possibility of the undue influence of participants (e.g., vulnerable

participants may feel compelled to provide socially desirable responses rather than being

truthful). While this method could save time, the openness and truthfulness of the

participants would most likely decrease as individuals would hold back their feelings and

this was viewed as an unacceptable limitation.

i. *Sampling:*

This research examined the entire population of circle members and volunteers

rather than a sample of that population. Consistent with Cesaroni's (2001) methodology,

this study did not include members of the professional group (e.g., members of the outer

circle), members of the advisory board or paid staff members. Only those volunteers

directly involved in the daily operations of the circles were interviewed since the number

of professionals who have peripheral contact with the core members would make the

study unwieldy and contribute little other than theoretical saturation (Cesaroni, 2001).

ii. *Access:*

It was imperative that the researcher gain approval from CoSA to access the

members of the circles. A letter was forwarded to the president and board members of

the Regina CoSA site outlining the purpose and design of the study and asking

permission to conduct interviews with core members and circle volunteers. The letter

also requested that the researcher attend a board meeting to meet with CoSA officials as

well as attend one circle meeting for the purpose of recruiting potential participants. This

letter contained the same information that was contained in the application to the

University of Regina Research Ethics Board and reported the purpose of the study,

methods to be employed, and the rights of participants and the responsibilities the

researcher to protect those rights (a copy of that letter is attached as Appendix B).

In order to recruit participants, the researcher attended each of the nine CoSA circles in the Regina area. The purpose of this attendance was to introduce the researcher to potential participants, explain the purpose of the study and ask potential participants if they would be willing to meet at a safe, but neutral location, to conduct the interviews.

Fourteen interviews were conducted and they ranged from 60 to 90 minutes. These interviews were recorded and then transcribed by the researcher. In respect to the core members, all were male and ranged in age from late 30 to 60 years, and had differing cognitive abilities. Two of the four core members were still under some form of correctional supervision, such as parole or living in a halfway facility. The volunteers were both male and female, appeared to be between their late-30s to late-60s (they were not asked for their respective ages), and had been involved in CoSA circles from two months to 10 years; most were from faith based backgrounds.

4. Method of Analysis:

Thematic network analysis was utilized as the method of analysis for this study. This analytic tool is a way to organize a thematic analysis of qualitative information. This method of analysis seeks to uncover themes present in written transcripts and the network aims to facilitate the structure and depiction of these themes, in other words, it emphasizes pinpointing, examining and recording patters/ themes within the data (Attride-Sterling, 2001). Attride-Sterling breaks down the method further, Thematic network systematize the extraction: of i) lowest-order premises evident in the text (Basic Themes): ii) categories of basic themes grouped together to summarize more abstract principles (Organizing Themes): and iii) super-ordinate themes encapsulating the

principal metaphors in the text as a whole (p. 388).

This method of analysis provides a process for breaking up text and finding within it rationalizations and their inherent meanings.

Each transcript was reviewed systematically in order to identify and sort segments of text or words that had meaning with respect to the primary and secondary research questions driving the analysis:

1. What are the program goals of COSA?

2. What role does CoSA play in crime prevention?

3. What constitutes an 'effective' program according to the perceptions of CoSA stakeholders?

a. *Analyzing the Data:*

Table 3-2 shows the steps involved in applying thematic network analysis to the data. The analysis process was iterative meaning that it was a repetitive and reoccurring process and involved recording reflective notes about patterns that appeared to be presenting in the data and post-it notes were used to capture ideas and insights as additional data was analyzed.

The codes were developed through direct examination of the data based on the frequency of use by the participants. Once identified, these descriptive words or codes were placed into a separate document which provided an initial list. This information was sorted in multiple ways to uncover patterns that could be used to classify the data. Line-by-line, codes were identified within the text that provided a categorization.

Table 3-2 . Steps in Analyses Employing Thematic Networks

ANALYSIS STAGE A: REDUCTION OR BREAKDOWN OF TEXT **Step 1. Code Material** (a) Devise a coding framework (b) Dissect text into text segments using the coding framework **Step 2. Identify Themes** (a) Abstract themes from coded text segments (b) Refine themes **Step 3. Construct Thematic Networks** (a) Arrange themes (b) Select Basic Themes (c) Rearrange into Organizing Themes (d) Deduce Global Theme(s) (e) Illustrate as thematic network(s) (f) Verify and refine the network(s) **ANALYSIS STAGE B: EXPLORATION OF TEXT** **Step 4. Describe and Explore Thematic Networks** (a) Describe the network (b) Explore the network **Step 5. Summarize Thematic Networks** **ANALYSIS STAGE C: INTEGRATION OF EXPLORATION** **Step 6. Interpret Patterns**

(Attride-Stirling, 2001; p. 391).

Whenever a segment of text that was meaningful to the participants was identified in the transcript, a code was assigned to signify that particular segment. This process continued until each transcript was segmented and all of the data was initially coded. A master list was then developed and then these codes were reapplied as appropriate to each segment of data in the next transcript to be analyzed. New codes from each transcript emerged from the list during each iteration and were combined to create the master list. The researcher noted that the same or similar words reoccurred and yet sometimes received more than one code. These codes that partially or completely overlapped were noted and the differences and similarities in codes for the offender transcripts were noted

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as well.

Next, the codes were organized into themes. Once all the codes were completed, charts were created to summarize or organize the data. The data that appeared repeatedly were organized accordingly and other categorizations were applied so that the data continued to be refined and revised during this step. The words and related words in the data were significant and used to create codes in the transcript. Relationships between codes were also uncovered in the review of the text and these relationships became codes. The basic themes were uncovered using this approach and the visual depiction of the data collection into charts was helpful. Basic themes emerged from an iterative analysis of the coded data. These themes and data were revised and refined and then grouped together allowing the text to be summarized and broken down further in to more abstract principles or organizing themes as the analysis progressed (Attride-Sterling, 2001). From here, the researcher identified global themes that were significant throughout the transcripts allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the data gathered from the participants without altering what was said; the end result being a web-like network that was utilized as an organizing principle when going from text to interpretation (Attride-Sterling, 2001). This network is presented in Figure 3-1.

Figure 3-1: Basic, Organizing, and Global Themes as a Network.
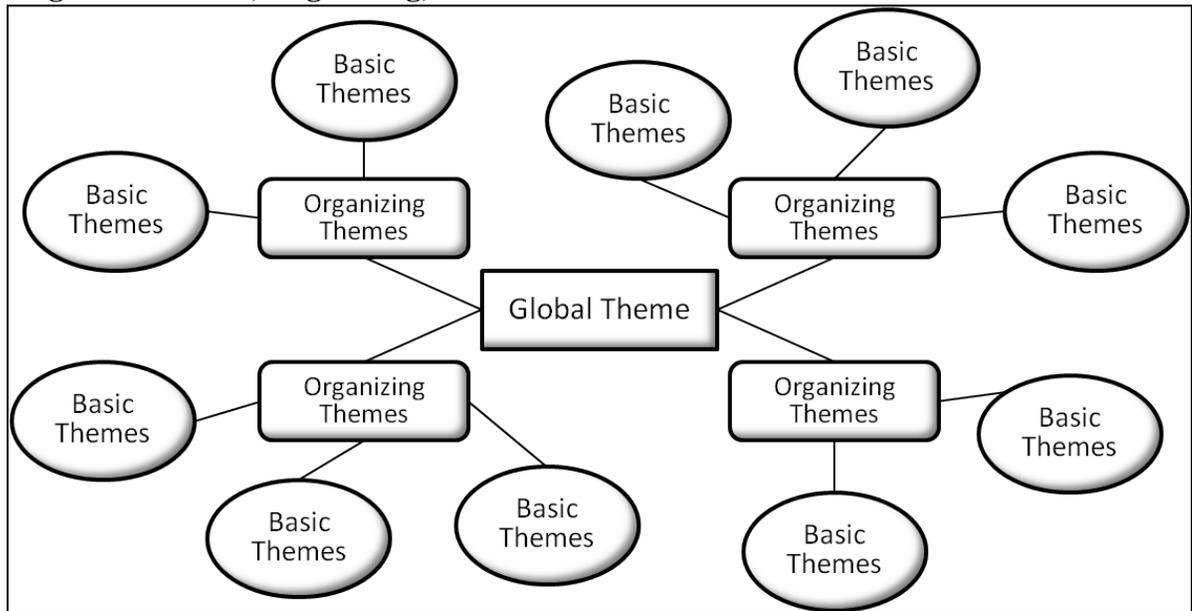
(Attride-Sterling, 2001, p. 388).

The next step is to describe and explore the thematic networks. By exploring the themes that emerged the researcher will be able to identify the patterns within them. Here the researcher returns to the original data, but instead of reading it from beginning to end the data is read through the global theme, organizing themes and basic themes. Not only is this beneficial for the researcher but also for the reader who is now able to follow the researcher interpretation on the summary. Once this step is complete, the next step is to present a summary of the significant themes and the patterns characterizing them. The last step involved review the original research questions and addressing these in light of the patterns that emerged through exploring the text (Attride-Sterling, 2001). It has been argued that because qualitative research uses key informants and focuses on truthfulness and theoretical saturation and not reliability and validity like quantitative research, qualitative research becomes non-generalizable and is limited in scientific

rigour (Hagan, 2010; Mason, 2002; Patenaude, 2004). However, Mason (2002) presents

a counter argument by introducing the concept of wider resonance" which claims that

research can be relevant across contextual boundaries and individuals. Thus, qualitative

research can have implications that extend beyond a small population sample.

There are four criteria that should be considered when using qualitative paradigm

in order for research to be considered trustworthy (Lincoln and Guba, 1985):

1) *Credibility* in terms of qualitative research is establishing confidence in what is "truth" in terms of the researcher and how she gathers and presents the knowledge that is gained. Ensuring credibility is essential in establishing trustworthiness. The researcher built upon the credibility of the circle administrator to gain access and build her own credibility with the participants. Initial appearances before the circle's participants allowed her to introduce herself and the research as well as lessen anxiety about the research; this was further accomplished through observations of the circles whereby the participants were able to observe the researcher and gauge for themselves how credible was her word. The researcher was able to further established credibility through the utilization of observation and semi-structured interviews (triangulation) which also helped to evaluate the credibility of the participants and the information they were providing.

2) *Is study transferable*? Can it be applied to other situations? Unlike grounded theory analysis which is limited to the study of a single group bounded by the time, place and participants involved in the study, a thematic network analysis permits wider resonance and generalizations to be made with comparable studies. In the case of this study, the literature established that methods of data collection and analysis used are typical of studies of and transferable to other CoSA research.

3) *De*pendability is the ability of the research to be repeated with similar outcomes. In order to address the issue of dependability it was necessary to provide an in-depth overview of how the research was conducted and the analytical framework utilized. In this case, the researcher provided an in-depth overview of the analytical framework and the steps taken in analyzing the findings. This allows future researchers to replicate the study using the same methodology and analyses to attain the same or similar conclusions. Interview questions can be found in Appendix A.

4) *Conformability* is the researcher's ability to establish objectivity. The researcher must take steps to ensure that the data collected and is

presented in a manner that is consistent with the participant's experiences and perceptions and not shaped by the biases or pre-conceptions of the researcher. Thematic network analysis was used to ensure conformability because it allowed the views of the participants to emerge rather than imposing pre-conceived findings.

4. Ethical Considerations

a. Informed Consent and Confidentiality:

Any research involving human subjects must be concerned with issues such as informed consent and confidentiality (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009: Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2010 [hereafter: Tri-Council]). Informed consent lays out the rights of research subjects and the responsibilities of researchers to protect those rights. Confidentiality, as opposed to anonymity, is concerned with protecting the research subjects from being identified either during the research or once the results are disseminated.

The participants were made aware about the overall purpose of the research, the main features of the research design, their roles in the research project, and any potential risk or harm they may encounter (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). This information was included in the informed consent form (see Appendix C). Participants were told that the study is an evaluation of CoSA from the stakeholders' perspective. It was the intention of the researcher to gain knowledge from persons directly involved in the circles to better understand the functions, strengths and weaknesses of the program. The focus is on their perspectives with respect to the program since they are the primary stakeholders and would be most affected by any potential changes to the program. If the participant chose not to sign the informed consent form, which did not occur, the interview would be

terminated at that moment and the participant would be thanked for their time. This decision protected both the subject and the researcher.

In terms of confidentiality, the participants were informed that any information provided would be used in the preparation of the thesis, but that no identifying information would be disclosed. His or her raw answers would be completely confidential and would not be seen by anyone except the researcher and her supervisor. Pseudonyms were used rather than the participant's actual names in order to protect the identities of anybody who was quoted in this study.

5. **Risks:**

a) *Risk to the Participants*

One of the hazards of qualitative research with offenders is concerned with disclosure of current and/or future criminal activities (Cowburn, 2005; Demi & Warren, 1995; Patenaude, 2004). Canadian law does not shield researchers in the same manner that journalists are protected from revealing their sources or the content of interviews like priests hearing confessions. Canadian researchers must report to authorities any current or future criminal acts that are disclosed to them during the conduct of the research (Lowman & Palys, 2000, 2001; Palys & Lowman, 2001; Zinger, Wichmann & Gendreau, 2001). The participants were clearly informed that any information of this nature would not be kept confidential and that they should refrain from sharing any such information. Indeed, the questions contained in the semi-structured interview guide neither included nor led to any discussions of this nature since they focused on the activities of the program itself.

The researcher accepted as a given that the participants had committed and been

convicted of a sexual offence and been incarcerated as a result of that conviction. The

participants were not asked to disclose any prior criminal act for which they were or were

not charged. Therefore, the questions were neither invasive nor did they lead to any

psychological distress for either the subjects or the researcher. Any attempts to discuss

prior sex offences were halted and the subject was brought back on topic by the

researcher. Furthermore, subjects were informed that while they had the right to

discontinue the interview at any time, the researcher could also terminate the interview if

the subject was being non-cooperative.

b) *Risk to the Researcher*

Many non-criminologists hold incorrect perceptions concerning sex offenders and

the risk they present to public safety. It has been taken into account that the core

members have been incarcerated for an extended period of time, for committing serious

and violent crimes. It is also worthy to note that they have been released into the

community and are living as free citizens. The goal of CoSA is that both the public and

the offenders can live safely together in the community. The researcher was aware of

potential risks concerning emotional and personal safety when interviewing these

participants, but realizes that it is imperative that all personal prejudices are recognized

and put aside.

The researcher has had experience interviewing medium- and high-risk offenders

as an intake paralegal in both an office setting and a remand facility. These experiences

enabled the researcher to conduct the interviews confidently without any concern to her

safety. Still, in order to ensure the researchers personal safety, interviews were conducted

in a public setting (i.e., coffee house) with which both parties were comfortable. The

researcher was cautious with what personal information was given to participants. They

were informed that the researcher was a graduate student at the University of Regina and

were given information related to the study. The participants were given a contact email

as well as the telephone number of the researcher's supervising professor if for any

reason they wished to contact the researcher.

The semi-structured interview guide does not include any questions that may raise

an emotional response. However if any comments were made that may allude to

potentially stressful or anxiety-provoking issues, the researcher immediately refocused

the interview. Moreover, if for any reason the researcher was uncomfortable, the

interview was halted and the participant was thanked for their time; as noted previously,

this did not occur.

6. Role of the Researcher

The researcher acknowledges that some core members have been classified as

having a high-risk to re-offend. This may present power concerns, since, "ethical issues

typically arise in interview research because of the asymmetrical power relations between

interviewer and the respondent…researchers are usually positioned as the relatively more

powerful side" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 76). In order to compensate for this

potential source of bias the researcher has to recognize her own values and beliefs. It was

imperative that the researcher's own prejudices and preconceptions were brought into

question (Demi & Warren, 1995).

Though the researcher has a genuine concern for the participants, the attitudes,

beliefs and experiences of the sample group may be different from that of the researcher.

Because part of the sample group (core members) may be lower-class, poorly educated

and members of minority groups it was imperative that the researcher develop a greater cultural sensitivity by involving herself in activities (e.g., taking part in circles) that helped identify and reflect on her own biases concerning these the types of offences that the core members had committed as well as their range of cognitive abilities (Demi & Warren, 1995; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

Moreover, since the researcher was an outsider being invited into the participant's affairs, the outsider may be met with some scepticism. For this reason, the researcher's goal was to use the perspectives of the participants in the analysis rather than make her own assumptions. The participant was reassured that it is their voice that would be the foundation of this study rather than the outsiders, who is there to better understand their experiences.

CHAPTER FOUR – DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

This chapter presents the research findings using a thematic network analysis that allowed the researcher to uncover systematic themes within the data. It discusses how the data was analytically grouped into clearly defined clusters of themes is analysed, (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 402) as well as provides a discussion of the thematic map derived.

The first section of this chapter describes the process by which the text from interviews was divided into common words and text segments and then grouped into codes. The codes were organized into basic themes. Common issues that arose were clustered into groups of similar issues. The second section examines each basic theme, providing evidence from the perceptions of the participants in this study.

The chapter then explains those commonalities that arose from the basic themes allowing the researcher to generate four organizing themes. The organizing themes give direction to the underlying global theme that was significant throughout the data gathered from the participants. In the last section, each organizing theme will be discussed separately and then as a global theme.

1. Coding the Data

The coding framework emanated from the researcher's interests and the salient issues reflected from the data. Since the research questions for this thesis focused on factors associated with the perceived effectiveness of CoSA, several factors related to perceptions and structures were the foundation for the coding framework. The network analysis also uncovered emergent issues that were not previously identified in the

literature review; notably issues that go beyond the fundamental structure of CoSA such as funding and communication linkages with other institutions.

Attride-Stirling (2001) underscores the relevance of coding with explicit definitions to ensure there are no redundancies and they remain related to the focus of the research. A review of the literature on the subject revealed a number of factors that formed a sound basis for the coding framework.

The next step in Attride-Stirling's (2001) process is a dissection of the text. The resultant dissections may consist of single words or entire passages that contributed to the focus of the research. In keeping with this approach, the researcher dissected the data to expose segmented portions of text that revealed insights with respect to factors influencing the participants' perceived effectives of CoSAs. This involved dissecting transcripts line by line within the context of the larger conversation to reveal those segments of text that spoke to perceived effectiveness. The text segments or codes that were captured during this process were then highlighted and captured in charts. Each of the 14 transcripts was coded, cross-referenced, and reoccurring codes were identified.

Table 4-1 is an illustration of a sample of the output produced by the coding process that was applied to individual interview transcripts and later to the aggregate transcripts. The coding process also provided an effective method for reducing large pieces of textual data into manageable codes (key words) that could be linked to individual participants suggesting the framework for the basic codes that would emerge later. This process was clearly important during the initial analysis phase when it was critical to gain the perspectives of both volunteers and offenders so that the true meaning of each of these segments was understood in the context of the overall conversation. All

of the offenders and volunteers were assigned a number to protect their privacy and

uphold the confidentiality agreements discussed at the beginning of each interview as

well as for tracking purposes.

Table 4.1: Sample Transformation of Selected Text to Codes Process.

Chunks of Text:	Codes Pulled:
Need to **protect** their children How can you even be near those folks Because somebody who has **faith** in one that **molested** them She put a lot of **pressure** on him to attend another church Very careful that he wasn't **alone** with children He was **nervous** They are the ones that caused you the problem in the first place We were **not allowed** to interact with him We started **pushing** We saw the need to have professional kind of thing They didn't want him because of his **offences** **Safety** of the community for their future continuity I didn't have **fears** you know that he was going to **hurt me** or my kids and so on but I know many people have **fears** with people like that. Several families that they offend He has so many **strikes** against him Are doing it out of **anger** or for your benefit Genuinely do not want to hurt people He wasn't supposed to be talking to him He wasn't supposed to relate to kids under fourteen without somebody This really **troubled** him because here I'm trying to be compassionate One has to really walk **carefully** have to be **cautious** on some of those kind of issues Not **condone** He was **manipulating** I won't try to **degrade** them, always be a friend that's where we're at. Nobody in the community that welcomes them This is a community issue not just a system issue you know.	Protect Faith Molested Pressure Alone Nervous Problem Not allowed Pushing Offences Safety Fears Hurt me Strikes Anger Troubled Carefully Cautious Condone Manipulating Degrade

2. Identifying the Themes

The next step in the coding process involved the refining of portions of the text

and codes into themes such as illustrated in Table 4-1. Attride-Sterling (2001)

acknowledges that this step is subjective and interpretive and that the themes which

emerge should be meaningful and well defined. In the context of the interviews and the

researcher's field notes, these text segments were read, understood, and assessed for

meaning.

The importance of the various structures and goals of the program (i.e. the covenant, the weekly meetings, and the volunteers' method of discussing issues) emerged in the data. The importance of education, awareness, funding, stakeholders, community involvement and trust were factors culled from the data as well. Overall, the data that emerged from the transcripts was consistent with the literature reviewed in support of this research.

Table 4-2 illustrates both the process and outcomes. The coded text is organized into thematic content. It is important to note that not all codes are presented in this table but rather selected codes (left column), issues discussed (center column), and basic themes (right column) are presented as a sample table. Codes such as support, no secrets, friendship, involvement, and volunteer, emerged from most of the transcripts. Codes were then clustered together in interrelated groups that became basic themes. In total, over 110 codes were pulled from the data from which fourteen basic themes were identified.

Table 4-2 Codes to Basic Themes.

Codes:	Issues Discussed:	Basic Themes:
Covenant	Importance of covenant	
Volunteers Challenge Similarities Differences Limitations	Choosing who should be on a circle is imperative	Success
Relationships Responsibility Accountability	Accountability for actions modeling behaviour	

Codes:	Issues Discussed:	Basic Themes:
Expectations surveillance Direction Sharing Encourage Group Advise Decisions Boundaries Roles Advocating Support	Distinguishing support from surveillance Decision making and problem solving as a group Setting boundaries Need for support structures Advocating for the core members	Support
Disclosure No secrets Honesty Sharing Communication encourage decisions Rules System	No secrets open conversation and trust Importance of guidance	Trust
Dynamics Roles Counsel Professional Friendship Acceptance Bond Relationships	Distinguishing between friendship and professionalism Developing strong bonds	Friendship
Hesitation Blindsided Red flags Rough edges Breaches	Communities are hesitant to accept criminals. Feeling insecure and unsafe	Community Fears

Codes:	Issues Discussed:	Basic Themes:
Poverty Statistics Spotted Evicted Marginalize Public Disclosure Perception Lock them up Bleeding hearts Victimization	Sex offenders are stigmatized individuals Communities are nervous and feel vulnerable	Stigmas/Community Perceptions
Good start Beginning Concerned Coping strategies Healthy outlets	Empathy	Involvement
Formal training Support Reliance on government Staff or lack thereof Stability Administration Spending	Lack of Funding	Funding
Awareness Community Word of mouth Media Educate Seminars Public Understanding	Awareness at the community level Need for consistent training of volunteers	Education
Assistance Local Responsibility Professionals Role Communication Service Probation /parole Police Federal	Lack of Consistent Processes	Government Involvement

Codes:	Codes:	Codes:		Issues
Correctional Services of Canada chaplaincy Crown Police Probation parole agencies social workers lawyers	The role government plays	Government stakeholders		
Church community teachers students rotary clubs nurses	The role community plays	Community		
Core members volunteers steering committee	The roles of those directly involved with CoSA. Modeling behaviours	Direct stakeholders		
Kids family friends victims neighbour	The roles of this indirectly involved with COSA	Indirect stakeholders		

3. Constructing the Network

The network analysis takes on greater clarity as we look at basic themes in the context of broader issues to reveal the organizing themes and global theme. By reviewing the basic themes and the issues discussed with participants, four common threads were identified and refined further using the analytical process to identify the basic themes as illustrated in Table 4-2. The process of examining and understanding basic themes in the context of the data as a whole facilitated the defining of the organizing themes in the same inductive manner described by Attride-Stirling (2001).

An analysis of the 14 basic themes revealed a natural grouping that led to the framing of four organizing themes:

> *1) Circle Structures and Goals:* Circle Success, Support, Trust and Friendship were grouped together as an Organizing Theme.

2) *Attitudes and Perceptions:* Community Fears, Stigmas, Community
    Perceptions, and Community Involvement were grouped into an Organizing
    Theme.

3) *Systemic Challenges:* Funding, Government Support and Education were
    grouped into an Organizing Theme**.**

4) *Stakeholders:* Direct, Indirect Stakeholders, Community and Government
    were grouped into an Organizing theme.

In keeping with the direction provided by Attride-Stirling (2001), the global

theme should be one which summarizes the "main claim, proposition, argument, assertion

or assumption of the organizing themes" (p. 393) in light of the basic themes. From the

process of clustering the 14 basic themes into four organizing and their subsequent

clustering around a single theme emerged the global theme of the effectiveness of CoSA.

This process is illustrated in Table 4-3 while Figure 4-1 provides a visual, non-

hierarchical representation of it in a web-like diagram. It is important to recognize that

some factors resulted negative impacts and other impacted positively on the effectiveness

of the CoSA programming.

Table 4-3 Basic-Organizing-Global Themes Relationship

Basic Themes	Organizing Themes	Global Theme
Circle Success Support Trust Friendship	Circle Structures and Goals	Effectiveness: what elements in the circles are considered successful/necessary
Stigmas /Community Perceptions Community Fears Involvement	Attitudes and Perceptions	Effectiveness: the importance of positive attitudes and perceptions in communities with offenders/reality of fear and stigmatization
Education Funding Government Involvement	Systemic Challenges	Effectiveness: The influence of consistent systems and processes and funding
Community Direct Stakeholders Indirect Stakeholders Government Stakeholders	Stakeholders	Effectiveness: Engagement of all stakeholders

Figure 4-1 Network Analysis – Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA)
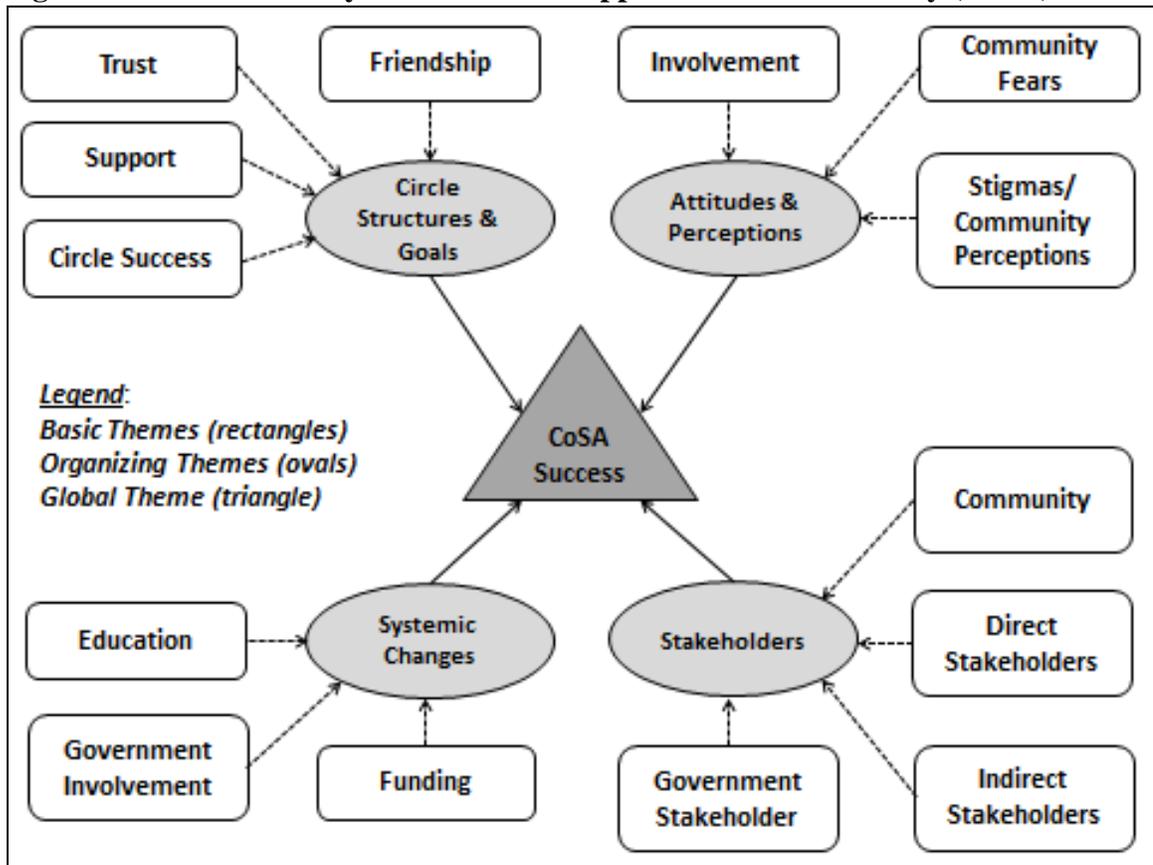
4.   Describing and Exploring the Networks

Attride-Stirling (2001) suggests exploring systematically, in a sequential order, assists in the presentation and understanding of the material. The findings are presented as discussions and interpretations of the basic themes arranged by each organizing theme; that is the four basic themes of circle successes, support, trust and friendship will be discussed individually and in relation to the organizing themes of circle structures and goals followed by a discussion of the basic themes for each of the three remaining organizing themes. Upon completion of this step in the analysis, the four organizing themes will be discussed in relation to the global theme of the effectiveness of CoSA.

5. The Basic Themes

a. *Basic Theme #1: Success*

The basic theme of success was evidenced in the findings due to the prevalence in the text that dealt with the structures that are necessary for CoSA to be effective and successful. Codes such as 'covenant', 'positive', 'help', and 'match' were pulled from the text provided by both the offenders and the volunteers.

Offenders repeatedly mentioned they were on the right path, or going down the right road, and that their success was in large part due to the consistency and unwavering presence of the volunteers in the circle. Both core members and volunteers regard the 'covenant' (or contract) that both parties sign as successful. The importance of the covenant was clearly raised in most interviews and was recognized by both offenders and volunteers. The whole notion of accountability is tied to the covenant and it allows the offender to publicly denounce his past crimes and commit to a better path. The offenders also noted that it was a way to ensure there were 'no secrets' between them. The no secrets policy helped with the level of trust in the groups and this was seen to be one of the successes.

> That (covenant) consists of an understanding in terms of what will be the commitment of the core members and what are the commitments of the volunteers. The core members we are asking them to be open with us and share with us their history and their plan for success. That they are committed to no further victims. (Volunteer 5)

> I think the important thing is that it's discussed and signed. It outlines what's acceptable and what's expected and what's not acceptable. And if there is ever any trouble down the road you can take the covenant out and say ok, well this is what you agreed to when you joined the circle, you're not living up to that and so what are we going to do? You either don't want to be a part of it or you do want to be part of it but things need to change. (Volunteer 3)

We work on developing a covenant. It's more of a developmental process we try to help people feel comfortable, begin to trust us and differentiate us from the system. (Volunteer 7)

Yes and the one thing that I learned is probably not about circle but that I am not secretive anymore. It's something real. When I talk and I talk to everyone and we are always on the same page. (Core Member 3)

Another issue linked to the success of the CoSAs in Regina was the make-up of volunteers involved in each circle. Each volunteer must work toward specific requirements. Among those noted by the participants were: experienced circle volunteers who are skilled at developing trust and friendship in a non-judgmental environment, common interests and potential matches with the core member's interests, gender, age, and aptitude play a role in determining best fit for a circle. Typical comments on this issue were those of Volunteer 9 who noted, "each circle should always have a circle organizer who has sat in a circle". Volunteer 1 stated that "[volunteers are chosen] in terms of what are the interests of the individual core member."

The participants also noted that a strong female member is important in any circle.

We have some things in common, movies we like things like that, dinners- they invite you to their houses…uh, XX well she is basically like… she is an elderly lady but she is interesting and she does like stuff like that I do. XX and XY do volunteer work so I get involved like that. (Core Member 2)

For instance circle women and volunteers need to recognize that sex offenders basically see women as objects and they do not form human relationships with women in the same was and yet it is important to have women in the circles because that is one of the agenda items, that is one thing core members have to learn that women are people too. (Volunteer 2)

I would say that in terms of volunteers, it takes a special kind of person that, I would say maybe it's 1 or 2% of people who would be open to that- but it is such an important and enriching experience for the volunteers, we know in our hearts of hearts that people we are reaching are not throw a ways and that we can help change the world and community living in such a positive way. (Volunteer 9)

When you come through the system it is not real… you like to think it is
but it is not… people wear masks and all kinds of stuff1… when you have
to deal with people who are real it is a lot easier than having to hide.
(Core Member 3)

Taking accountability is a key factor for success, not only on part of the core

members but the volunteers as well. Linked to this is 'modelling.' Volunteer modelling

is a major facet of a circle relationship; what is 'caught' is more important than what is

'taught.'

I see accountability as a very, very personal thing. We choose to be
accountable or we don't and ultimately no outside person or organization
is going to make that happen. You cannot make somebody else
accountable…We can encourage accountability and we can hopefully
model accountability. (Volunteer 1)

You know we've supported him in every way we can, you know we've
encouraged him, we've tried to model accountable kind of behaviour, but
he makes the decision, we don't. (Volunteer 1)

One offender noted that he learned from his volunteers to view his actions from another

point of view:

While I was offending I thought it was just a minor little crime I thought…
I wasn't having sex with any little kids you know. ..I wasn't… I thought if
I get caught…yah I know I was wrong but I thought I was just gonna get a
slap on the wrist. No big deal you know, nothing terrible. But then
through prison and then through CoSA I learned that it was a lot worst
then I ever thought it was. And there's nothing I can do to change that.
(Core Member 5)

Of course CoSA success was also attributed to a strong relationship with the core

member based on 'mutual trust' and 'non-judgement.' These qualities were essential in

building a circle that could support the core member in achieving healthy relationships

and a smoother transition to life within the community.

b. Basic Theme #2: Support

The theme of Support was prevalent throughout the texts providing an integral

theme to the philosophy of CoSA. Offenders and volunteers alike noted that circles were

not part of the surveillance system set up to track sex-offenders upon release; rather, they

are groups of volunteers with along with outside professional supervision (if required) to

support sex offenders as they reintegrate into society after their release from

incarceration.

> It is very hard for people to differentiate between that (support) and
> surveillance- that is why we always say we are talking support and
> accountability. But you know all of us have circles, supports and all of us
> have accountability. You know like if I am going to do something stupid
> and my wife is one of the first ones that will tell me that is stupid so that is
> accountability. We have to be cautious how we not condone but on the
> other hand affirm the intentions are not the action.   (Volunteer 2)

> They are forgiving me for my past and they just want to help me not ever
> do it again. (Core Member 5)

> When they don't differentiate us from the system that's what often ruins
> their ability to be honest. (Volunteer 7)

> What we want is to make sure that the core member also understands that
> this is not part of the court system that we are not a watch dog for the
> police or for parole or probation. It is strictly for your safety and the
> safety for the community.   (Volunteer 5)

One of the key benefits of having the circle is that the core member benefits from

group discussion and group problem solving when faced with a decision in his life.

Offenders typically need support with decision-making as this is not something they were

able practice while incarcerated as many daily decisions were routine and made for them.

The volunteers know to give the core member the time and space to explore options.

This was stated succinctly as:

> let the core member lead the discussion. And usually provide feedback or
> opinionated advice when he asks; (Volunteer #6)

whereas Volunteer 1 noted that:

> in fact, we want them to be making decisions for themselves so that they
> feel good about themselves and the decisions that they've made.

The positive effect of this process was described by Core Member 1 who noted that:

> they give me advice, they don't tell me how to do it! (Core Member #1)

Typically the discussion in the groups centers on routine matters that occur during the week. This gives the offender practice in explaining events and how he feels about those events as noted by Core Member 3:

> we chat about how the week was going, any issues came up, couple of
> other issues and how I dealt with them and how they think I could have
> dealt with them.

This guided discussion is important to the overall success of the circles and it is a very effective way of supporting the offender gain much needed decision-making skills. Providing guided assistance in looking at the pros and cons of an event or a decision is an important skill for volunteers that emerged from the data. Supporting a core offender who initially may lack the capacity to make his own decisions is a key facet as he needs to trust the volunteers enough to let them guide him in the discussion process. It is especially helpful when the core member has just been released, usually upon warrant expiry, as he is facing many complex decisions about his living and financial arrangements. For core members with mild cognitive disabilities this skill is especially important because of their impeded capacity to weigh factors in making decisions.

The issue of how to set proper boundaries also emerged from the texts. New, less experienced volunteers need to be wary. It is important that volunteers keep personal information to themselves to avoid exploitation. Setting boundaries is a crucial piece in being an effective volunteer in a circle. The boundaries set between the volunteer and the

core member is foundational to CoSA's functioning. It is an expected entry-level

competency for volunteers in the Regina circles. Proper boundaries create the framework

for the maintaining appropriate relationships and help manage expectations of both

volunteers and core members. Boundaries should be established and goal-directed as a

key connection between the volunteers and the core member. The core member develops

an understanding of the boundaries that have been set and the result is he trusts that his

circle family will protect his confidentiality and privacy. Another feature of circles is

that members remain non-judgmental and ensure there is a balance of power while

personal boundaries are respected in the relationship.

> There are some boundaries, and I try to tell the volunteers when your
> establishing boundaries, try to figure out what are your boundaries and
> then be assertive but respectful and most people when you say no, you
> know that's no. I don't want to give out my home number, or my home
> address, but here's my cell phone number if you need to get a hold of me.
> Like most guys if you tell them straight out and your respectful, then they
> accept it. It's more when you're wishy-washy about those things that you
> open the door to hurt feelings or potential manipulation, or who knows.
> (Volunteer 3)

> What roles, what boundaries do you establish in your own friendships?
> And um… once you know a little bit about this person, you know about
> his criminal past, you know who his victims were, and whether or not he
> used drugs or alcohol you know before offending. You'll know if there is
> high risk situations for him, then you'll know when red flags come up in
> that circle. (Volunteer 3)

> We helped them in terms of finding work, encouraging them to phone,
> helping them say yes they can do it. Resources in the community, you
> know housing and the basics. Socialization, just somebody to phone you
> know you feel it's ok to phone when you're down and that sort of thing,
> that we all need that people that we can relate to. (Volunteer 7)

> When high-risk, high-need sex offenders are released on their warrant

expiry date, typically they have no family or friends waiting for them at the gate.

They are released into a community and expected to transition seamlessly into a

foreign environment and one that may be hostile to them. CoSA's form a

community around the core member, and the volunteers offer them practical

support and a friendly ear. This was a positive note as comments from Core

Member 2 suggested,

> I was alone before and now I have people to answer to;

while Core Member 4 revealed

> I was looking at it as having people on my side… I guess over the years
> like I have lost all me family-support structures.

> Each member of the circle commits to the terms of the program. The core

member must work to ensure that he does not return to prison, and, most importantly, that

he never harms another person again.

> … it just makes sense to me that if we really don't want these guys to
> reoffend then we provide those kinds of supports. (Volunteer 1)

Support was offered in the form of an ear to listen, advice, transportation to and from

meetings, guidance in terms of gaining meaningful employment, and in some cases,

guidance on personal matters such as marriage and family. One volunteer noted that

walks around the lake were something his core member looked forward to and these

walks resulted in many life decisions being made.

   c. *Basic Theme #3: Trust*

> The basic theme of trust was also evidenced in many codes. Codes such as alone,

alienated, poster boy, and marginalized revealed that these core members lack trust in

both the system and their families. While related to the basic theme of support, lack of

trust often emanated from the lack of familial bonds and community support experienced

by the core member. Core member explained that they have little or no family ties that

they had lost or been rejected.

I was looking it at it as having people all my side...I guess over the years like I have lost all my family- support structures (Core Member 4)

In my case, I was alone before and now I have people to answer to sort of? You know? (Core Member 2)

I think the difference is that the people are real ok.. when you come through the system it is not real…you like to think it is but it is not… people where masks and all kinds of stuff.. when you have to deal with people who are real it is a lot easier than having to hide (Core Member 3)

CoSA volunteers are quick to acknowledge that a sex offender who comes out of

prison to live alone and in fear is more likely to re-offend, even if he starts off with the

best of intentions.

If there was no COSA or something similar then there would just be that anger and outrage that came back, that leads to isolation, and alienation, and can lead to a higher risk of re-offending. Guys going underground, changing their name, changing their appearance moving to another city, when their supposed to be serving say an 8-10. Or they just disappear and the police don't know where they are. That's a pretty high risk situation. so…telling them about the idea of COSA is to bring them into the community, where people know who they are, and what they've done, but also accept them for who they are and help them reintegrate with hopefully a successful and safe life in the community (Volunteer 3).

The issue of not keeping secrets emerged time and time again from the data. Four

of the five offenders interviewed raised the no secrets rule as positive because there was

no confusion about what was expected of them. They did not hide anything about

themselves as everything about their past crimes was disclosed in the initial circle

meetings.

Basically, talking about…. Well the original conversation was about our backgrounds and stuff, what we did. (Core Member 2)

Yes and the one thing that I learned is probably not about circle but that I am not secretive anymore. It's something real. When I talk and I talk to everyone and we are always on the same page. (Core Member 3)

Anything and everything absolutely. (Core Member 5)

The volunteers expressed the no secrets rule as something that was expected. In order to build trust with the core members total disclosure is a necessary device. Many of the volunteers expressed the importance of disclosing all information:

> …if you were to start a circle and the guy doesn't share his story about who he is and where he comes from and what led to his offending and all this kind of stuff, then I think you run the risk of having a circle where the core member says "these people are here for me and their supporting me, but they don't know the worst of me. If they know who I really was then they would ditch me" …But when they go through that and the next week those people are still there for them. Um… that can be a pretty powerful experience. (Volunteer 3)

> Well I think the social ability that comes with it and it's the support for them and gives them experience of sharing for both the core member and the circle member. And the friendship really that comes with that type of sharing. I think the members of our circle have always been willing to go the extra mile for them. (Volunteer 4)

> Our expectation is that through our friendship, that you will not reoffend and that you will grow in, you know, in your relationship. And that this will be a positive experience. Um, that you are, you know, honest with us, if you're lying to us, you're also lying to yourself, kind of thing that is not a good moment. Um, so the covenant is there to help him, in whatever way that makes sense, his need is, and that he can know and trust. (Volunteer 9)

> Once in a while XX will call and the three of us will get together and talk about an issue like employment so there is a lot of communication with my support system. No secret rule right… it is very important that they know what we discuss as far as change so you are able to recognize that in yourself and you are comfortable telling them. (Core Member 4)

Recognition of the importance of trust and openness in circle conversations leads to the ability of the volunteers and core member to deal with complex and sometimes difficult problems. Volunteers expressed that they were not afraid to touch on controversial topics with the circle members as this is how trust is established.

> Well I think the social ability that comes with it [circles] and it's the support for them and gives them experience of sharing for both the core member and the circle member. And the friendship really that comes with that type of sharing. I think the members of our circle have always been willing to go the extra mile for them. (Volunteer 4)

We are not afraid to approach subjects that are controversial or challenging that they aggravate him sometimes when you're aggravated that's when you challenge the thinking that you think may be kind of off and hopefully come to new ideas. It's when you're challenged that you grow. (Volunteer 6)

Open conversation and trust along with the importance of guidance were all flagged in the data as key to the effectiveness of CoSA. When these qualities were missing or have not been established the success of the CoSA is at risk.

Maybe it was our immaturity at that time we did not know how to engage him. We offered friendship and these kinds of things but maybe we did not know quite how to pick him up. (Volunteer 9)

Absolutely, oh yea, because that's really the challenge Kathy. These incarcerated people have not made a decision for 10, 15, 20 years. A so for them to make a decision it's just a difficult process. So it's another process they have to go through. (Volunteer 5)

d. *Basic Theme #4: Friendship*

Another basic theme was friendship. It is an important factor in the success of the circles. Offenders understand that the people who are taking part on their circle are doing so willingly and they are volunteering their time and effort. They are not professionals who gain monetarily. One offender was not completely convinced. He quoted someone from the 'system' telling him that nobody does anything for nothing. Offenders come from a very rough environment where everyone is out for themselves so it is hard for them to come to terms with the fact that strangers would come of their own free will to help support their reintegration into the community. However, all the offenders expressed that they considered the volunteers as friends and felt comfortable sharing or confiding in them.

We are pretty close. They show concern. They give us part of their day. (Core Member 3)

I enjoy their company, they have given me good advice and I take it. (Core Member 4)

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They are friends. They feel like friends. (Core Member 5)

Connection, friendship, willingness to help out in any way you need such as giving you advice. (Core Member 2)

Very good friends. (Core Member 1)

It is recognized by the volunteers that they must establish a rapport with core members and a friendship which optimises the potential for core members to successfully transition to the community and to have their needs met. Also, volunteers are responsible for ensuring they establish and maintain appropriate boundaries within the friendship circle between themselves and the core member. In Regina CoSAs, there is no single all-encompassing definition that constitutes a proper relationship. The intention of each circle is to achieve a shared understanding of acceptable and unacceptable practices, enabling all members to provide proper support. The more experienced volunteers typically monitor day-to-day dealings within the circle and they recognize when this is not being maintained. Everyone in the circle has the responsibility for maintaining appropriate behaviour and for raising concerns immediately.

They just can't go into a community and have friends and take advantage of them.   And I think it's good for all of us in the community to learn to be caring but also not be duped. You know how does one maintain, how does one continue to express ones compassion in an uncaring or in an environment that encourages that kind of behaviour or relationships. (Volunteer 7)

We are not there to counsel but it's a friendship kind of thing. (Volunteer 4)

This is a friendship relationship, not a professional relationship. (Volunteer 2)

They [volunteers] can use their professional knowledge but through the friendship process, it begins with friendship. Skills I learned as a councillor are extremely helpful in being a good friend. (Volunteer 7)

It is a professional relationship but at the same time developing the bonds of friendship so that the circle member can trust you…so that you do have good communication. (Volunteer 6)

…dynamics of addiction and poverty, mental health, manipulation that sort of thing and where does the role friendship and support fit into it. We're not there to offer counselling, we're not there to help them figure out why he is the way he is. Like we're there to form relationships and strong bonds. (Volunteer 3)

Volunteers indicated that the bonds of friendship reduce recidivism; offenders recognize the importance of the friendship bonds that are formed and are more likely to feel that they are accountable to others and to take responsibility.

Our expectation is that you will not reoffend and that you will grow in your relationships. (Volunteer 9)

We are pretty close. They show concern. (Core Member 3)

I've been coming here so long. It's kind of hard to release it. (Core Member 1)

…that is unlike any relationships he's ever had before. And that's really kind of the core of what these things are about, is developing you know a relationship with somebody that's a healthy relationship (Volunteer 1).

He values our friendship, that we care for him and he knows it… He looks forward to our circles. (Volunteer 6)

The data suggested the restorative justice principles upon which circles are built are applicable. The interviews revealed that offenders are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions and to acknowledge the harm they've done. The covenant makes this commitment tangible and the core members agreed that it was an important element in the CoSA program. The trained volunteers from the community helped support each ex-offender and regular meetings were key to the success of achieving the core member's practical needs: attaining employment and affordable housing; providing emotional support; developing constructive strategies to address everyday problems; and

to challenge the behaviours and attitudes of the core member that are associated with his offending cycle. The volunteers indicated that the commitment to do this work comes from understanding that it is through relationships of compassion that those who have been damaging to others can change by acceptance and social reconciliation. The experience of commitment in Regina from courageous volunteers and dedicated staff has demonstrated that the concept of CoSA works within our legal system of statutory supervision and controls. Although there was recognition that circles are still in the early stage of acceptance by the criminal justice system and the public, the experience has been that working towards emotional health and active citizenship within a group of supporters provides a powerful vehicle of restorative justice for sex-offenders, their victims and the community.

Core members generally reported that while they initially felt mixed emotions about CoSA, over time they felt thankful for having this level of support upon release from prison. In addition, all core members interviewed reported that in the absence of CoSA, they would have had difficulties adjusting to the transition.

I was hesitant – I wasn't too sure what it was all about. (Core Member 4)

Feels good to have the courage and the bonds to open up and to yeah it's been a great think. (Core Member 4)

Like I said the other day, circles should be offered to everybody not just certain groups of people. I think they accomplish a great deal. Once you get over the initial uneasiness of being with another group they are great. They help you get through some days. (Core Member 3)

The belief that inclusion rather than exclusion is the key to community safety is central to CoSA. However, there is still much work to be done when it comes to acceptance of the core members in the community.

e. Basic Theme #5: Community Fears

The codes are representative of those texts that emerged in most responses from the core members. All the volunteers mentioned that the core members are high-risk offenders and that some caution needs to be used when a circle becoming a circle member.

> I do know they are manipulative so that's the part that I think we need to be very cautious about and I guess that is one of the challenges and that I think that's why it is really important that the group always meet because we always hear different things. (Volunteer 5)

> He was manipulating. (Volunteer 7)

Namely, there is still scepticism in the community with regards to public safety and security when an offender is transitioning into the community. One core member, upon being released, indicated that people in the community would have preferred he stayed in jail and that he often heard statements such as "…those people need to be put in jail and they need to stay there and they should never come out again" (Core Member 5); a perception based on his interactions with community members.

> This theme emerged numerous times:

> They are dropped off on the street and there is no one there for them so for us just to be there for them I think they have to accept responsibility for their actions… They worry a little. My oldest daughter said keep your doors locked (Volunteer 4).

> Yes and no. There are many people who don't know anything about it and there are other people that are very much for helping them integrate and I think a lot of people that aren't sure one way or another but are not negative – I know I have found that in many ways it has been positive for everyone-the people- on the other hand I remember when the first member came back into the community in the early 90s when we first had circles he was locked up in his apartment and the people on the street…it was like Armageddon-actually he didn't want to even go pick up his stuff. (Volunteer 2)

They hurt people, and that the community reaction, when the community reacts in anger is legitimate. That these guys have committed some pretty serious crimes. So we talk a little bit about that. But then the community reaction…the general response, if there was no COSA or something similar then there would just be that anger and outrage that came back, that leads to isolation and alienation, can lead to a higher-risk of reoffending. Guys going underground changing their names, changing their appearance moving to another city, when their supposed to be serving an 8-10. Or they just disappear and the police don't know where they are. It's a pretty high risk situation. (Volunteer 3)

f. Basic Theme #6: Stigmas and Community Perceptions

After incarceration, stigma and community perceptions involve severe social disapproval of sex offenders. For sex offences against children, these stigmas are even greater. Core Member 5 noted that people say "these are the most unlovely of people" and "they should be locked up and throw away the key." These are typical comments from the public and evidence of community reticence to accept these offenders.

All core members indicated they had been subject to some kind of stigmatization. One said that a police officer had called him a 'poster boy' and that he found this upsetting. Another reported "police tell me straight out that even if I was 80 years old they still wouldn't trust me." (Core Member 5)

Some volunteers noted that community members had questions about safety: the safety of the children in the community; and the risk of the person reoffending. In some cases, and their own family members counselled them against getting involved in CoSA and reminded them not to give out personal information about where they lived or their phone number. Volunteer 8 said her daughter told her to "keep her doors locked at all times."

At first I would say that um… I wanted to know something about the core members who's circle I served on, what were his offences and who were they against, because I have two daughters, one who lives with me a teenager. We'll she wasn't a teenager then but she was 12 at the time and I

just wondered about you know security and safety. Would her or I be vulnerable in anyway (Volunteer 6)

Like I didn't have fears you know that he was going to hurt me or my kids and so on but I know many people have fears with people like that (Volunteer 7)

The offenders involved in this study were able to transition into the community with the support they received and with the help of their circle; they were able to find suitable housing, information and opportunity for employment and social support. However, the risk for vigilantism was noted to be the exception and there was agreement that through community involvement, volunteers and faith-based communities the circle concept was gaining acceptance.

g. *Basic Theme # 7: Involvement*

Sex offenders in this study revealed problems accessing and participating in social activities. Some reported exclusion from renting homes and difficulty in finding and keeping a job as a direct consequence of being publicly identified as sex offenders in their communities.

> One rule that I had to live by was that I couldn't be within 300 meters of where children were expected to be… Now that's impossible. And mow when we came to Moose Jaw, where I currently am there is a church right across the street. The police had already secured the house. And then um…through all this other stuff in court and everything they said 300 meters. We asked again and they said no the police hadn't cleared this place. But they had cleared it for my wife before we had even gotten together. And there's nothing you can do if you've tried. You know try and say, oh the police are liars and all that. It's only going to go back on me not them. (Core Member 5)

However, all of the core members reported that they enjoyed participating in social activities with circle members and for the most part look forward to celebrating birthdays, going to movies and meeting for coffee.

> We have some things in common, movies we like things like that…
> dinners. They invite you to their houses, XX well she is basically
> like…she is an elderly lady but she is interesting and she does like stuff
> like that I do. XX and XX do volunteer work so I get involved like that.
> (Core Member 2)

> They are making you feel like you're kind of a part of a community. (Core
> Member 5)

The volunteers explained that celebrating milestones and achievements is

particularly important:

> They meet regularly, they walk through…they walk with the core member
> though times of crisis and they celebrate. That's an important one for the
> circles, celebrating birthdays, achievements and milestones. Most of the
> guys haven't has a lot of celebration in their lives. (Volunteer 3)

> I had my daughter and son in law and their two children for dinner that
> night with him. That was an interesting experience. We had a really nice
> dinner. I set up the dining room table as I would for Sunday dinner. I
> thought I would only have one family it might be too much for him... I
> think he enjoyed it. (Volunteer 4)

Celebrating and allowing core members to be part of these social activities is

important because the core members have not experienced this sort of contentment.

Celebrating even small achievements such as being out of prison any amount of time can

give the core members confidence and a sense of purpose and belonging.

h. Basic Theme # 8: Funding

The basic theme of funding, or lack of funding, was a reoccurring issue from the

transcribed data. Issues such as 'limited resources for recruitment' and the 'dependence

of volunteers' were presented as challenges for many of the volunteers. When asked if

there were any negative aspects to the circles it was agreed that there was a dependence

on volunteers and recruitment was a problem. CoSA is a voluntary, non-custodial

program that lies between law enforcement and other authorities on the one hand and the

public on the other.

A circle's approach is restorative – addressing the harm caused by the offence, in this case harm to the offender, – its work is to 'walk with' the core member, and to exercise no power directly over the core member. The role of a COSA volunteer is to listen, provide guidance, and to strive to be non-judgmental about their past in their approach to support their future in the community. Volunteers are trained to contribute to a safe community, for open discussion and a non-judgmental ear. It is dependent on those that volunteer their time to support the core members. The very design of the program introduces issues for funding.

> The limitation with our model is that we depend on volunteers. If you don't have enough volunteers then it's difficult to expand and have more...more circles. (Volunteer 3)

> One of the negative aspects or should I say one of the frustrations is that we don't have stable funding and you see projects that are good but there are a lot of hassle with that as well… As a result you have to learn how one can after five years reduce the cost of how we are going to do that. (Volunteer 2)

The number of CoSAs in operation at any given time is a function of volunteer availability, and the time/date the offenders are released. The requirement for new circles is not cyclical and nor is it systematic as the release of offenders to be released each month varies. Rather, warrant expiry dates can occur for one or more core members at the same time. The challenge for a CoSA organisation is for volunteer and circle support to be available on short notice. This is difficult in smaller communities where volunteers are not plentiful.

> If we could get more volunteers that would be great but we don't need more volunteers until we get more circles. It doesn't make much sense to train a whole bunch of volunteers if there are no circles to allow them to do their thing. (Volunteer 5)

> ...and how many volunteers can I have sitting, trained waiting with no circle. And then nothing with the circles happen, we have no referrals and

then we'll just happen to have 3 referrals within a couple of weeks. (Volunteer 3)

(circles are) very limited in smaller cities it should be more expanded... more budget so they can do the things they want to do...it works! (Core Member 3)

One of the offenders (Offender 5) interviewed in this study had a hard time

believing that anyone would spend time with "someone like him" if they weren't being

paid. It was noted that he had difficulty believing that any real relationship would be

provided by an unpaid person who chose to spend time with an offender.

I was telling my parole officer how good CoSA was and he said, 'don't think they are doing this all for nothing". He explained that they get paid. The researcher reiterated, "I don't think they do"... "I am pretty sure that they do, they even said that they do." (Core Member 5)

This offender was more likely to believe that volunteers were accepting payment than

doing good for the sake of doing good. It was hard for him to believe anyone would care.

The central role of volunteers in CoSA was seen as a strength of the model regardless of

the lack of funding. Volunteer 7 indicated that it would be helpful to have funding to

recover some costs:

Because we were spending an enormous amount of time both on administration and all other things. I mean we are relatively comfortable initially but don't have deep, deep pockets like some people do but it has been helpful to have some resources to cover some of the costs. (Volunteer 7)

i. *Basic Theme #9: Government Involvement*

There is an inherent need for *government involvement* around the circles in terms

of supporting operational structures. Support from police, parole, probation, and other

government agencies is a requisite for the success of the circles and those volunteers

involved. For the most part, participants reported that support from probation, parole and

police was generally good. When asked if they thought probation, police and other agencies were supportive of CoSA, participants offered answers like:

> Yes I think so. (Core Member 3)

> We communicated with the probation officer. And she was very, very nice and supporting what we were doing. (Volunteer 1)

> We have a good relationship with the police department. Parole and probation… same thing. (Volunteer 3)

> To do it without that relationship with the police and parole and probation and all the other agencies that we work with, it would seem to me like you're doing it in isolation. (Volunteer 3)

> It's really important to let the professional know that there are challenges that we are facing and that we might need help with what's happening with that. (Volunteer 5)

> However, not all reported data supported government involvement as positive.

As mentioned previously, comments by police officers albeit possibly not intended in a negative context often have such an impact on offenders since they are made by an agent of the state. Regardless of the issues, government involvement was recognized as essential to the overall success of the program. Not only does there need to be agencies involvement, but there has to be a level of understanding of the criminal justice system; its policies and practices. Volunteers recall taking the time to help offenders understand the system and the role of the professionals and vice versa.

> I try to help people understand the role of police and the criminal justice system, the psychologists, the "professionals". What's their role, because it's different. (Volunteer 3)

> You have to work with community agencies, mental health, the police and so forth and there is an education that takes place at that level too. (Volunteer 9)

> We spent a lot of time talking about his 810 renewal issue from a legal perspective. (Volunteer 6)

Not only do the core members and volunteers need to understand the system, but there is a need for mutual respect and a non-judgemental attitude between these individuals. Both volunteers and offenders admitted to being critical of the system; typical was Volunteer 2's comment that

> We're critical of the system for doing things that really should not be done and it may be true- but what we have to remember in circles is that our role with them is not to make judgements about the system (Volunteer 2).

> Offenders also seemed to have mixed feelings when it came to experiences with police. To have good relationships presents as a positive experience for the offender.

> In general I have had good experiences with local RCMP...umm city police are a little worse. And then there is the heavy duty guy that... what's his name... he was one of those guys who wouldn't trust me no matter what I did. He just wanted to lock me up and throw away the key. (Offender 5)

> I think the core members are always pleased when the police come in and they see them in conversation with folks. I think it's a mutual appreciation. The police appreciate that that's happening and the core member likes to be seen with others. (Volunteer 5)

This phenomenon actually occurred when the researcher met with one of the offenders for an interview. The offender was very proud to be sitting in an interview in a public place; and when two police officers walked in, the offender attempted to get their attention to let them know he was with an upstanding member of the community.

j. Basic Theme #10: Education

The need for public education about the role of CoSA was substantiated in all of the transcripts. One of the interview questions related to this theme was, "Do you think the general community is properly educated as to what the circles are doing and what they are about?"

Sexual offences and especially sex offences involving children incite an enormously high degree of fear and anger in the general population. Even when sex offenders are arrested, convicted, incarcerated, and serve their entire sentence, the vast majority of them return to society where they meet with a great deal of community resistance and fear. It is within this context that education is the key to better community acceptance and to raising awareness of the need to support the offenders in their successful transition to main-stream society.

When asking offenders whether they believed the general community is properly informed about what the circles are doing, participants typically answered "not in my case...more outcry and stuff" (Core Member 2); and "they are educated by the wrong people…but by the guys like 'anonymous' it would be different…better than the 'Corrections' guys" (Core Member 3). One volunteer mentioned that his circle member was met with an 'Armageddon' type welcome when a core member attempted to move into an apartment in Regina. He reported that the core member's stuff was left out on the curb and the neighbours did not want him in their community stating, "the public has a little bit of an awareness, but it's a very little bit" (Volunteer 1).

Another aspect that emanated from the data was the training inner core workers receive.

> I think the more they can get in to speak to people, not necessarily just in the media, but do more groups and sharing might be helpful and how our circles are going I'm sure people will know more about it too. (Volunteer 4)

> There are many people that who don't know anything about it. There will always be a need for public education/continuing education is important. (Volunteer 2)

Talking to volunteers in terms of training and education some volunteers with core members that can be a real problem some people tend to become turned off by the core member. (Volunteer 2)

Although involvement is not always easy to harness, CoSA officials in Regina tend contact faith-based communities as they have been more involved than the general public in offering support to programs such as CoSA. One volunteer spoke of sending out a letter to all of the Regina churches about CoSA. Word of mouth is one of the keys in disseminating information in which people become aware of CoSA and what the organisation is trying to achieve. Two examples of this were also noted by Volunteer 3 who stated that

letters [sent] to all the churches in Regina to let them know that this exists. One hundred and fifty letters were sent out; one church responded.

and Volunteer 1 who commented that:

the vast majority of volunteers are people who know somebody who's already involved.

Establishing seed funding for CoSA projects was an important topic of discussion during the meetings as was the need for recognition, training and support resources. The meetings were cited by Volunteers 2 and 5 as key to the development of standardized national training manuals for the development and operation of circles across the country. The training package, with modules and suggestions for training formats, was developed in response to those initial discussions as well as for needs that were articulated in the intervening years.

k. *Basic Theme #11: Community Stakeholders*

The importance of the community as a prominent stakeholder in the overall success of the circle concept cannot be understated. The circles rely on Rotary Clubs, faith-based communities, and churches for forums informing and building awareness.

Integration within these smaller communities is a first step in many instances for the core member to gain acceptance.

> I had a pretty good idea of what were some of the things we could not do and then we involved the Mennonites we had informed the whole congregation and a few other volunteers including XX and others. (Volunteer 2)
>
> Well we are referred to Regina Council Churches and they give us mailing list. XX will send letters out and whatever public we have we talk about it. We are open about it and the kinds of thing we are doing. (Volunteer 7)
>
> About a month ago we did an hour-long interview on the community radio station CRTR. I've spoken at university classes usually human justice classes and um… spoken to Rotary Clubs and what not. (Volunteer 3)

The ability to mobilize faith-based volunteers to engage and collaborate with recently released sex offenders is essential.

Other community stakeholders include teachers, students in programs such as social justice and nurses. These community players were mentioned as collaborative and generally supportive of the circles in most instances. Many volunteers noted that faith-based community members were more apt to be supportive than the general public due, in part, because: these organizations already take part in many types of volunteering. Those in helping professions such as nurses, clergy, etc., were also deemed to be more knowledgeable. Comments supportive of the circle model included: it allows communities to be part of the change process; it reduces fear of crime; and it takes advantage of low-to-no-cost community resources; largely from existing faith-based communities.

l. *Basic Theme #12: Direct Stakeholders*

Direct stakeholders are individuals directly involved in a circle, namely: core members, circle volunteers, and committee members. It is important to note that in

Regina circles, 'volunteer' does not mean 'inexperienced'; rather, most of the volunteers

that were directly involved in circles were professionals that had either retired or had

decided to volunteer their time and as such were quite amenable helping changing an

offender's circumstances and meet his needs.

There are many concerns about the volunteer aspect of the program, including: (1)

lack of certainty that there would be a sufficient supply of volunteers for CoSA; (2)

questions about volunteer recruitment and motivation; (3) the need for serious and

substantial training; and (4) appropriate exit strategies. In addition, one common concern

about volunteers was the need to maintain the balance between support and

accountability roles; this aspect often resulted in tension between the volunteer and core

member.

Volunteers commented that their experience in the circles changed their views.

For the most part, their view of the circles changed from anxiety and idealism to reduced

anxiety and greater pragmatism about the potential affect, following their training and

involvement in the circles. When ask about their initial feelings on joining a circle,

volunteers explained,

> You know I felt privileged to be there (Volunteer 9).

> I had a really strong interest in restorative justice it was kind of my focus
> when I was doing my HJ degree, and so I had a pretty good understanding
> of what it was all about, I wasn't one of those people who needed to be
> convinced that this was a good idea (Volunteer 1)

> At first I would say that um… I wanted to know something about the core
> members who's circle I served on, what were his offences and who were
> they against, because I have two daughters, one who lives with me a
> teenager. We'll she wasn't a teenager then but she was 12 at the time and I
> just wondered about you know security and safety. Would he or I be
> vulnerable in anyway and so Chris, who I work with, shared with me how
> he approached it as the parent of two boys um… as far as protecting your

family and so on. You know don't ever reveal where you live your phone number. It's a friendship based circle but you always try to stay professional with what you reveal. Don't put pictures in your office of your children. Try not to talk too much about your children but at the same time, don't let it be unnatural with how you (unclear) with your core member. It's protective common sense, its protective safe guards. I guess I would say…apprehension isn't the right word, but more how do I do this right, more of a caution. Um... I didn't want… I wanted to do justice to the position as far as being a good volunteer, being a good member (Volunteer 7).

m. *Basic Theme #13: Indirect Stakeholders*

Indirect stakeholders are those individuals that have a link to the offender through either kinship or social relationships such as formal or common-law marriage. Some offenders had children and wives; all had mothers, fathers, family, and neighbours who knew them as individuals and sex offenders. These people are important to consider as they can have a major influence on the offender being accepted at home and by the community. They are also inextricably linked to the offender and therefore are often the subject of an offender's release.

Offenders in this study sought support from circle members to reach out to their families. One offender sought advice on his marriage and the path forward. Another acknowledged that children were afraid to meet with him and he was also apprehensive about meeting them for the first time since his release from prison.

> XX's brother has come a couple of times - not regularly but…XX's mom has come too, with XX his wife is always there and it's important that she be there I mean she often goes and does other work, but she is aboriginal and has a very strong mentality of community kind of thing. XX is not always in that space so it is kind of a good strong influence. So getting her in the circle is very good because they can discuss these things because he has mellowed a great deal and it has really been an assistance. (Volunteer 2)

> XX, who we meet only monthly now, his situation was not as intrusive, he was a gentle guy, so we've always asked questions about his mother, that sort of thing, that seemed to be his strongest relationship and she came

down to visit and so forth and he has a, he's married now. You know the gal was totally aware, as are his children, um, he has gotten a job and the work seems positive. (Volunteer 9)

I did take my brother once 'cause he lived in Regina. And he came over and we had dinner. And they got to meet him… I was comfortable I liked having him there. But not something you'd want to do every day. (Core Member 5)

n. *Basic Theme #14: Government stakeholders*

Finally, the role of government emerged as a main stakeholder. Both offenders and volunteers recognized the need for federal and provincial governments' involvement in achieving success in CoSA.

Government stakeholders provide much needed financial support as well as occasional human resources to support the development of training materials, undertake evaluations, and to establish education and awareness campaigns. This work is critical to the overall success of the circle concept.

I also had consultations of course with the National committee and chaplaincy and um basically based it on the principals of friendship and support and accountability then when they came. (Volunteer 2)

Well, first, one basic thing is that Circles of Support and Accountability make a difference, that's one thing; um, the other thing is that you have to work with community agencies, you know those things, mental health, the police and so forth and there is an education that takes place at that level too, to see there, this is all through the force and personality, you have the RCMP, you have the prosecutor, you have the city police, the social services; all of those things. (Volunteer 9)

I have a contract with CSC chaplaincy, with security clearance and everything so I can go in and visit and they can share that information with me. But we just recently established that at LPC in Saskatoon; and we just got a referral from them in the last few weeks here. (Volunteer 3)

We encourage them to, like the probation, like if someone is looking for a probation officer we invite them to come to the circle. Sometimes they won't come. Some do and some don't I don't know why. (Volunteer 7)

The Crown Prosecutor, probation and parole, social workers, police officers, and the chaplaincy were all seen as stakeholders who affect the outcome, positively or negatively, of offenders released from prison. They work in collaboration with the circles yet the distinction between the system stakeholders and the non-judgmental CoSA stakeholders was distinctive.

6. Basic Themes to Organizing Themes

According to Attride-Stirling (2001) organizing themes emerge from the clustering of basic themes around related issues. These clusters are significant because they summarize the principal assumptions of the basic themes and reveal a more abstract and summation of the text. The organizing themes also enhance the significance of the broader themes that connect to the global themes. In the next section of this chapter, the basic themes were rearranged into clusters based on larger comparable issues, or organizing themes, that emerged from the clusters of basic themes. Table 4-12 reveals how the basic themes are clustered into the four organizing themes.

Table 4-4 Basic Themes to Organizing Themes

Basic Themes	Issues Discussed	Organizing Themes
Success Support Trust Friendship	Foundations and fundamental principals rooted in COSA	Circle Structures and Goals
Community Fears Community Perceptions /Stigmas Involvement	Importance of acceptance and struggles face due to stigmas and fears.	Attitudes and Perceptions
Education Funding Government Support	Lack of funding, education and stakeholder support	Systemic Challenges
Community Direct Indirect Government	Those affected in some way by CoSA	Stakeholders

a. Organizing Theme 1: Circles Structures and Goals

The organizing theme *circle structures and goals* is explained and understood as a

function of the interaction of four basic themes: (1) success in terms of circle structures;

(2) support; (3) trust; and (4) friendship. Each of these four basic themes contributed to

the way CoSA circles functioned as a whole.

From basic circle patterns and processes such as covenants, weekly meetings, and

conversation to ensuring a safe and non-judgmental environment, based on friendship and

trust, support the success of CoSA circles. Developing and maintaining strong

relationships within the circle for a core member is aimed at him developing healthy

relationships outside the circle, thereby promoting a healthy transition into life in the

community.

Throughout the data collection phase, it became apparent that CoSA circles utilize

specific strategies that serve to shape their overall goals. The circles are all comprised of

one core member and four to five trained community volunteers. The circles meet on a

regular basis to engage in regular conversation, celebrate success, build healthy

relationships, and provide support to their respective core member. Volunteers assist

core members with practical needs, (i.e. housing, seeking employment and social

assistance), challenging inappropriate behaviours and attitudes that might lead to future

offending, provide advice, and help core members to develop constructive solutions to

everyday challenges.

To reiterate, CoSA's mission is: "To substantially reduce the risk of future sexual

victimization of community members by assisting and supporting released men in their

task of integrating with the community and leading responsible, productive, and

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accountable lives" (Wilson et al., 2007, p.7). Their overall goal is to promote successful integration of released sex offenders into the community by providing support, advocacy, and a way to be meaningfully accountable in exchange for living safely in the community (Wilson et al., 2007).

The fundamental goals of CoSA are reflected in the way circles function. Success in terms of circle structures can be defined by how the circle (weekly gathering of core members and volunteers) result in positive outcomes. This organizing theme revealed there is method to each of the circle structures; and how the role played in ensuring the ultimate success of reintegration and reducing recidivism. From the choosing of volunteers (deciding the type of individual needed and in his or her selection) to once a week meetings, the importance of a written contract (known as the covenant) that outlines each member's role and responsibility, and how these practices combine to contribute to an overall successful CoSA.

Meetings in local coffee shops and conversing with members of the community allow core members to further integrate with the community. The covenant is a prime example of a structured instrument that promotes accountability and has been used successfully in the cases noted by all the participants. Not only is it the responsibility of the core members to uphold the contract, but the volunteers have a responsibility to model good behaviour and are held accountable for their actions.

Aside from the physical structures, circles are structured around the ideals of support, trust, and friendship. These three principles interact with one another and were frequently touched upon by all the participants. Circles create friendships and healthy relationships as well as providing the support systems that core members need to make

good decisions and set boundaries for themselves. By allowing core members to openly and honestly share stories about their past with the other circle members, free of judgement and stigmatization, establishes and reinforces trust. The core member sees a separation between professionals and friendships thus creating a structured environment where they are able to develop functional and healthy relationships that might be reflected in how they live in the community.

According to all participants, the methods and structures utilized in CoSA circles are positive. Though all core members reported to be apprehensive at first, after time passes they exhibited and espoused mutual respect and a sense of pride to be part of the program. Many of the participants both core members and volunteers expressed that the core members would not have had such a seamless journey back into the community without the help of CoSA circles.

b. *Organizing Theme 2: Attitudes and Perceptions*

The *attitudes and perceptions* organizing theme is explained and understood as a function of three basic themes: (1) community perceptions; (2) fears/stigmas; and (3) involvement. Indeed, successful reintegration will not occur without community acceptance.

All offenders face community scrutiny once they are released and attempt to re-enter mainstream society. No other group, however, is scrutinized as closely as sex offenders, especially those deemed high-risk. Community members were reported as sceptical and non-accepting of individuals involved in sex offences. As Core Member X noted, even "the police officer would like to lock us up and throw away the key."

The issue of community perceptions was universal throughout the interviews for this thesis. Among the churches that were polled for interest in participating there was much apprehension; those that did not respond to mail outs and were approached specifically to ask whether they would welcome an offender into their faith community, the answer was often, no! They reported being worried about their children, being alone with a sex offender, and about the safety of their female congregation members. The perception of sex offender as 'non-salvageable' was an issue that volunteers work towards turning around on a regular basis. A sex offender has many additional challenges facing them as they attempt to re-enter society. Restrictions set out by government legislation and policies have been put in place because of public fear and outcry. Sex offenders are sometimes labelled as 'predators' by the media; a term that implies they hunt down their victims, which in turn evokes fear in individuals who read or hear this characterisation.

The issues of fear and stigmatization were also evident as part of this organizing theme. Sex offenders are hated and vilified by community members who often rally to have surveillance put in place to help ensure the former offenders don't reoffend or are apprehended quickly. But the stigmatization often results in disruption to the offender's life to the point where he has a hard time finding housing and work. Community members claimed these to be 'red flags' and don't want to be 'blindsided' by the offender and/or his partner.

Clearly, this research reveals that those individuals who become involved in supporting the reintegration process definitely have a greater understanding and

acceptance of sexual offenders than those who are not involved. A key factor facilitating the ability to empathize and understand the offenders' point of view is involvement.

There has to be an effort by all stakeholders if stigmatisation and negative perceptions are to be set aside. CoSA intends to build safer communities and with fewer victims. For example, and this is also a systemic challenge, if community members were better aware of CoSA and its fundamental goals, they may be encouraged toward a more positive perception of core members and his intentions to lead a responsible and productive life. This does not necessarily mean that all community members need to become directly involved with CoSA circles, but rather there needs to be an education and awareness of what is needed to assist these individuals re-entering the community. In so doing, this type of involvement and engagement leads to a shift in attitudes and stigmatizing behaviours. Community members can feel safer in their communities as can the core members.

c. *Organizing Theme 3: Systemic Challenges*

The organizing theme systemic challenges is explained and understood as a function of the contributions of three basic themes: (1) funding; (2) government support; and (3) education. These basic themes emerged throughout the data and it was noted that the correctional system (i.e., parole and probation services) and reintegration are not always aligned and the lack of both funding and education are considered 'systemic' issues.

Numerous volunteers noted the misalignment of an offender's warrant expiry date and the notification request sent to the CoSA program; this causes difficulties in being able to provide timely and efficient support to the offender immediately upon release.

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There is also a lack of communication among the CSC chaplaincy and CoSA administrators in Regina. The latter are only made aware of an offender's release days before it occurs which precludes having a circle in place.

Moreover, funding instability and inconsistency leads to the inability to recruit effectively and adversely affects the proper orientation of volunteers. Thus, circles are not ready upon an offender's release. Also, the nature of volunteer organizations being what it is, existing circles often share the same volunteers. Some volunteers reported being part of two or three circles.

Lack of funding directly impacts the community education and the ability to provide proper communication and learning materials to indirect stakeholders. Community education is not only important to change community perceptions and reduce fear, but is essential to attract and retain quality potential volunteers. Community involvement is already difficult due to community perceptions of sex offenders and it becomes even more difficult when there is a lack of information to educate the public and recruit volunteers due to a lack of funding. As touched upon earlier, involvement is not always easy to harness yet word of mouth was the most successful form of publicity. This was how most volunteers were recruited and many of these individuals were part of a faith-based group or community. However, it is difficult to convince any individual that sex offenders are capable of re-establishing themselves as productive, meaningful and responsible community members without proper communication and education strategies in place.

Involvement from state institutions such as the police, parole, and the CSC Chaplaincy directly affects the success of CoSA circles. While all the volunteers stated

they have a strong relationship with the police department and the parole officers, the core members shared that they felt besieged by the justice system and had a hard time understanding the role it played in their lives. The majority of their interactions with the police are negative, beginning with arrest, detention, and questioning. The police presence upon a sex offender's release can be detrimental, yet it is necessary as part of the surveillance plan. Even when living in the community with CoSA support, the core members recalled not just a lack of communication and support from the police but also negative experiences when dealing with the police. One offender revealed he was harassed repeatedly by a particular police officer who constantly provoked him by saying he was going back. Having core members perceive the 'system' in a more positive manner is one of the challenges faced by CoSA.

d. *Organizing Theme 4: Stakeholders*

The *stakeholders* organizing theme is explained and understood as a function of the contributions of four basic themes: (1) community; (2) direct; (3) indirect; and (4) government. Coding of the data revealed a consistent acknowledgement of the difference between direct and indirect stakeholders and the importance of the community and what stake they hold as well as the importance of the government in place.

Direct stakeholders were seen to be those that had a direct link and a high level of involvement in the circle process. The offender, the volunteers, and the steering committee members were deemed essential and directly related to the success of the circles. Indirect stakeholders were family members, partners.

The importance of government involvement to support the education, communication and outreach aspect of the circles was noted throughout the interviews as was their role in providing funding and controlling the allocation of monies.

'Community' had both positive and negative connotations throughout the interviews. Communities members could be on board and willing to support what or fearful of what and prone to stigmatize the offender at the same time. Community plays a large part in the success of CoSA as a whole and the success of the core members who are learning to live in a community as a valuable member. It is because of the community around them that they feel sense of worth, belonging responsibility and accountability.

7. From Organizing Themes to the Global Theme: The Effectiveness of CoSA

The organizing themes presented here were built upon the clusters of basic themes that were grouped according the similar underlying issues that became apparent. The first organizing theme is circle structures and goals. The success of the basic themes in terms of circle structures, support, trust and friendship as shown in Table 4-3 all fit into a category that depicts what is necessary for a circle to function effectively. All of these basic themes talked about the necessary methods and tools that were utilized within the circles that created a positive experience for both volunteers and offenders.

Success in terms of circle structures demonstrated the importance of the covenant and modeling positive behaviours. These concepts were put in place to allow members of the circles to commit to open communication in efforts to end patterns of sexual offending and increase public safety.

The basic theme of "support" illustrates the importance for support structures for the core members. Allowing the core member to realize that circles are meant to provide assistance in decision making and setting personal goals and boundaries without acting as an authority establishes strong circle bonds and connections that a core member would not normally have. Trust again shows the importance of open communication and the importance of guidance. Circles would not function effectively if an appropriate level of trust was not established between the core members and the volunteers. This level of trust can only come from an agreed upon rule of no secrets and a deep understanding of who the core members are and what their histories are like. Lastly, all the participants talked about the profound friendship they made after entering the program. It is imperative that the volunteers understand that their primary roles is to be a friend for the core members, allowing the core members to create strong bonds with individuals who model positive behaviours.

The basic themes of community fears, perceptions, stigmas and involvement were all grouped under the organizing theme of attitudes and perceptions. The importance of influencing public perception and the public attitudes where CoSA is concerned is paramount. The importance of education is clearly linked to this organizing theme and it emerged in the codes under the theme of systemic challenges as well. The systemic challenges organizing theme emerged from three basic themes that all brought issues described by the participants regarding challenges within the structure of CoSA. Funding, education and government support all discussed aspects of the program that raised concerns regarding CoSA's effectiveness. Funding captures the dependence on volunteers and limited recourses as CoSA would be constrained to offer fewer circles

(fewer volunteers) without proper funding and support from outside agencies. CoSA circles are dependent on volunteers and recruitment and placement of volunteers can be difficult because of a lack of funding, community education, and communication with outside agencies.

Government support depicts the importance of agencies (police and probation/parole) involvement within the circles, the need for a solid understanding of the criminal justice system and its processes, as well as the need for trust between agencies and circle members. It was also noted that the corrections system (parole services) and reintegration phases are not always aligned. Numerous volunteers noted the misalignment of a person's warrant expiry with notification to the CoSA program caused lags in being able to provide support to the offender immediately upon release.

Education underscores the challenges arising from a lack of volunteer training and community education. These are all issues that were raised by the participants and things that need to be addressed in order for CoSA to be effective.

While only the core members and circle volunteers from the Regina area were interviewed in this study, it became quite apparent within the data that CoSA has a profound effect not only on those directly involved in the program but outsiders as well. CoSA had an effect on the surrounding community, family members and friends, police officers, probation, etc. The effectiveness of the program and though directly involved allowed for safer communities, cooperation with police and probation making their jobs easier. Family members related to the core members were able to re-build relationships with the core members and the volunteers.

The last organizing theme related to the types of stakeholders that are involved in order for CoSA's to be successful. Direct stakeholders are those that benefit directly from CoSA`s, the offender and the volunteer, and they provide the foundation upon which are CoSA are built. The indirect stakeholders are family members of both the offenders and the volunteers. Community involvement from rotary clubs and churches were captured as community and anyone involved that represented a formal organization were captured under government (governance).

Each stakeholder plays a significant role in his or her respective CoSA circle. Support from each stakeholder group is necessary for circles to run effectively. While government and community support is necessary for the circles to function effectively, it is imperative that the community is educated and informed about the benefits of having a CoSA. When circles are running effectively this allows for community safety and fewer victims.

CHAPTER FIVE – SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

1. Introduction

This thesis sought to answer the primary research question: From the perspectives of selected stakeholders, how effective was CoSA as a program for sex offenders in Regina between 1997 and 2011? The researcher also examined this issue by asking three secondary questions: (1) what are the individual program goals of CoSA? (2) What role does CoSA play in crime prevention? and, (3) what constitutes an effective program according to the key stakeholders (volunteers and core members) of CoSA? This chapter revisits the previous chapters as well as summarizes and discusses the findings in order to determine the successes and/or the shortcomings of Regina CoSA based on the analyses of the data. The theoretical, policy and programming implications of this research are also discussed. Finally, recommendations for further research into CoSA are offered at the conclusion of this chapter.

2. Summary of the Chapters

Chapter One outlined a series of challenges faced by sex offenders who are released on parole from a penitentiary into the community, thus establishing the foundation for the research. Chapter One included a brief overview of reintegrative shaming and demonstrated how that theoretical proposition relates to CoSA as a restorative justice approach to managing the re-entry of high-risk sex offenders into the community. The chapter then presented the primary and secondary research questions for this study and outlined the organizational and operational definitions and terms.

Chapter Two provided an in-depth a review of the extant literature relevant to sex offending and CoSA. It first looked at sex offenders and their offences, described current

sex offender legislation in Canada and then provided a review of the different typologies

of offenders. Patterns and cycles of sex offenders were described as well as risk,

offender needs, and responsiveness to correctional and community-based programs for

these individuals. It also provided and in-depth review of restorative justice as well as

introduced the concepts of social capital and reintegrative shaming. This was followed

by an in-depth description of the CoSA model which was followed by a review of

research conducted on the efficacy of the program in reducing sex offender recidivism.

Chapter Three presented the methodological approach employed in this research.

This chapter described the strengths of using qualitative research methods in studying this

vulnerable population and highlighted the specific methods employed in the research.

The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews to collect the perceptions of primary

stakeholders (volunteers and core members) who spoke to the issue of effectiveness of

CoSA as a restorative justice initiative in Regina, Saskatchewan. The chapter also

presented thematic network analysis as the method used to classify the transcribed

interviews into manageable codes and themes in the analysis of the data. The analysis

took an emic perspective, signifying the point of view of the participant (Pelto & Pelto,

1978). This strategy provided the researcher with a method of evaluating the success of

CoSA as a program for high-risk sex offenders in Regina. This approach also allowed

the self-reported perceptions of core members and volunteers to be considered throughout

the analysis of the data.

Chapter Four presented the research findings through the lens of a thematic

network analysis which allowed the researcher to uncover systematic themes within the

data. The data were analytically grouped into clearly defined "clusters of themes" or

basic themes (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 402). The basic themes that emerged from the data were grouped into four organizing themes directly derived from the primary and secondary research questions: (1) CoSA's structures and goals; (2) systemic challenges; (3) attitudes and perceptions; and (4) stakeholders. The basic theme "successes in terms of circle structures, support, trust and friendship" directly related to the secondary research questions "what are the individual program goals?" and "what role does CoSA play in crime prevention?" The organizing theme of *CoSA's structures and goals* depicted the necessary foundations to maintain an effective and successful program through the perceptions of the primary stakeholders.

This secondary research question was "what constitutes an effective program according to the perceptions of the primary stakeholders?" The second organizing theme illustrated the challenges as described by the participants. Participants frequently identified problems such as dependence on a limited number of volunteers, lack of funding, importance of agency involvement, and education (or lack thereof) for both the community and circles. The basic themes of funding, government involvement, and education were then derived from the transcribed interviews and became the organizing theme of *systemic challenges*. The third organizing theme derived directly from issues such as community safety and vulnerabilities, stigmatization of core members, and empathy. The basic themes of community fears, stigmas, and perceptions and involvement form the organizing theme *attitudes and perceptions*. .

The final organizing theme deals primarily with CoSA stakeholders. It became apparent throughout the examination of the data that many stakeholders (both direct and indirect) are affected by their involvement in CoSA circles. Offenders, victims, families,

volunteers, police and other agencies all have and have relationships with CoSA and

provide them with social capital. Thus, the basic themes of government, community,

direct stakeholders, and indirect stakeholders became apparent and, in turn, classified into

the organizing theme: *stakeholders*.

Afterward, the organizing themes provided direction in the development of the

underlying super-ordinate or global theme of this research, namely: *COSA as an effective*

program. This theme emerged throughout the data collection and analysis phases. The

global theme was examined through the lens of the primary research question.

3. Conclusions

The interpretation of the data collected in this research indicated that CoSA is an

effective program for reintegrating sex offenders into the Regina community from the

perspectives of stakeholders who took part in the study. From the perspective of core

members, the support provided by CoSA or the social capital gains of establishing

stronger social networks and accountability upon their release into the community is

paramount and, for many, their sole source of support. In most cases, family and friends

have rejected these individuals because of the nature of their crimes. As a result, they are

forced to transition into the community from prison without the support of family and

friends. CoSA members, in effect, became the family, friends, and support network for

these offenders thereby increasing their social capital.

The goal of CoSA is to promote the successful reintegration of released sex

offenders into the community by providing support, holding them accountable for past

and present actions (Wilson et al., 2007). Throughout this process, they develop social

capital by re-establishing social ties with community members who model strong values

and behaviours in hopes that by strengthening those ties and helping core members live more meaningful and productive lives there will be less opportunity for crime (Settles, 2009). The basic themes under the organizing theme, *CoSA structures and goals*, describe what is needed to sustain an effective circle in Regina and answers the first of the secondary research questions**:** *What are the program goals of CoSA?*

CoSA volunteers are trained to provide social support. These volunteers typically come from faith-based communities or the human service sectors, such as hospitals, and rehabilitation centres. Most Regina volunteers are retirees and few have any formal training in sex offender treatment. The more senior volunteers mentored newer ones; imparting valuable information and helping them build the skills to help them become effective in their role as circle members. Regina's CoSAs benefit from the volunteer activities of highly committed members with many years of experience, including the two founding members who are still actively involved, and continue to share their knowledge and experience with younger volunteers and agency staff.

A strong circle structure where one core member is supported by two or more volunteers appears to be the most effective structure in Regina, and this model is consistent with the other 18 CoSA sites throughout the nation (Saskatchewan Justice Institute, 2012). Circles that piloted service to more than one core member at a time were perceived as being less effective by stakeholders and participants reported that all had reverted to one core member. Core members reported feeling less inclined to be open when they had to share the circle with another member. When asked whether they would like to take part in a circle with more than one core member, the answer was a uniform 'no.'

Observations of the investigator revealed that circle meetings were held in safe, welcoming locations such as coffee shops or community resource locations. In the circles that were observed, core members were greeted with questions about their week and how they were feeling; allowing them the opportunity to influence the direction of the conversation. Some meetings remained at a very superficial level, while others involved difficult conversations. One example was when a core member was interested in marrying a woman who had two children and his circle volunteer challenged that decision. His comments required the core member to question his readiness to accept responsibility of a ready-made family given his recent transition from prison. In this instance, the conversation was led by the core member with guidance from the volunteer. The core member did end up marrying, but he had the opportunity to weigh the pros and cons of his decision. He was challenged with regard to the unacceptable nature of his previous behaviour, the potential for this behaviour to continue given the circumstances, and possibly how to avoid that behaviour in the future.

A key requirement in the success of CoSA is the ability of volunteers to gain the trust of the core members. Something as simple as a covenant or agreement for core members to take accountability for actions and for volunteers to model healthy and productive behaviours can have a positive effect on a core member's success in integrating into a community.[3] Circle volunteers provided multidimensional support to core members, increasing their social capital and addressing risk factors. While the most common type of support came in the form of advice, volunteers also provided core members with support as to how to approach financial institutions, finding an apartment or job and, in one instance how to propose to a girlfriend. In many cases, the long-term

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[3]   A sample covenant is provided in Appendix E.

relationships resulted in friendships between volunteers and core members that were sustained even after a circle closed. In their interviews, core members repeatedly indicated they felt comfortable enough to contact circle volunteers outside the scheduled circle meeting times for help with decisions or for advice.

The individual program goals of COSA emerged during the analysis of the data. The goals that emerged were friendship, trust and support. Although accountability is a fundamental program goal, this was less evident in the coded data. The structures in place to support the core member are critical to the success of the program. Through these supports, it is evident that CoSA volunteers deliver a meaningful intervention that helps offenders to live safely and productively. The circle model employs a restorative justice approach in that the offender is able acknowledge both his crime and the implications for his reintegration into the community. The approach allows the core member to reflect on and understand the ramifications of his actions in the same manner as Christie's norm-clarification and the personal 'cost' of his actions for himself, his victim, and the community.

CoSA is an exceptional example of the restorative justice approach since it provides purposeful and consistent support needed for the core member to take positive actions and begin to be able to see himself in a more positive light (Wilson & Prinzo, 2001). The meetings and the consistent discussions contribute to the development of a positive outlook which, in turn, leads to increased social capital, reduced recidivism as well reducing dynamic risks such as feelings of isolation.

When discussing the effectiveness of CoSA as a program for high-risk sex offenders, it was necessary to ask the next secondary question: *what role does CoSA play in crime prevention?* The Center for Sex Offender Management (2008) notes:

> The impact sexual victimization can have on victims and families, the fear these crimes generate in members of the public, and the unique risks and needs posed by sex offenders have led to more concerted efforts to develop specialized ways to manage known offenders as a means to prevent future sexual victimization. (CSOM, 2008, p. 1)

Imprisoning offenders provides an immediate solution for ensuring public safety, however, most sex offenders are eventually released into the community and return with insufficient or no support. Ex-offenders are able to receive much needed and meaningful support and learn accountability for their irresponsible or risky behaviours. As a result, the rights of both the community and sex-offenders are respected (Wilson et al., 2007).

Accountability in CoSA means taking responsibility for your behaviour and taking the appropriate actions to repair the harm of the original offence. Accountability in this restorative approach model differs from other traditional justice approaches where accountability is in is "interpreted as punishment or adherence to a set of rules laid down by the system" (Pranis, 1998). Punishment and following a set of rules does not aid in moral development at the same level that is attained by taking full responsibility for behaviour. According to Pranis, taking full responsibility for behaviour requires understanding how that behaviour affected other human beings, acknowledging that the behaviour resulted from a choice that could have been made differently and acknowledging to all affected that the behaviour was harmful (1998, n.p.).

All participants in this study described how CoSA circles played a significant role in reducing recidivism. The core members who were re-incarcerated within a three-year period were charged with less serious crimes than their initial offences and they were not of a sexual nature suggesting that program supports are indeed working. Two core members in this study revealed they were re-incarcerated for breach of probation during the reintegration process.

In addition to support, the use of the covenant promotes accountability but not in a punitive sense. The core members gain a sense of responsibility for themselves and they acknowledge the choices they made could have been made differently and recognize the harm their behaviour caused. They also have respect for the volunteers they do not want to disappoint or let down the other members of the circle as they begin to recognize that it would be at the cost of their relationships. This reflects the notion of reintegrative shaming and how those closest to the core member can have the greatest effect on future behaviour since interdependent people are susceptible to shaming (Braithwaite, 1989).

Volunteers indicated that the friendship bonds created within the circles contributes to reducing recidivism. They do this by giving the core member a sense of belonging thereby reducing social isolation. They have individuals who care for their well-being and to whom they have to answer if they violate a behavioural boundary or engage in risky behaviours. If they commit a new criminal offence, they would also be held accountable through a response from the criminal justice system once again. CoSA attempts to take the focus away from stigmatization and social isolation and can reduce offending risks by

providing a supportive environment. Core members have reported that friendship

networks which are significant factors in reducing recidivism (Saskatchewan

Justice Institute, 2012). In this thesis, core members reported having positive

views of the program and admitted that having access to these supports were

significant factors in preventing new offences (Wilson et al., 2005, Bryson, 2010).

The purpose of CoSA is to provide a support system and build trusting

relationships keeping the offender from feeling isolated which, in turn, can reduce

the risk of reoffending (Bryson, 2010; Hannem & Petrunik, 2007). This is in line

with Bates et al. (2010) whose study which indicated lower rates of recidivism

among core members compared to those sex offenders not participating in circles.

The final research question identified what makes CoSA an effective program:

what constitutes an 'effective' program according to the perceptions of CoSA

stakeholders? It became very apparent that while the goal of not reoffending is a

significant factor when discussing the effectiveness of the program, both offenders and

volunteers believed that building healthy relationships and strong bonds were more

important in determining whether or not the program was successful. According to

Hirschi (1969), humans are selfish beings who make their decisions and choices with

respect to their personal wants and only the existence of these bonds will control criminal

behaviour. If social bonds are not developed or become weakened or broken, then,

individuals may choose to engage in delinquent acts to fulfill their needs. While Hirschi

(1969) noted that individuals with strong social bonds are less likely to engage in

criminal acts, Braithwaite (1989) noted the importance of using existing bonds, or

creating new ones, in the process of reintegrative shaming. "By this I mean that

attachment to parents and other agents of conventional morality is more likely to reduce crime. People are more likely to continue to believe in the rules those agents of conventional morality uphold and to be influenced by them" (Braithwaite, 1989, p. 7). Being able to build strong bonds and healthy relationships is a key skill that core members acquire while part of CoSA. This is attributed to the success of CoSA circles because when core members have developed bonds with circle volunteers they become accountable to them. This is in keeping with the concept of increased social capital since the social ties and reciprocity that bind participants together enable to live happier and more productive lives. The same notion applies to core members. Because most prisoners will eventually be released, there is a need to support this population within an approach that promotes personal participation and community involvement and restorative justice is key to achieving this goal. As Settles (2009) stated, increasing social capital can contribute to a more successful reintegration.

This is consistent with Braithwaite's (1989) proposition that interdependency runs next to social bonding, attachment and commitment. Individuals with interdependent relationships are more likely to respond to shaming and, unlike Regina, those societies which these individuals reside are likely to be communitarian where group loyalties preside over personal interest and where shaming is widespread (Braithwaite, 1989). As discussed in Chapter Two, there can be two types of shaming; 1) shaming that becomes stigmatizing and 2) shaming that is followed by reintegration. Shaming that is reintegrative is a result of disapproval that is dispensed without rejection from the disapprover. This prevents the dismantling of future disapproval (Braithwaite, 1989).

All participants who were interviewed agreed that the ability to develop strong bonds and friendships is the strongest aspect of CoSA circles. This is reaffirmed by COSA Halifax (2012), that noted that:

> Circles are not like a program which has an ending date. They are about relationships that are ongoing. On a continuum, Circles are more about being family than they are about therapeutic interventions. Modeling is a major focus of what occurs in a Circle and, in that sense, what is caught is more important than what is taught. It has been observed that the most powerful aspect of a Circle is the sense of belonging that occurs both for the offender and for the Circle members. It is because of this belonging, because of the degree of attachment that is formed, that CoSA has such a profound impact (n.p.).

The impact of having someone to whom you are accountable and who will hold you to account provides meaning to the life of a core member within the community. Some core members have never developed strong social bonds with anyone prior to their incarceration, and CoSA provides a group of community members who are there to support them and advocate on their behalf. For these core members developing successful relationships is a key factor in helping them transition from prison to acceptance within the community.

Although the work the local CoSA sites are doing for community safety is admirable, the data collected and analyzed in this research confirms that community perspectives of sex offenders are anything but welcoming. More educational campaigns to raise awareness and educate the community on the principles of restorative justice are needed. The public needs to understand the benefits of the CoSA model for successful reintegration into the community and hear success stories of past core members. Public perceptions could improve with better communication and education.

Though there may be people who do not stigmatize sex offenders, all the core members reported that many community members and professionals, including people working within justice systems still reject, stigmatize, and label them. As a result, the core members feel the public is hesitant to accept them and show little or no empathy towards them. According to Bazemore (1998) restorative justice is based on the assumption that justice is achieved when the response to the needs of the citizens, offenders and victims are balanced. Basic community expectation, such as security, proper sanctions for criminal acts and offender reintegration, cannot be effectively achieved with only a narrow focus on the needs and risks of offenders. Rather to repair the harm crime causes, victims, community and offenders must be involved meaningfully as co-participants in the justice process (Bazemore, 1998).

Bazemore's (1998) concept of earned redemption could help reduce stigmatization by using an approach that give offenders the opportunity to make amends with though who have been harmed and essentially earning back the trust of the community. The concept of earned redemption should build the process of earned redemption and not only could but should build upon natural process of personal and behavioural growth and reintegration into the community, rather than expert-driven processes (Bazemore, 1998). There is still a lot of fear and uncertainty regarding sex offenders and as a result, some people still view organizations such as CoSA with skepticism.

4. **Theoretical Implications**

The 'sex offender' label is stigmatizing and incredibly difficult to remove. It is present within justice systems while incarcerated, with many offenders reluctant to

disclose the crimes they are guilty of committing for fear of being assaulted or killed by other offenders.

As noted by Terry (2006), funding for social supports for this offender group is rare in the U.S. The analyses revealed that challenge also exists in Regina where there is little community support for released sexual offenders. Historically, the only other funded programs that exist to support the transition back to the community for sex offenders were those offered by the correctional system prior to release, or community-based sex offender treatment. However, according to the CCJC (2012, p. 1), the National Crime Prevention Centre (NCPC) in 2009 earmarked $7.5 million dollars in funding over a five-year period for 18 participating CoSA sites across Canada (CCJC, 2012; Saskatchewan Justice Institute, 2012).

The CoSA concept challenges the stereotype that sex offenders are frightening people, deserving of hatred and exile. CoSA advocates that through reconciliation with the community, acceptance can be found for high-risk core members. Reintegrative shaming theory suggests that if one focuses on labelling the `act` as heinous, rather than labelling the person, the act or crime is in disrepute and not the person, thus promoting forgiveness. The offender is better able to shed his/her label (Braithwaite, 1989).

The covenant (an agreement between core members and circle volunteers) is a key component in the CoSA model and it is highly effective in terms of ensuring the core member is aware that he must be accountable for his conduct while participating in a circle (Wilson *et al*, 2007). There are societal expectations that individuals need to be held accountable for their actions. Holmes and Holmes (2002) explained that, "many believe that treatment programs designed for the rehabilitation of sex offenders constitute

an unrealistic approach" (p. 231). Additionally, many feel it is a waste of taxpayer's funds to provide treatment and support for these individuals, yet the alternative is their release into the community without any supports for that the transition (Holmes & Holmes, 2002). These beliefs were identified in the analyses of the interview transcripts and it is important that the public be educated about the nature of sex offences, offenders, treatment, and their reintegration (see Braithwaite, 1989). Indeed, stigmatizing these individuals will often do more harm than good, as it will increase their social isolation and anger, which might place them at higher risk of re-offending (Griffiths et al., 2007).

Upon release, some high-risk sex offenders are often harassed by members of the public as well as identified and labelled by the media, thereby increasing their social isolation and making their transition to the community a higher risk proposition (Levenson, Brannon, Forney & Baker, 2007). Proponents of reintegrative shaming theory advocate labelling the crime, not the offender. This sentiment was observed in the data collected from the Regina CoSA stakeholders. One volunteer indicated that the welcoming received by his core member upon release was much like 'Armageddon' due to negative publicity there was a public outcry and his personal belongings were put on the sidewalk beside his dwelling. His neighbours clearly did not feel safe knowing a convicted sex offender was to reside nearby. Volunteers worked to disassociate the crime from the individual, educating them to the fact that the core member had accounted for his crimes and was on a new path; however, the residents were slow to change their perceptions. Not only does a lack of acceptance by a community have a negative influence on an offender's recovery, it might also contribute to reoffending if the offender

feels socially isolated, powerless, hopeless or the stability of their employment or housing is threatened (Braithwaite, 1989).

Braithwaite's (1989) notion of reintegrative shaming stresses the importance of invoking remorse and rejecting stigmatic shaming. It is clear that CoSA circles deliver a process consistent with this notion whereby community volunteers provide core members with opportunities to repair their relationships with their families and friends by (a) accepting core members and (b) exposing them to individuals who care for them and hold them accountable. Although the victim is not directly involved, there is indirect acknowledgement of accountability for the harm caused. As described in Chapter Two, the community and offenders have the opportunity to account for that which was disrupted by the sexual offending and a key goal of CoSA is to prevent reoffending through reintegrative shaming. In some respects, CoSA constitutes an effective program due to the benefits of reducing dynamic risks and therefore reducing recidivism, which are clearly needs for the population included in this study. The fact that friendships are developed where they normally would not characterizes one facet of the effectiveness of CoSA. However, this does not diminish the importance or concern for recidivism and accountability in the eyes of the wider community.

5. **Policy and Programming Implications**

The Regina CoSA site, in conjunction with the Church Council on Justice and Corrections has an orientation training program and this was offered in Regina during the period from 1997 to 2011. This orientation is delivered to new volunteers. However, the volunteers who participated in this study were veterans of the program and had not participated in any formal or informal orientation. Ongoing training exists and has been

delivered and, it would be beneficial for these veterans to attend refresher session to bolster their knowledge including: learning how to recognize risk factors in core members and how to communicate with core members, especially if some of these individuals are cognitively challenged. However, this does not discount the importance of gaining practical experience through participation as a volunteer since knowledge comes with experience.

There is a need to recruit and train more volunteers so they can develop the same depth of experience and understanding as the foundational volunteers. Training is necessary in order to assist new volunteers to understand and identify proper boundaries and to be able to recognize risk factors for re-offending. It is also important for new volunteers to understand the role of circles in reducing sexual offending. These issues are addressed in the orientation program and this training should be mandatory.

Another problem faced by the Regina CoSA organization is that some experienced volunteers sit on more than one circle. It might be beneficial to have a number of prospective volunteers attend the orientation training and participate in existing circles to gain experience. This approach, however, may be disruptive for the core member. Given that the optimal size of a circle is four to six volunteers and one core member it is difficult to introduce a new volunteer without disrupting the circle experience for the core member. The introduction of new volunteers could disrupt the circle and lead to the core member being less engaged in the process, ultimately reducing its effectiveness. As revealed in the participant interviews, some core members have been part of a circle for many years and as a result, the volunteers are committed to one circle for a very long time. Being committed to one core member over a long period of

time does not allow the volunteer to support newer core members. The lengthy

relationship and its effect on reducing recidivism can be perceived as the strength of the

model on one hand; but on the other hand, it can also pose a challenge in that it ties up

the volunteer so he/she is not available to participate in new circles.

Since the entire foundation of the CoSA approach relies upon the availability of

volunteers, a lack of community awareness of CoSA inhibits recruitment. Although all

CoSA sites in the demonstration project receive some monies for community outreach,

there is still a lack of funding to build proper community awareness and to help educate

the public of the importance of CoSAs. Increased funding to the CoSA sites would

enable them to conduct more community outreach and public education activities. There

is a pressing need for better community education concerning CoSA and the benefits that

circles provide in terms of increasing public safety. Many volunteers mentioned in their

interviews that promoting CoSA was a difficult process due to lack of community

awareness. One volunteer described how letters were sent out to all faith-based

organizations in Regina and only one agency responded. While CoSA site administrators

participate in restorative justice seminars and attempt to disseminate their message

wherever they can, it might be beneficial to expand outreach activities to different

audiences. One possible solution is to hold seminars in universities, colleges, and

community centres in order to promote public awareness and recruit a younger generation

of individuals to participate as CoSA volunteers.

Support from organizations within the justice system as well as other health and

social service agencies is essential to running a successful CoSA site. According to

volunteer respondents, partnerships with these agencies in Regina are strong and both the

police and parole are represented on the CoSA organization's steering committee. As a result, they are aware of circle proceedings and the difficulties that come with the core member's re-entry. Respondents reported that representatives from these agencies are supportive and hold positive attitudes toward CoSA. However, this positive view of these agencies was not shared by the core members who participated in the study.

One of the primary concerns brought forth by participants was that the referral process to the circle for those needing support is lacking. In some cases, site directors interview the prospective core member while the core member is in the penitentiary, but in many cases, there is a lag between when an offender is released and when they might be referred to participate in a circle. Consequently, recruiting and training new volunteers in a timely manner can be difficult. One way participants have attempted to overcome this problem is to always have an experienced volunteer participating in a circle. The researcher noted that most of the circles in Regina had been facilitated by the same two volunteers.

The offenders involved in this research reported feeling distrust toward officials working within the justice system. Not all police officers or parole officers understand or are sympathetic to the goals of CoSA. It was noted that in some of the circles parole officers were invited in to participate in meetings. This is a beneficial way to bring CoSA and other agency workers together as their collaborative participation would increase understanding of the model. Trust needs to be built not only between the core members and the volunteers, but also between core members and the police and parole. If trust and understanding are built between these officials and circle members, through awareness program or training, this trust might then extend out into the community.

Rugge and Gutierrez (2010) found some variation in the orientation of CoSA sites. In keeping with Mason's (2002) concept of wider resonance, it is important to acknowledge that while this research focused on CoSA circles in Regina the findings may extend beyond circles in this city. The data gathered throughout this research might be relevant to other CoSA circles throughout Canada or internationally dealing with similar issues. This has implications for future research and this will be addressed in the following section.

6. Research Limitations

The level of comfort and rapport between the core members and the researcher varied somewhat and that influenced the data collected in this study. Some participants were pleased to be part of a study and eager to share their experiences, while others were very apprehensive and unable or unwilling to articulate their feelings freely. For the most part, core members were interested in participating in the research. However, it needs to be noted that core members were less willing to articulate their feelings compared with the volunteers. Their answers, for example, often tended to be one-word responses and the researcher had difficulty encouraging them to expand their responses.

It was noted by Wilson et al. (2005) that the common reason for core members to refuse participation was due to mistrust of the researcher's personal motives. In this study, the researcher was able to increase rapport by attending circle meetings and this approach allowed the core member to interact with the researcher in a safe environment before the one-on-one interview. Observing circles also allowed the researcher to experience their operations firsthand, witness core member and volunteer relationships and their dynamics. Though the findings in Chapter Four are based solely on the

transcribed interviews, observational research is something that might be explored in future studies.

The volunteers who participated in this study were forthcoming in their participation and provided an abundance of information. They were very proud of their role and provided detailed information on their involvement with core members. Older members were eager to share their knowledge and these interviews typically lasted over an hour. In some instances, the information was redundant and resulted in long transcripts with repeated information.

As previously described, the interviews were digitally recorded and the interviewer also took notes. One limitation was that the recordings varied in terms of quality. Interviews that took place in public places with core members were sometimes difficult to transcribe as background (white) noise occasionally made it difficult for the interviewer to understand the content. As a result, transcriptions were reviewed to ensure that the messages were accurately recorded. Sound quality sometime varied and, especially with the core members, the lull in voice and vocabulary made the recordings difficult for the interviewer to transcribe. Transcribing each individual interview took between four to five hours. The limitations noted above did not put the validity of the data in question as they were not substantial enough to affect the researcher's ability to transcribe the data accurately. It was just a very onerous task, requiring many hours of dedicated transcription and validation of the transcription.

8. Future Research Directions

This study focused on CoSA operations in Regina during the period from 1997 to 2011. Although the findings express the realities of the CoSA experience for the core

members and volunteers in Regina during that era they may have wider resonance beyond this locale and time. Given federal support for a Canada-wide evaluation of the program in 2012, a comparison of the results found here and those of the national evaluation could be undertaken at a later date.

There are many potentially fruitful areas for future research with respect to CoSA. This study focused primarily on the effectiveness of the program through the experiences of core members and volunteers from Regina. However, it may be beneficial for future researchers in subsequent studies to utilize the same methodological approach in other cities, as there are 18 CoSA sites across Canada. Rugge and Gutirrez (2010) found that there was considerable variation in the manner in which circles operated across these sites. Some were more accountability focused while others were more supportive and friendship oriented. Given the findings reported above, Regina had a more supportive and friendship orientation and therefore the results of this study cannot be generalized to all other CoSA sites across the country.

It may also be beneficial to solicit the perspectives of stakeholders who are not directly involved in circles, such as the family members of core members, as well as outside agencies (including the police or community corrections) as well as the paid staff members from the CoSA sites and CCJC officials. Starting in 2010, each of the demonstration sites has a paid coordinator and data collector funded by the federal government. The funding for those positions is administered through the Church Council on Justice and Corrections (CCJS, 2012). The perspectives of site employees and CCJC staff on the effectiveness of CoSA may shed additional light on our understanding of the model.

Moreover, this study did specifically collect information about the benefits and consistency of the orientation and training processes, but this was not the focus of the study. But it would be very beneficial for future researchers to focus on the topic of recruiting and training new volunteers. Specifically, it may be fruitful to examine what motivates volunteers to participate and identify what characteristics are needed in order to develop more effective recruitment strategies.

One outcome of the interviews was that the cognitive ability of the core members appeared to differ greatly. Some core members had a profound understanding of the program and its importance while others had more difficulties describing program goals and they appeared to have less capacity to describe the CoSA model. This could be due to differences in both education and/or cognitive and affective deficits. The cognitive ability and or mental health problems the core members participating in this study may suffer from were not disclosed and therefore cannot be described fully. Thus, it could be beneficial for CoSA administrators and researchers to study the different types of core members who participate in CoSA circles and determine whether their risks or unmet needs differ. Such research could inform volunteer training procedures, and in particular, helping volunteers to assess risk factors in core members as well as how to support them better.

Finally, future researchers may wish to compare perceived effectiveness of programming between different CoSA sites and/or programs in the United Kingdom, the United States, and recently, the People's Republic of China to determine if core members and volunteers had similar perceptions in those locations which initial findings seem to suggest.

Interestingly, the federal government announced it was cutting funding to CoSA effective March 30, 2014. No reasons were cited for the decision (Maher, 2014). The Correctional Service of Canada did not provide and explanation for its decision, but its February 21, 2014 email said it "recently became clear that the present mandate of (CS C, np) will not be supporting resourcing for CoSA in the present format". Thankfully, CSC reversed their decision and will continue to provide funding to CoSA sites across Canada. An emphasis in return on investment research and the CoSA format may be prove worthwhile given the apparent lack of insight into the benefits of the format of CoSA, on the part of CSC officials.

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Legal Decisions

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Appendices:

Appendix A – Interview Guides

Appendix B – Introductory Letter

Appendix C – Informed Consent Form

Appendix D– University of Regina Research Ethics Board Approval

Appendix E – Sample Covenant

APPENDIX A – INTERVIEW GUIDES

Interview Guide for Core Members

Questions:

1. Did you serve the full sentence to warrant expiry?

2. How long have you been involved with the Circles of Support and Accountability?

3. Initially, why did you enter a Circle?

4. Was this program recommended to you? Eg. Corrections

5. Initially/currently, how did you feel about being in a Circle?

6. What do you talk about at the meetings?

7. How many times a week do you meet?

8. When you first joined, what do you think you got from the Circle?

9. What do you think might have happened if the program did not exist?

10. Initially/currently, how would you describe your relationship with Circle Volunteers?

11. Do you feel supported by your community with the help of this program?

12. Do you feel the community is properly educated about the program and its benefits to both you and the community?

13. Upon entering the program, did you have to take responsibility for both your past and present actions?

Interview Guide for Volunteers

Questions:

1. How did you become involved with Circles of Support and Accountability?

2. Initially, why did you volunteer ? (Cesaroni)

3. How long have you been involved with the Circles of Support and Accountability?

4. Initially/currently, how did you feel about being in a Circle? (Cesaroni)

5. Describe the training process? What kinds of processes did you have to go through to be a circle volunteer?

6. What do you talk about at the meetings?

7. How many times a week do you meet?

8. How do you think this program has assisted the community and the Core Members?

9. What do you think might happen if the program did not exist? (Cesaroni)

10. Have you ever had any problem or concerns with the circles or group members?

11. Do you feel supported by your community when they learn you're involved with the program?

12. Do you feel the community is properly educated about the program and its benefits?

13. Has your involvement in CoSA been positive or negative? Explain.

APPENDIX B – INTRODUCTORY LETTER

Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) in Regina, Saskatchewan, 1997-2011:
Exploring the Perceptions of Key Stakeholders.

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Kathy Giambrardino, I am a graduate student in the Department of Justice Studies at the University of Regina. In exploring the criminal justice system throughout my time here, I have become passionate about utilizing restorative justice initiatives as a alternatives to other more punitive approaches. I was introduced to Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA), have done extensive research about the program and its successes within the community, both in Canada and abroad.

The focus of my thesis is an examination of CoSA through the eyes of a selected group of sex offenders, volunteers and professionals who are actively involved with the circles in Regina. It is my intention to better understand the functions, strengths and weaknesses of the program. The focus will be on their perspectives of the program since they are the primary stakeholders and would be most affected by any potential changes to it.

I am writing this letter to request your permission to conduct a series of semi-structured interviews with core members and circle volunteers. The interviews would take between 60- 90 minute each. In order to gain access to participants, I am also requesting permission to attend each circle for the purpose of recruiting potential voluntary participants. At that time, I would introduce myself, my research and protocols and ask both circle volunteers and core members if they would be willing to participate in my study at a later time. Participants would be expected to sign an Informed Consent Form outlining their rights and role within the study as well as my responsibilities to protect those rights. Any information given from the participants will be kept completely confidential with the exception of disclosures of ongoing or future criminal acts.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact myself Kathy at 613-878-3485 or giamberk@uregina.ca or my supervisor Dr. Allan Patenaude at 306-585-4815. I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Kathy Giamberardino

University of Regina   DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE STUDIES   343 Classroom Building
3737 Wascana Parkway
Regina, Saskatchewan
Canada S4S 0A2
phone: (306) 585-4779
fax: (306) 585-4815
www.uregina.ca/arts/justice-studies

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

This study is meant to act as a program evaluation for CoSA using the perspectives of the Core Member, Volunteers, Professionals directly involved in the Circles. Throughout this interview the researcher will read a series of questions. The interview will take approximately 2 hours.

I understand that my participation this study is completely voluntary. I am free to stop participating at any time without any negative consequences. I am free to not answer any questions at any time without any negative consequences. If you feel I further understand that, in the researcher opinion, this research creates no potential risk.

I understand that my name will appear only on this consent form, which will be stored separately from any information I provide with respect to the questions in the interviews. No identifying information will be associated with the information I provide.

If you feel answering a question or participating with feeling that you are in danger of being harassed

A copy of this agreement has been given to me.

This project was approved by the Research Ethics Board, University of Regina. If research subjects have any questions or concerns about their rights or treatment as subjects, they may contact the Chair of the Research Ethics Board at 585-4775 or by e-mail: research.ethics@uregina.ca.

If you have any other questions or concerns regarding the results or the study itself, please feel free to contact Kathy at kmg_18@hotmail.com.

_____   _____

Participants Signature   Date

_____   _____

Witnesses Signature   Date

APPENDIX D –RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD APPROVAL

University of Regina

OFFICE OF RESEARCH SERVICES

MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 7, 2011

TO: Kathy M. Giamberardino
Justice Studies

FROM: Dr. Bruce Plouffe
Chair, Research Ethics Board

Re: **Support and Supervision: Exploring Circles of Support and Accountability from
the Perspectives of the Stakeholders (File #85S1011)**

Please be advised that the University of Regina Research Ethics Board has reviewed your
proposal and found it to be:

☑ 1.   APPROVED AS SUBMITTED. Only applicants with this designation have ethical
approval to proceed with their research as described in their applications. For
research lasting more than one year (Section 1F). **ETHICAL APPROVAL MUST
BE RENEWED BY SUBMITTING A BRIEF STATUS REPORT EVERY
TWELVE MONTHS.** Approval will be revoked unless a satisfactory status report
is received. Any substantive changes in methodology or instrumentation must
also be approved prior to their implementation.

☐ 2.   ACCEPTABLE SUBJECT TO MINOR CHANGES AND PRECAUTIONS (SEE
ATTACHED). Changes must be submitted to the REB and approved prior to
beginning research. Please submit a supplementary memo addressing the
concerns to the Chair of the REB.** Do not submit a new application. Once
changes are deemed acceptable, ethical approval will be granted.

☐ 3.   ACCEPTABLE SUBJECT TO CHANGES AND PRECAUTIONS (SEE
ATTACHED). Changes must be submitted to the REB and approved prior to
beginning research. Please submit a supplementary memo addressing the
concerns to the Chair of the REB.** Do not submit a new application. Once
changes are deemed acceptable, ethical approval will be granted.

☐ 4.   UNACCEPTABLE AS SUBMITTED. The proposal requires substantial additions
or redesign. Please contact the Chair of the REB for advice on how the project
proposal might be revised.

[signature]

Dr. Bruce Plouffe

cc: Dr. Allan Patenaude – Justice Studies

** supplementary memo should be forwarded to the Chair of the Research Ethics Board at the Office of
Research Services (Research and Innovation Centre, Room 109) or by e-mail to
research.ethics@uregina.ca

Phone: (306) 585-4775
Fax: (306) 585-4893
www.uregina.ca/research

APPENDIX E – SAMPLE COVENANT

General Commitments

Confidentiality

As a volunteer member of this Circle of Support and Accountability (COSA), I agree to respect the confidentiality of the COSA. I will hold any information that is shared inside the COSA as private and privileged information that will stay within the group unless the whole COSA agrees that it should be released.

Communication

I understand that it is essential to maintain a high level of trust within the COSA. We cannot help each other unless communication is open and honest. I agree to make the building of confidence a priority, committing myself to maintaining open communication with every member of the COSA. The COSA agrees to maintain regular contact with me and I will maintain regular contact with COSA members. The telephone numbers of the COSA members will be distributed, and used in case of emergency.

Safety of the Community

I recognize that the reason for hostility in the community is because it is fearful of offenders who have committed sexual offences. As part of the COSA, I commit myself to the safety of the community as a first priority. If, at any time there is a concern about that safety, it must be urgently discussed within the COSA. I accept this as my responsibility.

_____ agrees to continue counselling as deemed appropriate by _____ and the COSA. _____ must be careful of feelings that he is the victim, which may turn to perpetration.

I agree that the COSA will look at the pattern of previous offences and seek to prevent a reoccurrence of the circumstances that led to them. The COSA agrees to have a refresher on _____ relapse prevention plan.

Responsibilities of the COSA

As the core member, I agree to respect this agreement with each of the other COSA Members, and I will not change it without discussion with the whole COSA. I will obey any conditions that are agreed upon within the COSA and maintain regular contact at the stipulated intervals. I will be available for increased involvement in times of crisis.

Among other responsibilities, the COSA will assist _____ when he has feelings of abandonment and isolation. The security of belonging is important. The COSA will act as advocates for _____, affirming positive things he is doing, but also calling him on issues of exploitation and hostile attitudes. He will be supported in creating and maintaining healthy, adult relationships.

We recognize that _____ will need assistance as he adjusts to life in the community. We intend to support _____ in preparing and possibly retraining for the work force. We would like to support _____ in creating healthy ways to spend recreational time and develop hobbies.

_____ participation and help with _____ is an important part of his life which this group will be part of, i.e. attend special occasions.

_____ will continue to nurture his spiritual self.
The_____ Church is crucial to this.

Self Care is important when people are giving of themselves, such as in AA and we will help
_____ support himself. We recognize anger to be an issue, and that silence can be an
indicator of anger. We will work together to address issues as they arise.

We commit ourselves to celebrate with _____ during special times in his life, such as his
Birthday and important occasions in the _____ (religious) community.

Date: _____

Signed by -- COSA Members

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ core member