

A prison-based model of Circles of Support and Accountability: Exploring
Core Member and Volunteer experience

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Abstract

Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) have been established in the UK since 2002. Their aim is to support individuals convicted of sexual offences in their reintegration, whilst at the same time holding them accountable for their behaviour. The CoSA model used within the UK has, until recently, been a community one with CoSA beginning once the Core Member (ex-offender) has been released from prison. In 2014, the first UK prison-based model of CoSA was established at HMP Whatton by the Safer Living Foundation charity. The CoSA are designed for elderly (55+) and Intellectually Disabled (ID) individuals convicted of sexual offences, who are assessed as high to very-high risk of reoffending. The research in this thesis was the first to consider a CoSA of this type. The empirical studies provide an in-depth exploration of the experiences of the Core Members as they progressed through the new prison-model CoSA. In addition, how the Core Members construed their self and others was considered along with the volunteers' perspectives of being involved in the prison-model CoSA. Studies one, two and three focused on the Core Members' journey on a prison-model CoSA. Data were collected at three time-points; just before they started the CoSA and continuing with them through the transitional period of release. A semi-structured interview and repertory grid was conducted with each participant at each time-point. This was the first time the triangulation of these methods had been used with any model of CoSA.

The analysis from the first study (n=9) indicated a turning point in the participants' journeys with regard to how they construed themselves and their previous offending behaviour. This signified the first stages of the desistance process according to the Göbbels, Ward and Willis' (2012) Integrated Theory of Desistance from Sex Offending (ITDSO). The identity change and cognitive transformation identified within the first study had developed further by the second study (n=6). A reconstruction of the self, said to represent the second phase of the ITDSO, was evident within the Core Members in this study. Despite the support of the CoSA, however, anxieties remained, or even increased slightly, the closer they came to leaving prison. The findings from the third study (n=7) indicated that, once in the community for a few months, the participants appeared to be within the re-entry phase of the desistance model. Barriers to successful reintegration were present however, which threatened to strip away their newly developed sense of agency. At this stage, therefore, it could not be determined whether the participants would reach the final stage of the ITDSO model; 'normalcy/reintegration' whereby an individual is able to maintain their commitment to change. The fourth study involved semi-structured interviews with the prison-model CoSA volunteers (n=10). The findings provided further evidence for how the prison-model CoSA may be best placed to support Core Members, in their progression towards desistance, over the transitional period of release from prison. Research to explore this further is now required.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis is comprised of eight chapters. Chapter one is the introduction, providing a rationale for the study and an outline of the research aims and objectives. Chapter two of this thesis reviews the literature on the concept, effectiveness and theoretical frameworks of CoSA and also considers the prison-model of CoSA specifically, including how it was established in the UK. Chapter three details the methodological approach underpinning this thesis and the process issues involved in designing and constructing this research.

Chapters four to seven will present the empirical studies of this research. Chapter four, details the Core Members' experiences and how they construed their future prior to beginning a prison-model CoSA. Chapter five focuses on the same Core Members' experiences of the prison sessions of their CoSA and how this has affected their view of release. Chapter six focuses on a third time-point, this time considering the Core Members' experiences and perspectives once they are in the community part of their CoSA. Chapter seven explores the volunteers' experiences and perspectives of their involvement in the prison-model CoSA. Finally, chapter eight presents a general discussion and conclusion, in addition detailing the implications and limitations of the present research and highlighting possible avenues for future research.

The label 'sex offender' appears within the literature to be particularly associated with the stigmatisation outlined throughout the rest of this chapter (Olver & Barlow, 2010). Willis, Levenson and Ward (2010) highlight how this may create a negative effect, whereby the labelled individuals begin to view themselves in a similar way. They therefore recommend that researchers discontinue labelling individuals who have a history of committing sexual offences as 'sex offenders'. Similarly, Harris and Socia (2014) believe researchers must remain mindful of the potential effects the language chosen to describe this group of individuals may have on the reader. For these reasons, although more cumbersome, alternatives such as 'individuals convicted of sexual offences' are utilised throughout this thesis.

Perceptions of those who commit sexual offences

Sexual offences result in negative consequences not only for the victims, in terms of, for example mental health difficulties or adult social and sexual functioning issues (Elliott & Beech, 2012), but also to society as a whole. In England and Wales, the population of individuals registered on the sexual offences registers has increased from 52,770 in 2015/16 to 55,236 in 2016/2017 (MAPPA Annual Report 2016/17, Ministry of Justice 2017). The Ministry of Justice (2017) state, however, that sentencing trends and requirements can be attributed to this increase, with more registered individuals not necessarily equating to more offences being committed. Within the media, though,

as Harper and Hogue (2015) report, sexual crimes are nine times over-presented in the British newspapers when compared with official crime statistics. The language used to describe these crimes is significantly more negatively emotional and angry than violent crime, acquisitive crime and immigrant related articles. The media's reports of highly sensational sexual offences and the subsequent consequences felt by the victims and their families, provokes anger, fear and hatred towards the perpetrators amongst the general public (McAlinden, 2006). Indeed, as Laws and Ward (2011) assert, these types of ex-offenders are perceived by the public to be extremely dangerous, high-risk offenders who are highly likely to commit further crimes. Any recidivism that does occur is reported in a way that exacerbates initial public concern thus perpetuating the cycle of hostility (Harper & Hogue, 2015). This is despite the fact that not all ex-offenders who have committed sexual offences are equally likely to reoffend in the future (Mann, Hanson & Thornton, 2010). Alongside this, the terrifying and loathsome stereotype the media has created for those who commit sexual offences, overlooks those who have undergone treatment and are motivated to start new lives and desist from sexually reoffending (Nellis, 2009).

Levenson, Brannon, Fortney and Baker (2007) reported, from a study into public perceptions of those who commit sexual offences, that community members estimated 75% of these individuals will reoffend. Of the participants questioned, 50% believed that such individuals would still reoffend even after psychological treatment. Similarly, Olver and Barlow (2010) reported community members' estimations of recidivism to be at 59% reducing to 42% if they had received treatment. In fact, Hanson and Morton-Bourgon (2009) in their meta-analysis of 118 studies, reported a sexual recidivism rate of 11.5% over an average of 70 months; much lower than members of the community believed. Hanson, Harris, Helmus and Thornton (2014), however, reported differing rates of reoffending. From their meta-analysis involving 7,740 offenders who had previously committed sexual offences, they reported a sexual recidivism rate of 22%, at the time of release, for those falling within the high-risk category. This had decreased to 4.2% however, when the ex-offenders in the same risk category who had remained offence free, were considered at a 10-year follow up. As Helmus, Hanson, Thornton, Babchishin and Harris (2012) explain however, sexual recidivism base rates can vary considerably across settings and samples. For example, from their meta-analysis of reconviction studies they reported that using the same static-risk assessment tool but with different samples, resulted in the predicted 10-year sexual recidivism rate varying from 3% to 15%. In addition, reconviction rates need to be used with caution due to the fact that the dynamic risk of those who commit sexual offences is often not taken into account. For example, dynamic risk factors can be seen as changeable psychological characteristics, which can therefore decrease (as well as increase) the likelihood of reoffending (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2009). Still,

it appears from the literature that the general public estimate the reoffending risk of those who commit sexual offences to be much higher than the actual low base rates of recidivism outlined above, even when the variability is taken into account.

These societal attitudes towards those who commit sexual offences, fuelled and exacerbated by the media, encourage a punitive response to the offenders responsible (Harper & Hague, 2015; McAlinden, 2006). This evokes strong negative feelings in the individuals affected, such as bitterness, loneliness, fear of being recognised and alienation from society, especially if they have been rejected by family and friends because of the nature of their crime (Jahnke, Imhoff & Hoyer, 2015a; Wilson, Picheca, & Prinzo, 2007a). Instead of leading to greater community safety, however, it is argued within the literature that the increased restriction, surveillance and monitoring of these individuals leads to their social isolation and increases the risk of reoffending (Hannem, 2011; McAlinden, 2006). This punitive approach to criminal justice is termed by Garland (2001) as 'criminology of the other' whereby criminals are seen as different to the rest of society and in need of being controlled. This lack of focus on rehabilitation and reintegration however, can lead individuals to view further criminality as the only option leading to the argument for alternative approaches to dealing with crime (Worrall, 1997).

Alternative approaches

An alternative to the punitive approach towards those who commit sexual offences is initiatives based on restorative principles. These are concerned with the needs of the offenders alongside the needs of the victims and communities (Hannem & Petrunik, 2007). Defined by Ward and Langlands (2009), restorative principles involve an ethical model, which aims to repair the harm caused by crime in an inclusive and community responsive way. Rather than stigmatising the offender through punitive control, restorative programmes, it is argued, are more likely to help offenders desist from crime by focusing on their reintegration (McAlinden, 2005). Initiatives with a restorative nature aim to engage offenders to help them appreciate the consequences of their actions and seek, to reintegrate the offenders back within the community (McAlinden, 2005). Through this approach, justice is achieved by the offender repairing the harm caused by the crime. This 'giving back' to the community enables the individual to change their self and public image from an offender who has caused harm, to a resourceful member of the community who is worthy of support (Bazemore & Maruna, 2009).

Although developed as an opposing paradigm to criminal justice, it is now being increasingly recognised that, for initiatives involving restorative principles to make a difference, they have to find a place in mainstream retributive criminal justice systems (Hannem, 2011). With the media continually demanding punitive punishments for particular groups of offenders, an alliance with the

retributive framework is argued as necessary to ensure the legitimacy and viability of such restorative practices (McAlinden, 2011). Restorative programmes of this nature are in short supply for those convicted of sexual offences (McAlinden, 2005). One way restorative principles have been adapted and made available for these individuals, however, is through Circles of Support and Accountability.

Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) are an intervention used with medium to very-high risk individuals, convicted of sexual offences, to support and enable their reintegration back into society, whilst still holding them accountable for their behaviour (Cesaroni, 2001). The CoSA model recognises the humanity of the ex-offender (Core Member) and focuses upon the reintegration rather than restraint of these individuals (McAlinden, 2005; Wilson, Huculak & McWhinnie, 2002). It seeks to balance community protection from victimisation with the reintegration into society of those individuals who are socially isolated and highly marginalised (Hannem & Petrunik, 2007). From this restorative approach, offenders convicted of sexual crimes are viewed as worthy of human rights, with their participation on CoSA being voluntary in respect of this (Ward & Langlands, 2008).

CoSA is argued to be based upon restorative principles through the community's involvement in the reintegration of those convicted of sexual offences (Hoing, 2013). This involves members from the local community volunteering to support these individuals, encourage their pro-social behaviour and hold them accountable for their behaviour (McCartan, Kemshall, Westwood, MacKenzie & Pollard, 2014). CoSA involves an interconnected group of individuals, with the Core Member and volunteers all being of equal importance (Wilson, in press). Unlike other restorative justice approaches, the victim is not involved in CoSA. As Ward, Fox and Garber (2014) acknowledge, however victim reparation is still achieved through the healing of fractured communities. This, they argue, is achieved by the volunteers holding ex-offenders accountable for their offence and reasserting shared community norms.

These types of restorative programmes empower the community to take responsibility for their own protection and participate in decisions about crime prevention (Bazemore & Erbe, 2004; McAlinden, 2005). In addition, CoSA aims to facilitate the reintegration of those convicted of sexual offences back in to the community (Wilson, in press). This engagement between the offender and the community, enables social relationships to develop between the offender and pro-social members of the community (Bazemore & Erbe, 2004). Establishing social bonds in this way, as deemed within the literature, is an ethical approach to encouraging desistance within individuals (Laws & Ward, 2011). With its focus on support, CoSA provides a meaningful sense of belonging and inclusion helping to counteract the social isolation and feelings of loneliness and rejection that

are argued to be associated with sexual reoffending (Marshall, 2010; Wilson, Cortoni & McWhinnie, 2009).

Although concern is expressed at the involvement of community members, Braithwaite (2006) points out that initiatives involving 'professionals' are not guaranteed to be successful. Restorative practices, such as CoSA, can, and do, involve competent community members, the benefits of which are discussed in more detail throughout this thesis.

Research context

CoSA provides both practical and emotional support alongside encouraging ex-offenders to recognise potentially risky thoughts and behaviours, thus ensuring offender accountability and community safety (Höing, Bogaerts & Vogelvang, 2013). CoSA projects are now established on an international scale, with there being CoSA projects across many counties in the UK. Although a literature base of the CoSA in the UK and around the world is now forming (see chapter two for more detail of this), Wilson, Bates and Völlm (2010) have argued strongly for further published evaluations of CoSA in the UK. In particular, they make a call for evaluations including qualitative research. Indeed, McWhinnie (2015) has argued that qualitative evaluations are now needed to answer the bigger questions surrounding the initiative, such as what happens in CoSA that contributes to its success. This is even more pertinent when considering the limitations of the quantitative data on CoSA, as discussed in chapter two. In addition, exploring and understanding the experiences of both Core Members and volunteers is deemed essential to CoSA success (McCartan, 2015; Wilson et al., 2010).

In 2014 the Safer Living Foundation charity established the first prison-based model of CoSA in a treatment prison in the UK (see chapter 2 for more detail specific to this). This thesis is not attempting to be broad based or be able to generalise to wider populations but has purposefully and intentionally limited its focus to the Core Members and volunteers involved in this CoSA prison-based model. This enables an understanding of the prison-based CoSA to be developed from the Core Members and volunteers' perspective. In addition, this thesis provides an insight into the Core members' sense-making and construing, particularly in relation to their release from prison and perceived ability to reintegrate. The knowledge surrounding prison-based models of CoSA are currently confined to the US and limited at that (see Duwe, 2012) with all of the UK research to date focusing upon the community model of CoSA (see chapter two for a detailed discussion). This thesis will provide a greater knowledge by using a phenomenological qualitative and mixed methodology to understand the lived experiences of those involved in a UK version of a prison-model of CoSA. This thesis could be considered explorative as it aims to understand the role of prison-based CoSA

in the desistance process of individuals previously convicted of sexual offences. In addition, the thesis will highlight recommendations to improve the current policies surrounding this model.

Research aims and questions

Research aims

- To provide an in-depth understanding of the experiences of the Core Members (individuals convicted of a sexual crime) as they engage with the prison-based model of CoSA.
- To understand the views and perspectives of the volunteers involved in the prison-based model of CoSA, thus contributing to the knowledge base on this new initiative.
- To gain an insight into the construing and sense-making of the Core Members on their prison-based CoSA journey, particularly with reference to self and others.

Research questions

- What are the personal experiences of the Core Members involved in a prison-based model of CoSA?
- In what way do the Core Members view their release from prison and subsequent reintegration?
- How do these views develop throughout their journey on the prison-based model of CoSA?
- What impact does the prison-based model of CoSA have on the Core Members' desistance processes?
- What are the perspectives of the volunteers who are involved in a prison-based CoSA?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter is split into four main sections. The first section outlines the need for CoSA, and how they came to be established within the UK Criminal Justice System (CJS). In addition, the three underlying principles (Saunders & Wilson, 2003) are considered with regard to the aims of a CoSA. The second section of this chapter critically discusses the growing body of research surrounding the effectiveness of CoSA. This will include the key statistical evaluations of the effect of CoSA on recidivism, along with more qualitative explorations of the psychosocial implications of being involved in a CoSA project. The third section of the chapter discusses what can be termed the traditional theories of desistance from crime, including their applicability and relevance to those who commit sexual offences (McAlinden, Farmer & Maruna, 2017). In relation to this debate, the Integrated Theory of Desistance from Sexual Offending (ITDSO) (Göbbels, Ward, & Willis, 2012) is considered in detail as a comprehensive account of how those convicted of sexual offences become successful pro-social members of the community. Leading from the discussions in the previous three sections, the final area considered is the transitional phase from prison to the community. This includes the discussion of a new prison-based model of CoSA, upon which the research outlined in the empirical chapters of this thesis is based.

The CoSA model

CoSA are a community initiative designed to reintegrate those previously convicted of sexual offences, back into society. As Maruna (2006) highlights, reintegration involves more than just physical resettlement. Instead, he believes successful reintegration involves a moral inclusion whereby ex-offenders are forgiven for their past behaviour and accepted back into society. As will be illuminated however, reintegration by this definition is difficult to achieve, particularly for those who have previously committed sexual crimes.

Individuals' experience of prison when convicted of sexual offences

The negative perceptions of those who commit sexual offences are present even before they are released from prison. Tewksbury (2012) reported how these individuals are ostracised and devalued within prison communities, often being viewed as having committed the worst crime of all. The consequences of this can be both verbal and physical harassment, which lead to internalised feelings of shame and disgust, along with a realisation that the community outside prison will view them the same. Schwaabe (2005) similarly reported how prison for those convicted of sexual offences was characterised by fear and anxiety of being outed as a 'sexual offender' and the subsequent harassment that would follow. Even when segregated on a vulnerable prisoners' wing,

those convicted of sexual offences reported frightening events, such as having insults and objects thrown at them, resulting in damaged self-esteem as well as physical harm (Levins, 2013). In addition, it is documented within the literature how those convicted and imprisoned for sexual offences report significantly less positive relationships with fellow prisoners, than individuals imprisoned for any other offence type (Van den Berg, Beijersbergen, Nieuwbeerta & Dirkzwager, 2017). Tewksbury (2012) warns how this sense of hopelessness can effectively work against the successful reintegration of these individuals, with participants reporting a sense of fear regarding their release from prison.

This experience is not necessarily the same for all prisons housing those who have been convicted of sexual offences. Indeed, one of the largest sex offender treatment prisons in Europe, which only houses those convicted of sexual offences, has been described by prisoners themselves as a place of acceptance, thus generating feelings of safety they have never experienced before (Blagden, Winder & Hames, 2016; Levins, 2013). Although prison climate may influence the exact levels of anxiety experienced by those convicted of sexual offences whilst in prison, these individuals undoubtedly experience stigmatisation on release from prison once in the community (Brown, Spencer & Deakin, 2007).

Issues those convicted of sexual offences face on release from prison

For many offenders, imprisonment leads to social exclusion, from pro-social networks in their community, on release from prison (Berg & Huebner, 2011). However, for those who have committed sexual offences, successful reintegration is even more difficult, with the negative issues encountered as they re-enter the community considerably worse (Robbers, 2009; Tewksbury, 2007).

Within the UK, those sentenced to 30-months imprisonment or longer for a sexual offence are currently subject to notification requirements for the rest of their lives, with only certain circumstances resulting in the opportunity for review (Padfield, 2011). The ex-offender is responsible for notifying the police of their current address and informing them of any changes to this. This data is then stored on the sex offender register under the terms of the Sexual Offences Act 2003. Unlike the US, community notification is restricted in the UK to a 'need to know' basis (see McAlinden, 2006, for a further discussion on this). Despite this, the focus is still very much on risk management with a range of restraining orders used to control where those convicted of sexual offences can frequent once in the community (McAlinden, 2006). The most commonly used restrictive interventions in the UK with these types of ex-offender are prohibited contact with people deemed at risk (e.g. children of a certain age), accommodation or residence requirements

(i.e. not living within a certain distance of a school) and exclusion from certain areas and places (Bows & Westmarland, 2016).

It has been argued that the increase of the use of these restrictions and preventative orders in the UK, with those who have been convicted of sexual offences, have resulted in an increase in the barriers to their successful reintegration (Brown, Spencer & Deakin, 2007). Within the literature regarding those who commit sexual crimes, Tewksbury and colleagues (Tewksbury, 2012; Tewksbury & Connor, 2012; Tewksbury & Copes, 2013; Tewksbury & Mustaine, 2009) have considered in detail the consequences of being released into the community after having committed this type of offence. Difficulties finding suitable housing and employments are prominent issues faced by ex-offenders convicted of sexual offences (Tewksbury & Mustaine, 2009). This can be due to the legal restrictions placed on them with regard to where they can live i.e. not near a school, or who they can work with i.e. no contact with under children under 16 years of age or vulnerable adults. However, these issues can also occur due to the perceptions of those around them i.e. individuals will not employ them or rent property to them due to the nature of their criminal background. In addition, many individuals convicted of sexual offences also report problems maintaining social and familial relationships due to their status as a 'sex offender' (Tewksbury & Connor, 2012; Tewksbury & Copes, 2013). These issues can create a persistent sense of vulnerability and increased levels of stress, which in turn may lead to social isolation and work against those previously convicted of sexual offences reintegrating successfully back into communities (Tewksbury, 2012; Tewksbury & Mustaine, 2009).

These issues, faced by those convicted of sexual offences whilst attempting to reintegrate back in to society, are viewed within the literature as collateral consequences of stigmatisation (Tewksbury, 2012). Social stigma is defined by DeLuca et al., (2017, p.2) as 'the attribution of negative stereotypes, as well as endorsements of prejudice and intended discriminatory behaviour, toward negatively labelled persons'. As Goffman (1963, p.3) had previously acknowledged, this involves the perception of the person the stigma is directed towards being reduced 'from a whole and usual person, to a tainted and discounted one'. For those convicted of sexual offences, public shaming and stigmatisation, through the use of methods such as name and shame campaigns promoted by the media, appear to be the norm (McAlinden, 2005; Tewksbury & Lees, 2006). Jahnke, Schmidt, Geradt and Hoyer (2015b) have reported how this perception of stigmatisation creates a sense of fear within these individuals of their sexual interests being discovered. This, they argue then leads to social problems, such as loneliness.

Tewksbury and Lees (2006) similarly documented, from interviews with those convicted of sexual offences, how all participants reported being labelled and despised by the general public

thus creating a sense of societal rejection. A prominent belief was that they would never be able to escape the 'sex offender' label imposed on them by society and be accepted back into the community, no matter how pro-socially they attempted to live their lives. Instead of controlling future sexual reoffending, this public shaming and stigmatisation is believed to only socially isolate and exclude the individuals targeted, making it difficult for them to reintegrate successfully back into communities (Tewksbury & Lees, 2006).

Indeed, Mingus and Burchfield (2012) have argued that the 'sex offender' label is the most highly stigmatised label in modern societies. They believe the 'sex offender' status becomes the master status above all other identities the individual may have, such as a father, husband or community member. From a survey with 164 individuals convicted of sexual offences in the US, Mingus and Burchfield (2012), stated that nearly all (94%) of the participants perceived themselves as being susceptible to devaluation and discrimination, due to their status as a 'sex offender'. Further to this, a significant effect was reported between a person's belief that they will be devalued or discriminated against and their propensity to withdraw from society. Similar to this, Tewksbury (2012) highlighted, from interviews with 24 individuals who had committed a sexual crime, a sense of resignation involving feelings of depression and hopelessness. This was argued to be the result of the labelling and stigmatisation towards these them from the general public. Some of the participants described being viewed by others as 'the lowest of the low' and the 'worst of the worst' and as a result were identified as withdrawing from social opportunities (Tewksbury, 2012, p. 614).

Withdrawing from socialising with others may be viewed as a self-preservation mechanism for those convicted of sexual offences. For example, Goffman (1959) believed that, maintaining a social distance between themselves and others enabled individuals to manage the way they are viewed, and the impression that is subsequently formed. Relating this to those who commit sexual offences, maintaining social distance from others in this way prevents them having to disclose their past offending behaviour. Whilst this may help them to maintain the impression that they are pro-social members of the community with nothing to hide, isolating themselves in this way can also be very risky. From their research, Mingus and Burchfield (2012) and Tewksbury (2012) reported, that social isolation and feeling of being 'shunned' by society should they know the 'truth' may potentially trigger a relapse in offending. They warn that the stigmatisation of this group of ex-offenders, as is present in society today, can be harmful not only to the offenders themselves but also to public safety. As was outlined in chapter 1, at the heart of society's stigmatisation is a fear that those who commit sexual offences are highly likely to reoffend (Tewksbury & Copes, 2013). The isolation and loneliness this inflicts on these individuals, however, are risk factors for sexual recidivism (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005; Marshall, 2010).

Restricting and stigmatising these individuals therefore, may not be the best approach to promote public safety. Instead, attempts to restore and reintegrate them as engaging members of the community, is considered by some to be a better option (Levenson, D'Amora & Hern, 2007). Indeed, it is argued that feelings of acceptance and belonging are essential facilitators of conformity to societal rules and laws (Brannon et al., 2007). This suggests a need to accept those who have previously committed and been punished for sexual offences back into the community and help them overcome the barriers to successful reintegration highlighted briefly above.

Social support and successful reintegration

Linked to the concept of successful reintegration is the need for social support. Berg and Huebner (2011) postulated that good quality ties to relatives, and the social support they provided, was what motivated ex-offenders to reintegrate back into society successfully and pro-socially. Visher and O'Connell (2012) similarly reported how, for those close to release from prison, their support networks and their social roles within these networks played a vital role in how they viewed their chances of success on release. They argued that it is positive family ties that orient ex-offenders towards an optimistic perspective of the future and motivate them to live pro-social, crime free lives on release from prison.

In relation to this, Woodall, Dixey and South (2013) explored prisoners' perspectives of their approaching transition from prison to the community. Using interviews and focus groups, the expectations of 36 male prisoners (13 of these were convicted of sexual offences), from three institutions in England were sought regarding their release from prison. One of the salient themes to emerge from the data was an overwhelming apprehension of reintegrating back into the community. It was reported that the level of apprehension felt by the participants appeared to depend upon the level of family support they expected to receive post-release. For example, those with strong family connections were less worried about reintegrating back into their home communities. Alongside this, similar to the research stated previously, those convicted of sexual offences were apprehensive about possible vigilante action and physical attacks made towards them on release. It was perceived that the societal stigma surrounding those convicted of sexual offences would result in them experiencing community exclusion on release and restrict their successful reintegration back into society. With regard to research involving individuals convicted of sexual offences specifically, Tewksbury and Copes (2013) similarly explored expectations regarding re-entering the community. Those who were positive about release and expected to be able to reintegrate successfully back into the community had family or friends who they felt accepted them and believed they would provide support for them on release.

As Brown, Spencer and Deakin (2007) state, within the UK, the majority of individuals convicted and imprisoned for sexual offences will be released back into society. Due to the stigmatisation outlined in the previous sections, however many of these will not have any social support available to them and be released into unaccepting communities (Lowe, Willis & Gibson, 2017). A review by the Ministry of Justice was commissioned in England and Wales to explore the importance of relational ties in relation to preventing reoffending (Farmer, 2017). This review reported similar findings; those who have been convicted and imprisoned for sexual offences have difficult family ties, which have often broken down due to the nature of the offence and subsequent imprisonment. Whilst the focus of the review was family ties, Farmer (2017) acknowledged that individuals other than family members are able to provide the safe, supportive and nurturing relationships he believed to be key if rehabilitation is to be achieved. Providing pro-social, stable relationships in this way may also enable a sense of belonging and encourage law-abiding behaviour (Tewksbury & Connor, 2012). One initiative that provides such support to individuals convicted of sexual offences is Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA).

The development of CoSA

First developed in Canada, CoSA was a community's response to the panic created by the release of a high-profile individual convicted of repeat sexual offences against children. In 1994, Charlie Taylor was released from custody on the expiry date of his prison sentence with no support or supervision, as was routinely the case for prisoners in Canada (Wilson & McWhinnie, 2016). Charlie has been described in the literature as a lonely and socially isolated man for whom sex offender treatment had been unsuccessful due to both denial and inflexibility (Hanvey, Philpot & Wilson, 2011). Without some form of support or monitoring, the likelihood of Charlie reoffending was deemed high (Hannem & Petrunik, 2007). In response to contact from institutional staff, and to address the sense of powerlessness felt within the community, Reverend Harry Nigh, a pastor of a small Mennonite congregation, formed a group of supportive volunteers (Wilson, McWhinnie, Picheca, Prinzo & Cortoni, 2007). The idea of establishing a CoSA around Charlie came to the Reverend after he had witnessed a similar process being used with children who suffered with developmental difficulties, to ensure they received support after their parents had died (Nigh, 2014). It was quickly realised by those involved in this first 'circle' that an accountability component was required to go alongside the supportive element (Wilson & McWhinnie, 2016). In doing this, the concept of CoSA as it is known today was established.

Later in 1994, a similar situation occurred in Toronto whereby a CoSA was formed to help an individual convicted of sexual offences who was being released from prison. A CoSA was put in

place to support the individual in an attempt to reintegrate the individual back into the community whilst at the same time helping to enhance community safety (Quaker Peace and Social Witness, 2003). This ad hoc faith-based response to difficult situations was manualised in 1996 by the Mennonite Central Committee in Ontario, who entered into a contract with the Canada Correctional Services (Wilson et al., 2010). Informed by restorative justice principles (as was outlined in chapter 1), CoSA projects developed across a number of communities in Canada with two mission statements at their core; “no more victims” and “no one is disposable” (Höing et al., 2013).

In 2000, the Crime and Community Justice Committee of the faith group Quakers, known for its humane and innovative approach to crime prevention, approached the Home Office with regard to implementing CoSA in the UK (Wilson et al., 2010). From its connections with Mennonites and Quakers in Canada, the committee in the UK proposed a workshop with CoSA pioneers from Canada and key representatives from the UK, such as those from the police, probation and the Home Office (Quaker Peace and Social Witness, 2003). Also at this time in the UK, the release and resettlement of high profile individuals convicted of sexual offences was becoming increasingly more difficult (Wilson, in press). An awareness of this, combined with the success of the workshop, led the government agreeing to fund and establish three pilot CoSA projects in the UK in 2002; one based in Thames Valley, another in Hampshire and one through the Lucy Faithfull Foundation (Armstrong et al., 2008).

How a CoSA works

CoSA involve a group of screened, selected and trained volunteers who meet once a week with a medium to very high-risk individual (Core Member) previously convicted of a sexual offence, who has little or no pro-social support (Wilson et al., 2010). These volunteers offer emotional and practical support to the Core Members, for example finding a suitable place to live or supporting the reestablishment of family ties. In addition, the volunteers monitor attitudes and behaviours of the Core Member thus holding them accountable for their commitment to live an offence-free life (Bates, Macrae, Williams & Webb, 2012). The ideal lifespan of a CoSA is around 18 months by which point it is hoped the Core Member has established a support network outside of the volunteers (McCartan & Kemshall, 2017). Some volunteers may choose to remain in touch with the Core Member unofficially after the CoSA has ended; however, in the UK this is not routine practice (Armstrong & Wills, 2014b; McCartan & Kemshall, 2017).

Unlike Canada, where CoSA functions mainly outside the criminal justice framework, CoSA volunteers in the UK are supervised by a qualified coordinator who reviews and assesses the

progress and risk of the Core Member. The coordinator also liaises with other agencies responsible for the Core Member’s risk management (police, probation, psychologists etc.) through the Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) process (Wilson, McWhinnie & Wilson, 2008). MAPPA is a national arrangement, which is responsible for assessing and managing all offenders convicted of sexual offences at a local level. CoSA is therefore a form of positive risk management through which MAPPA can ensure public protection and community safety. In essence, CoSA can be portrayed as two concentric rings, which liaise and work with one another to ensure effective support and monitoring of the Core Member (McCartan et al., 2014). It is worth reiterating here, that a Core Member’s involvement within CoSA is voluntary. Participation in CoSA ‘cannot be specified as part of any statutory requirement, nor can failure to engage by itself result in a breach’ (Circles UK, 2013, p.8).

Grounding principles

Developed by Saunders and Wilson (2003) the principles underpinning all CoSA in the UK, provides a reference point for the development, provision and best practice of all CoSA projects. This framework, known as ‘the three principles’, consists of three key aims; Support, Monitor and Maintain. As figure 1 demonstrates, each of these aims involves a subset of principles relating to both the desistance from sexual crime and public protection (Saunders & Wilson, 2003).

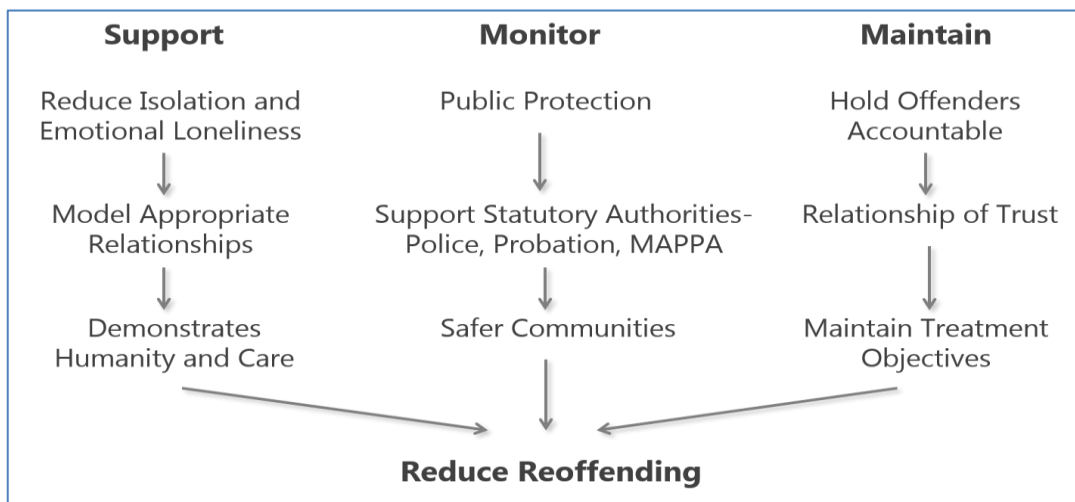


Figure 1. The Three Principles, Saunders and Wilson (2003).

The principle of ‘support’ is concerned with the isolation and emotional loneliness factors significant in sexual recidivist behaviours (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005; Marshall, 2010) and can be both emotional and practical. For example, the volunteers on a CoSA could support and

encourage the Core Member to find a new job or appropriate housing, or they could simply provide someone for the Core Member to talk to and discuss their general worries. It is essential that the support offered by CoSA in helping the Core Members pursue an offence free life is delivered within a context of humanity and care, with relationships modelled and developed on a basis of honesty and trust (Wilson et al., 2010). As Fox (2015a) postulated from her research, CoSA can provide opportunities for the Core Member to both witness and rehearse the way 'ordinary', pro-social relationships work thus enabling them to develop normative behaviour in the context of trusting relationships. Due to the focus on humanity and empathic concern, this principle is considered restorative in nature.

As a CoSA is formed, a contract is signed by all involved, acknowledging the three key principles. This ensures that the support the Core Member receives is balanced with the objective of holding them accountable for their thoughts and behaviour (Saunders & Wilson, 2003). Through the 'monitor' principle of CoSA, information can be shared, through the Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) process, in order to ensure public protection and therefore safer communities. As Clarke, Brown and Völlm (2015) highlight, this principle enables statutory agencies to act swiftly and prevent further reoffending. The openness and honesty between Core Members and the volunteers involved, particularly about the need to keep all relevant risk management agencies informed i.e. police, probation, ensures that their relationships are not inhibited (Wilson et al., 2008). Wilson, Bates and Völlm (2010) explain how, through growing evidence gained from practice, Core Members continue to share problematic behaviour despite knowing that any information relating to public protection and safety will be passed on. In this way, monitoring becomes a positive and community activity with Core Members overtly aware of the communication that takes place between CoSA and the risk management agencies (Carich, Wilson, Carich & Calder, 2010).

The third key principle, 'maintenance', is rehabilitative in nature, focusing on the addressing of criminogenic factors through community reintegration. CoSA can help Core Members to maintain objectives and reoffending prevention strategies, developed through previous treatment, thus holding them accountable for their thoughts and behaviour (Wilson et al., 2010; Wilson et al., 2008). For example, as Carich, Wilson, Carich and Calder (2010) explain, a Core Member may share with the CoSA volunteers any treatment they have previously undertaken and any strategies they have developed to avoid and prevent reoffending in the future. These can be encouraged and supported by the volunteers thus reinforcing this new pro-social behaviour. In addition, any cognitive distortions, such as the minimising of their offence or blaming of the victim are acknowledged and challenged, in a non-judgemental way, by the volunteers. This encourages the Core Member to

accept and be accountable for their thoughts and behaviour (Höing et al., 2013). As Bates, Williams, Wilson and Wilson (2014) explain however, CoSA is not intended to replace sex offender treatment programmes in any form. In fact, Ward and Langlands (2009) warn against trying to combine or blend restorative practices, such as CoSA, with rehabilitative treatment due to them being complimentary, but very different components of crime reduction that are designed to deal with different tasks.

For example, treatment programmes do not necessarily provide the sense of community belonging and social support deemed necessary for the successful reintegration for those who have committed sexual offences (Fox, 2015b). The social and supportive nature of CoSA, however, can encourage progress in socio-affective and self-management risk areas for Core Members by providing additional guidance to put into practice what they have learnt on treatment programmes (Bates et al., 2014). Alongside this, Barrett, Wilson and Long (2003) have reported that the motivation to change and live an offence-free pro-social life, which is developed and reinforced through treatment, decreases once those convicted of sexual offences are released back into the community. Potential causes for this decrease discussed by the authors included, stressors such as unemployment and conflicted relationships. In addition, frustrations at being subjected to further treatment requirements once released from prison were identified. Being part of CoSA therefore, may help maintain this motivation thus helping Core Members desist from reoffending; an area of discussion that will be explored in more depth throughout the rest of this thesis.

Despite the popularity of Saunders and Wilson's three principles model, it has been criticised due to a to a lack of validation regarding whether the theory is congruent to practice (Höing et al., 2013). Höing et al., (2013) have proposed a revised intervention model through their research on UK and Netherlands CoSA. This involves a slightly different, extended set of principles to Saunders and Wilson (2003); inclusion, promoting change, risk reduction and process-oriented strategies. Their research produced a model that could inform CoSA providers and coordinators of the core features and processes that Core Members have reported to be helpful and beneficial. It was argued by the authors that the UK and Netherlands CoSA were comparable due to the similar way in which Core Members are selected, volunteers are recruited and trained and the CoSA itself is supervised. However, CoSA in the Netherlands do not necessarily have the same retributive focus that UK CoSA do (McCartan & Kemshall, 2017). In the study also, narratives from Dutch CoSA were collected at two different time-points. Narratives from the UK CoSA, however were used from a different evaluative study published at an earlier date by the Quaker Peace and Social Trust (2003, 2005, 2008). This means therefore, that further research is required with UK Core Members directly before the revised model can be confidently generalised to this population. Finally, this model

suffers from the same criticism as the original 'three principles' model in that it has not been subjected to validation.

Volunteering for CoSA

The use of volunteers has been described as the strength of CoSA, allowing Core Members to feel part of the community by having contact with 'real people' who want to spend time with them rather than professionals who are paid to do so (Armstrong & Wills, 2014a; Hanvey et al., 2011). Recruited from the local community, volunteers in the UK come from a variety of backgrounds including faith communities, students, professionals and individuals who have previously worked in the field (Bates et al., 2012; Duwe, 2012). Saunders and Wilson (2003) argue that it is essential for volunteers to share a belief in the restorative justice principles CoSA has roots in. This enables them to separate the individual from their offence whilst still being part of an initiative that aims to protect communities from further sexual crime. For example, a report published by the Quaker Peace and Social Witness charity in 2003 explained how Core Members felt they were not pre-judged by volunteers in their CoSA, as they were by other agencies, such as the police and staff at probation hostels.

Lowe, Willis and Gibson (2017, p.5) define volunteerism as 'an intentional and active process whereby individuals seek out opportunities to assist their community'. Due to CoSA's reliance on such individuals, the successful recruitment of appropriate volunteers is vital for the long-term existence of such initiatives (Wilson et al., 2007). Ideally each CoSA should involve a balance of age, gender and experience in its volunteers, thus providing a true representation of the community. This, however, is not always possible. As McCartan, Kemshall, Westwood, MacKenzie and Pollard (2014) state, there is limited research into the profile and motivations of those who volunteer to take part in CoSA. From a file review however, conducted using data from the South East CoSA pilot funded by the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) in the UK, they identified that volunteers were more likely to be female (74%), with range of ages from 23 to 82 years. Alongside this, the occupation reported the most was 'student'. Armstrong and Wills (2014) also highlighted how, throughout the UK, the profile of the volunteers involved has tended to be skewed towards younger females who are students working within a related field (criminology, psychology etc.). From their own research evaluating CoSA in Scotland, a gender imbalance of volunteer was reported leading both Core Members and staff to comment on the lack of male volunteers. This is of particular concern due to a gender mix of volunteers being reported as an important concern for some Core Members, due to, for example, feeling outnumbered if the CoSA consists of a group of female volunteers only (Bellamy & Watson, 2013). A gender mix of both male

and females however, enables Core Members to experience and practice building trusting relationships with both genders (Bellamy & Watson, 2013).

With regard to the volunteers' main motivations for becoming involved in a CoSA, McCartan et al., (2014) reported professional interests in relation to current or future employment, child protection or safer community focus, religious beliefs and issues related to personal issues (experience as a victim of sexual abuse). Although these are all valid motivations, it is essential that the last issue be explored during the interview stage. This is to ensure that it would be safe and ethical, for both the potential volunteer and the Core Member, for the individual to become involved in CoSA. Similarly, Thomas, Thompson and Karsdedt (2014) highlighted how career prospects or personal interests were reported as motivations for initially volunteering. Volunteering in general has been shown to benefit not only the community but also the volunteer themselves, such as higher levels of well-being (Stukas, Hoyer, Nicholson, Brown & Aisbett, 2016). Interestingly, this increase in well-being was not reported when individual motivations were self-orientated i.e. to further their career. After a period of volunteering for CoSA however, motivations shifted for the majority, becoming more altruistic in nature (Thomas et al., 2014). Volunteers were reported as having a realistic assessment of what change they could make to Core Members' behaviour; recognising that although they could not control their behaviour they could encourage change through pro-social modelling and providing a supportive environment.

Additional benefits reported by the CoSA volunteers included a sense of taking control for the safety of their community through helping to reduce future sexual offending (Armstrong & Wills, 2014). This resonates with previous research whereby Kirkwood and Richley (2008) reported how being a CoSA volunteer can enable members of the local community to take responsibility for their own public safety through the support and monitoring of individuals previously convicted of sexual offences released from prison. Despite the positives of using volunteers within CoSA, for the Core Member and the volunteers themselves, there is still a debate surrounding their role as will now be outlined briefly.

Additional support or extended risk management

The close relationships formed within CoSA results in the volunteers holding more information about the attitudes and behaviours of individuals convicted of sexual offences than many other agencies working in the field (Bates, Saunders & Wilson, 2007). At any point, the inner circle (volunteers) can report back to the outer circle via the coordinator who can, if necessary, take appropriate action to prevent reoffending (Höing et al., 2013). Research has highlighted how both professionals and volunteers alike place a high value on the information exchange that exists within

CoSA, with the coordinator being viewed as the 'gatekeeper'. It is the gatekeeper's role to make responsible, defensible decisions on what information is being passed on, whilst keeping the trust of the Core Member (Thomas et al., 2014).

Arguably therefore, the volunteers involved in a CoSA can become perceived as the eyes and ears of those agencies responsible for the management of that offender, feeding information into MAPPA (Saunders & Wilson, 2003; Thomas et al., 2014). CoSA has been criticised further for attempting, through the use of volunteers, to provide statutory supervision 'on the cheap' (Armstrong et al., 2008). In fact, Hannem (2011) explains how critics have argued that a widening of the net of formal social control occurs through initiatives such as CoSA under a disguise of reintegration. It is argued that, although CoSA in the UK has risk management and successful offender reintegration as its joint focus, it is its ability to address recidivism that provides the sole attraction for support and funding of the initiative (Hannem & Petrunik, 2007). Hannem (2011) warns against promoting CoSA primarily on its risk management and community protection merits, however, as this may attract volunteers who are not committed to the restorative and support aspects and who instead approach the role from a surveillance and vigilant stance. Although these motivations are rarely reported within the literature, it may be that those with a dissatisfaction with current criminal justice approaches choose not to participate in research whereby this will be explored (Lowe et al., 2017). In addition, Thomas, Thompson and Karstedt (2014) warn CoSA projects against moving too close to the probation service, as this perceived lack of independence could lead to it being viewed as purely an extension of the formal supervisory systems in place in the UK.

It is important to note here that the above is a view strongly contested by CoSA organisations, as is highlighted in the following quotation from the Yorkshire and Humberside project.

"What we are not is a free extension to the statutory services, we are not here to supervise offenders, we are not the eyes and ears of the police, and that is very important. If we lose our unique purpose and identity, our values and the reason we exist, then we also lose our ability to intervene positively and to make a difference. It is the fact that four 'ordinary' people give willingly and freely of their time, and keep on coming even after they have heard what the Core Member has done, that is so powerful, that allows the Core Member to believe there can be a way back, that continuing to offend is not their only option"

(Yorkshire and Humberside CoSA, 2014: 4)

Although CoSA within the UK supports risk management, through the accountability aspect, they do not duplicate or seek to replace statutory supervision of those convicted of sexual offences released from prison (McCartan et al., 2014). Instead they aim to complement and work in addition to the supervision that already exists for this group of offenders in the community. For example, if an individual is sentenced to imprisonment for 12 months or more following a sexual offence, supervision offered by the Probation Service is mandatory (McCartan et al., 2014). One argument is that the focus on community protection and the motto 'no more victims' is not done out of a rejection of its restorative principles, but more out of an act for survival (Hannem, 2011).

Despite the debates surrounding its true purpose, CoSA projects have grown and are now established on an international scale. This is due to the support and assistance the Core Member receives in attaining a more satisfying, fulfilling, and therefore, offence-free life (Bates et al., 2012). In addition, in 2008 an umbrella organisation, Circles UK, was launched to maintain national standards of operation, ensure best practice and monitor and evaluate future delivery of projects (Circles UK, 2013). Part funded by the government, the organisation has provided consultancy and training to projects in other countries, such as the Netherlands, Belgium and Spain (Circles UK, 2013). In addition, they take the lead on national evaluations and research, aiming to ensure the promotion of learning and good practice (Circles UK, 2013).

This section of the literature review has aimed to understand the purpose and explore the need of CoSA within the UK. CoSA are described within the literature as an initiative which views those who have committed sexual offences as changed, or capable of change, and also encourages and motivates them to live productive lives in society (Bates et al., 2012). The research related to CoSA that underpins this statement will now be discussed in the next section, along with the related debates on the topic outlined.

Do CoSA work?

To ensure that CoSA projects continue to grow in both success and public confidence on an international scale a solid research base, demonstrating effectiveness, is essential. In addition, to inform best practice, the factors involved in the success of CoSA need to be identified (Wilson et al., 2010). The following section focuses on research surrounding the effectiveness of CoSA projects. This will include quantitative evaluations of the effect of CoSA on recidivism, along with more qualitative explorations of the psychosocial implications of being involved.

Does CoSA reduce recidivism?

In 2005, Wilson, Picheca and Prinzo carried out the first evaluation of the CoSA pilot project in South-Central Ontario, Canada. The evaluation was split into two parts, the first part explored the

effect of CoSA on both the Core Members and the stakeholders (Wilson et al., 2007a). The second part, however, focused upon in this section (Wilson et al., 2005; Wilson et al., 2007b) assessed the rates of reoffending of those involved in CoSA compared to a matched sample of those who were not. The reoffending comparison study consisted of two groups of offenders and an average follow up time of 4.5 years. The CoSA group consisted of 60 individuals previously convicted of a sexual crime, who had become involved in the CoSA project at the end of their sentence. The comparison sample involved 60 individuals also convicted of a sexual crime and released following completion of their prison sentence, but who did not participate in a CoSA. To eliminate potential confounding variables influencing the findings, Wilson et al., (2005; 2007b) endeavoured to match the groups on release date, risk category (e.g. low, moderate, moderate-high, high) and prior involvement in sex offender treatment programmes. However, the CoSA group had a significantly higher risk of sexual recidivism than the comparison group (assessed using the RRASOR; Rapid Risk Assessment for Sexual Offence Recidivism, Hanson, 1997), and a significantly higher average of number of victims. This resulted in a comparison group who would presumably therefore reoffend at a lower rate than the CoSA group. As the authors acknowledged, for the matching process to be exact, the two groups should not have differed in this way, with regard to risk. The deficiencies in the matching protocol of the two groups were argued to be a consequence of the resource difficulties the CoSA project faced. The limited services resulted in a selection bias whereby CoSA were allocated to those individuals in most need i.e. at the highest risk of reoffending.

Despite the higher risk profile of the CoSA group, however, the comparison group reoffended at a faster and higher rate than the CoSA group. It was reported that being a Core Member of CoSA resulted in a reduction in sexual recidivism when compared to individuals who were not in a CoSA (5% sexual recidivism in the CoSA group vs. 16.7% sexual recidivism in comparison group). There was also a 57% reduction in all types of violent recidivism; 15% violent (and sexual) recidivism in the CoSA group vs. 35% violent (and sexual) recidivism in the comparison group. Overall there was a reduction of 35% in all types of recidivism; 28.3% in the CoSA group vs. 43.4% in the comparison group. Alongside this, the three instances of sexual reoffending in the CoSA group were described by Wilson et al., (2007b, p. 332) to be 'less severe or invasive than the offence for which they had most recently served sentence'. Details were only given however, for one out of the three instances, whereby a Core Member, whose previous conviction was for rape, reoffended by making an obscene phone call. This shift from perpetration of a contact offence, to a non-contact offence is described within the literature as a harm reduction function of CoSA and therefore still viewed as a positive and encouraging finding (Wilson et al., 2010; Wilson et al., 2005; Wilson et al., 2007b).

As CoSA projects expanded throughout Canada, Wilson, Cortoni and McWhinnie (2009) sought to replicate the findings of the pilot study evaluation (Wilson et al., 2005; 2007b), by examining whether CoSA continued to demonstrate efficacy in reducing recidivism. Using a similar methodology, 44 offenders, previously convicted for a sexual crime and who were involved in a CoSA were matched, on general risk, time of and geographical location of release and prior participation in sex offender treatment programmes, to a comparison sample of 44 offenders who were not involved in CoSA. It is important to note here that in all cases of CoSA research, the voluntary nature of participating on a CoSA may result in a self-selection bias. For example, CoSA may be documented as successful in reducing recidivism due to the Core Members already having made the decision to desist from crime. This cannot be proven however, with authors such as Farrall (2002) arguing that early aspirations and motivations to change do not guarantee that desistance from crime will take place.

The risk between the CoSA and comparison group was determined, using the risk assessment tool STATIC-99 (Hanson & Thornton, 2000), and a statistically significant difference was reported. In the case of these two samples, it was the comparison group who produced the higher average risk scores. Similar to the previous study though, the results demonstrated that the reoffending rates for those in the CoSA group were significantly lower than for those in the comparison group. When comparing the CoSA group to the matched comparison group, there was an 83% reduction in sexual recidivism (2.3% CoSA vs. 13.7% Comparison), a 73% reduction in all types of violent recidivism (9.1% CoSA vs. 34.1% Comparison) and a 70% overall reduction in all types of recidivism (11.4% CoSA vs. 38.6% Comparison). The differences in recidivism rates are comparable to the previous study outlined, however a much shorter follow up period was used with an average of 35 months.

Despite using a much shorter follow up period than the 2007 study, Wilson et al., (2010) argue that the latter research supports the findings that CoSA is an effective rehabilitative and restorative initiative for high-risk offenders who commit sexual offences. It is acknowledged however, that the lesser risk profile in the CoSA group, compared to the matched offenders, weakens the robustness of the findings (Wilson et al., 2009). In addition to this, Elliott, Zajac and Meyer (2013) argued that, due to the small number of recidivists, a Fisher's Exact Test should have been used to analyse the results instead of the chi-square distribution test. If this was the case a non-significant result would have been reported suggesting that CoSA was less effective at reducing recidivism than was documented in the research.

Canadian research into CoSA has also been criticised for providing limited information about the methods that were used to identify a suitable comparison group, and for basing their

studies on small sample sizes (McCartan et al., 2014). Elliot and Zajac (2015) also make this argument, stating that in both studies, details of the methods used to match the groups for prior treatment was not described nor do the researchers explain why the control sample did not participate in CoSA. If the reason was that they were not suitable to participate, they may not have represented an adequate control sample due to confounding differences with the experimental group.

UK CoSA

Following the establishment of the CoSA in the UK, an evaluation of the first four years of the Thames Valley CoSA project was carried out by Bates, Saunders and Wilson (2007). Different to the studies evaluating effectiveness conducted in Canada, case files of the Core Members registered with CoSA between November 2002 and May 2006 (n=16) were reviewed in the study. Although, as the authors acknowledged, the follow-up period (less than 4 years) was inadequate for a formal reconviction study, none of the Core Members involved in the CoSA reviewed were reconvicted of a sexual offence. This suggested that, as in the studies from other countries, involvement in a CoSA may have reduced the likelihood of reoffending.

A detailed analysis identified one Core Member (6.3%) who had been convicted of a breach of a Sex Offence Prevention Order, four (25%) had been recalled for breaching the conditions of their parole licence and five (31.3%) were reported to exhibit some form of recidivist behaviour. These outcomes, however, were still deemed as a success due to the fact that early intervention was possible and no further victims were created (Wilson et al., 2008). The authors went on to argue that breaches of parole and return to prison should not necessarily be regarded as a 'failure' due to the role that CoSA, and the volunteers involved, had played in gathering intelligence and passing on information to the relevant agencies, resulting in the prevention of further sexual abuse. Further to this, of the four recalled to prison, three retained contact with CoSA and returned as a Core Member for ongoing support on release. As Wilson et al., (2010) acknowledge, this provides evidence of the ability for the support and accountability elements of CoSA to co-exist alongside one another.

Another explanation for the results is that additional contact with ex-offenders through a CoSA may inflate the detection of new offences (Elliott & Beech, 2012), meaning offence-related behaviour is being reported that would otherwise go undetected. Although CoSA in the UK has risk management alongside successful offender reintegration as its joint focus, it is argued that its ability to address recidivism is the sole attraction for support and funding of the initiative (Hannem & Petrunik, 2007). Some even go as far as to argue that initiatives such as CoSA are just a widening of

the net of formal social control, under a disguise of reintegration or restoration (Hannem, 2011), a view that is contested by CoSA providers in the UK.

In 2012, Bates, Macrae, Williams and Webb were able to expand upon the above findings, focusing on the first eight years of CoSA within the UK. Case files for the sample (n=60) included information about each Core Member, since the beginning of their involvement with CoSA and during the follow-up period since. This included descriptive demographic information and outcome data (e.g. recall, reconviction, level of reintegration), which was examined and evaluated. These methods have been criticised however, due to a lack of objective measurement and an over-reliance on the researcher's judgement of the file information, making it difficult to ascertain whether the improvements reported were due to taking part in a CoSA (Elliott et al., 2013).

Nevertheless, 75% of the CoSA analysed were categorised as having a positive outcome, with any problematic behaviours demonstrated by the Core Members managed within the CoSA itself. Of the 25% deemed to have not completed successfully, two Core Members had demonstrated behaviour that paralleled previous offending behaviour, resulting in Sex Offence Prevention Orders being made. Alongside this, one Core Member (1.6%) was reconvicted of a sexual offence and sentenced to 15 months imprisonment for downloading images of sexual abuse. Since the sexual re-conviction was for an internet offence, as opposed to contact offending, the CoSA was still reported as making positive progress by the authors. They stated that this demonstrated a reduction in the Core Member's risk of harm and the severity of their offending behaviour. This can be criticised however, due to the belief that there should not be a hierarchy in sexual offences of any nature due to the harm all inflict on the victims.

Although the studies discussed here go some way to demonstrating the effectiveness of CoSA, the studies on this initiative have been criticised for the use of small sample sizes (Wilson & McWhinnie, 2013). Armstrong and Wills (2014b) explain how the lack of any large-scale research of reoffending post CoSA is attributable to the low base rate for sexual offending in the first place. For example, Hanson and Morton-Bourgon (2009) reported a sexual recidivism rate of 11.5% over a follow up period of an average of 70 months. This is comparatively low when compared to the recidivism rates they reported for any offence (33.2%). In addition, projects within the UK specifically face criticism due to the absence of a comparison group (Duwe, 2012). Bates et al., (2012) acknowledged this limitation to their research, which Hanvey, Philpot and Wilson (2011) agreed with, stating that a comparison group matched to Core Members on as many variables as possible, in relation to the prediction of reoffending, is an ideal method to be used in studies exploring CoSA effectiveness.

In an attempt to overcome these criticisms, Bates, Williams, Wilson and Wilson (2014) carried out a larger comparison study on 71 of the first 100 CoSA established in the South East of the UK. Unlike previous efficacy studies of CoSA, this research involved a ten-year follow up period, which is considered by some to be a credible length from which to derive conclusions of effectiveness (Hanvey et al., 2011). The average time a Core Member was involved in a CoSA was 15.9 months with the average follow up period being four years and four months. Behavioural outcomes of the Core Members, along with formal reconviction data, were reviewed and compared to a group of 71 offenders, convicted of sexual offences who were referred to, but did not receive, a CoSA. Reasons for not receiving a CoSA were lack of availability, lack of motivation to engage or withdrawal after being assessed as suitable. Although both groups were matched as having broadly similar risk scores using the RM2000 risk assessment tool (Thornton et al., 2003) and therefore held similar projected rates of reoffending, the Core Members reoffended sexually or violently at a significantly lower rate than those who were not involved with CoSA.

Out of the 71 Core Members involved in a CoSA, 54 had not engaged in any criminal behaviour involving a legal sanction, since formally starting their CoSA. Of the 17 Core Members that did, three were identified as having nonsexual reconvictions, four obtained convictions for failing to comply with the Sex Offenders Register requirements and another four returned to prison due to violating the terms of their conditional release. In addition, two Core Members were convicted for violating the terms of their Sex Offence Prevention Order (SOPO). In one of these cases, this was following the CoSA reporting the violation to the police. Similarly, one Core Member was subject to a SOPO during his time on a CoSA due to concerns about his behaviour. This arguably still demonstrates CoSA effectiveness, due to action being taken before any future victims were created. Finally, four sexual reconvictions were identified within the Core Members, one for a historical sexual offence and three for non-contact sexual offences. For two of the non-contact offences, previous offences had been for a contact sexual offence, therefore, similar to previous studies, a harm reduction effect was documented by the authors when compared to their original conviction. Again however, the use of a hierarchy within sexual offences could be criticised due to the harm inflicted on all victims of sexual crime.

In terms of actual versus expected re-offences (using the risk levels of the RM2000 tool), neither group reoffended sexually at a rate significantly different to that which was predicted (Elliott, 2014; Elliott & Zajac, 2015). In addition, Bates et al., (2014) included a '90 day rule' to the sample in their study, stipulating that only Core Members who had been with a CoSA for a minimum of 90 days would be included in the study. This, they argued, was to ensure that Core Members included in the research had been given sufficient time to have benefited from the CoSA process.

Their rationale for the inclusion of this was stated as being due to the use of such a rule in prior Canadian studies. However, as Elliott and Zajac (2015) highlight, no reference of this is made in either of the Canadian studies that have been outlined earlier in this chapter. In addition, where such an exclusion criteria is used one could question the extent to which the true effectiveness of CoSA is reported. This is due to the early stages of release from prison, being a particularly sensitive period in terms of desistance (Aresti et al., 2010), with reoffending expected to occur within the first few weeks (Elliott & Zajac, 2015). Indeed, the authors themselves reported how, during this 90 day period, five Core Members had been recalled to prison for breach of licence conditions and four withdrew from their CoSA; all of which were excluded under the 90 day rule. The use of a 90-day rule in CoSA research therefore, excludes data from a period during which there is a higher likelihood of CoSA failures and Core Member dropouts (Elliott & Zajac, 2015). This could result in a skew in the findings towards 'successful' CoSA rather than the true effectiveness being reported.

In conclusion, Bates et al., (2014) highlight how a Core Member's lack of ability to refrain from reoffending may not relate entirely to the quality (or lack thereof) of support and accountability (Bates et al., 2014). Instead an individual's motivation to desist from offending, along with the opportunities available to them to access a balanced, self-determined and crime-free lifestyle, also need to be considered. In addition, although the length of follow-up and the use of a reasonable comparison group were comparable to studies evaluating the effectiveness of CoSA in Canada, Bates et al., (2014) acknowledge that using a randomised clinical trial, or matched participants, would have been preferable. The use of these methods however, to effectively evaluate initiatives involving those who have offended sexually has been debated as will now be outlined.

The use of Randomised Controlled Trials in CoSA

The only study to date that has randomly assigned participants to either an experimental group (CoSA) or a control group (non-CoSA), was carried out by Duwe (2012) in the US. Duwe (2012) utilised a Randomised Control Trial (RCT) design by randomly assigning 62 men, previously convicted of sexual offences, to either an experimental group, whereby they took part in a CoSA, or a control group, where they did not. All of the participants involved in the study had previously been deemed suitable for the Minnesota CoSA programme and expressed interest in becoming involved. This therefore controlled for offender motivation to desist from further offending. In addition, participants in both groups had been assigned to a level two risk category prior to leaving prison, meaning they were deemed to be of moderate risk to the public. As Elliott, Zajac and Meyer (2013) assert, using this randomised procedure goes some way to resolving the issue of potential

differences between CoSA and control group. There were no significant reductions in the reconviction or re-incarceration rates reported for the two groups. However, a statistically significant reduction in re-arrest for any offence, over a 2 year follow up, was reported for those who took part in CoSA when compared to those that did not (38.7 % CMs vs 64.5% controls). In addition, a non-significant reduction in sexual recidivism, again over a 2 year follow up was reported (0% CMs vs 3.2% control). In research such as this, the low base rate for sexual reoffending, as was outlined in chapter 2 can make it difficult, to detect an effect. In addition, the lack of a statistically significant result can be attributed to the short follow up period used within the study (Wilson & McWhinnie, 2013).

The use of short follow up periods is a limitation consistent across CoSA research internationally (McCartan et al., 2014; Thomas et al., 2014; Wilson & McWhinnie, 2013). Cann, Falshaw and Friendship (2004) reported from a reconviction study involving a 21 year follow up period, that individuals, convicted previously for sexual offences, could reoffend after many years of living in the community offence free. The sample consisted of 413 participants previously convicted of a sexual crime, 103 of whom reoffended sexually during the 21 years they were followed. Over a third of sexual re-offences occurred after the 5-year time-point with one fifth of those who reoffended had lived offence-free for at least ten years before committing their first sexual re-offence. There are limitations of using such a long follow up period in research, e.g. the research can become out-dated by the time of publication. However, it does demonstrate that using a short follow up period of two years, similar to that of the CoSA research, will not always provide an accurate picture of reconviction rates and the full impact CoSA can have on these.

With regard to study design, the use of RCTs is considered the 'gold standard' in evaluation research. However, it is not always a straightforward process when applying this design to CoSA. Indeed, CoSA works with the Core Member on an individual basis and offers support that is specific to their needs. To use a strict RCT design with CoSA, however, would require the length and content of the session of each CoSA to be the same thus reducing their individualised nature. This could possibly undermine the potential effectiveness of CoSA due to desistance from sexual crime being an individualised process (McNeill, 2009). For example, Marques, Wiederanders, Day, Nelson and Van Ommeren (2005) conducted an RCT on sex offender treatment, with participants in the treatment group all receiving the same number of treatment sessions over the same length of time. No treatment effect was reported within the study, arguably due to the fact that the treatment had not been tailored to each individual and their needs (Marshall & Marshall, 2007). Findings involving sex offender treatment cannot be generalised directly to CoSA due to them being different

approaches. This does indicate, however, that an RCT design may not involve practices best suited to working with those who have been convicted of sexual offences.

In addition to design issues, Marshall and Marshall (2007) argue that RCTs are unethical, when used with individuals who have committed sexual offences, due to the control group being denied access to a programme or treatment. In the case of CoSA, whereby those participating are at a high-risk of reoffending sexually and are due for release in to the community, the use of RCTs becomes an ethically questionable concept (Lussier & Gress, 2014). Harvey, Philpot and Wilson (2011) highlight the ethical issues surrounding the use of RCTs to demonstrate CoSA effectiveness, stating that the use of a control group denies individuals at risk of committing further sexual crime a place on a supportive initiative that has already been shown to reduce risk of reoffending. Duwe (2012) countered this criticism of his study however, by explaining that the use of an RCT design did not result in any individual being denied involvement in CoSA purely for the benefit of the research. Instead, he stated, that the number of individuals, willing and able to take part in a CoSA, exceeded the number of volunteers and therefore CoSA available. One could still question however, whether it is ethical to engage in discussions with individuals regarding motivation and willingness to engage in CoSA, with the knowledge that places will not be available for everyone.

In summary, despite a growing body of literature regarding CoSA efficacy, critics have argued that there is not yet enough evidence to suggest whether or not CoSA significantly reduces sexual recidivism by the Core Member, with existing research varying in quality and involving a lack of significant results (Elliott et al., 2013). In part, due to some of these limitations of the quantitative data, calls have been made for further qualitative evaluations in order to explore the factors contributing to the success of CoSA at a deeper level (McWhinnie, 2015). These include the effects on the Core Members directly, such as level of social isolation and psychological well-being, which will now be discussed in the following sections.

How effective is CoSA in preventing social isolation?

In addition to considering the impact on recidivism rates, Wilson et al., (2007a), explored Core Members' experiences of being involved in CoSA and their motivations for participating. In line with the criteria for being selected as a Core Member, 83% of the participants reported that having no other form of social support was the main reason for deciding to take part in a CoSA. Using a different sample to the recidivism study, over half of the twenty-four male offenders who had been convicted of a sexual offence and were current or past Core Members, stated that negative community reaction to their release was also a motivating factor for becoming involved in CoSA. The study demonstrated the difficulties the Core Members would have had in adjusting to the

community without being involved in CoSA, with the majority stating they would have felt lonely, isolated and powerless. This is particularly concerning given that isolation and emotional loneliness are risk factors in sexual recidivist behaviours (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005; Marshall, 2010) and indeed approximately two-thirds of the participants reported they thought they would have returned to crime without a CoSA. Caution must be used here however, due to the self-report nature of these latter findings. For example, there is no way to prove whether or not these individuals would have reoffended without a CoSA.

Being involved with the CoSA, however, helped to combat this social isolation and loneliness with 92% of the Core Members stating they experienced a sense of support and acceptance when they first joined, that they would have tried anything to help them reintegrate back in society, and expressing relief and gratitude for having a Core Member place made available to them. These psychosocial outcomes are important to consider due to the recognition within the literature that isolation and emotional loneliness can be factors significant in sexual recidivist behaviours (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005; Marshall, 2010). With its focus on support, however, CoSA provides a meaningful sense of belonging and inclusion helping to counteract the social isolation and feelings of loneliness and rejection that are argued to be associated with sexual reoffending (Wilson et al., 2009).

Developing this body of research, Fox (2015a) conducted one of the first qualitative studies in the US to explore the relationships formed between the Core Members and volunteers. Fox collected interview data from a sample that included both Core Members (n=20) and volunteers (n=57) from the CoSA project in Vermont, US. Although no qualitative method of analysis was reported within the study, details were given to suggest a form of thematic analysis was undertaken (Elliott & Zajac, 2015). It is also important to note that Vermont provides CoSA for individuals with a wider criminal history than just sexual offences, for example, high risk offenders, who have committed homicide (Fox, 2015b). All offence types were included in the research making it problematic, therefore, when generalising the results to other CoSA projects who only include individuals convicted of at least one sexual offence.

From the results, Fox (2015a) reported how involvement in a CoSA could help mitigate the isolation felt by many of the Core Members on their release from prison. In addition, they stated that CoSA created a space for the Core Members to practice and rehearse pro-social relationships with members of the community and help support them in their ability to sustain pro-social healthy relationships. Although the Core Members reported motivation to desist from reoffending, they also explained how they felt excluded and labelled by the community due to their crimes. This resonates with previous research whereby ostracisation limits the successful reintegration of

individuals convicted of sexual offences (Burchfield & Mingus, 2014; Tewksbury, 2012). Fox (2015a) reported, however, that the CoSA volunteers were combating these feelings of exclusion through the inclusion of the Core Members. This created a sense of belonging for the Core Members, which Weaver and McNeill (2015) highlight as being necessary for successful desistance from crime to take place. They believe that social relations characterised by this solidarity, support the individual to realise their aspirations, i.e. achieving a crime-free life, without feeling dependant. Following this, further research is now required to explore further the context of the social bonds formed through CoSA, in relation specifically to the role they play in supporting the Core Member reach desistance from sexual offending (Fox, 2015a).

In summary, the qualitative nature of this research, particularly given the previous criticisms of the quantitative studies of CoSA, helps to inform best practice of CoSA by identifying the factors involved in their success, something that Wilson et al., (2010) argue is critical. It is not without its criticisms, however, with the research outlined above involving small, unrepresentative samples. As Fox (2015a) argues though, rather than determining the effect on recidivism, qualitative studies such as these provide an in-depth exploration into a given topic e.g. understanding the effect CoSA has on the social isolation of those who commit sexual offences.

Can CoSA improve psychological well-being

Alongside research exploring the role of CoSA in the reduction of social isolation and loneliness, other psychosocial benefits are also considered within the literature. This includes the impact of CoSA on the Core Member's psychological well-being, Bates, Macrae, Williams and Webb (2012) sought to address the impact of a CoSA on the life of a Core Member and the impact of being involved. From their findings, it was reported that 70% resulted in an improvement in the Core Members' emotional well-being, due to their involvement with volunteers with whom they could relate and share issues with, thus reducing their emotional loneliness and social isolation. Nearly 50% of Core Members had improved links with their families, had increased their support networks, and were encouraged to access employment and education following their involvement with a CoSA. Alongside this, 61% had displayed attitudes and behaviours that were pro-social and 50% had increased their engagement in age-appropriate relationships i.e. individuals of a similar age. This is of particular significance due to the fact that the majority of Core Members had been convicted previously of sexual crimes involving child victims (48 out of 60 Core Members had child victims in their previous crimes).

Similarly, in 2012, the Ministry of Justice in the UK commissioned a small independent study of the NOMS-funded CoSA pilot studies to understand the potential support and value a CoSA may

provide to those convicted of sexual offences. Although no face-to-face data collection took place, file reviews of 32 Core Members revealed that the CoSA pilots had provided both practical and emotional support to the Core Members. In addition, the Core Members were able to identify, develop and take part in pro-social activities and networks, such as safe leisure activities, volunteering, education courses and going to church (McCartan et al., 2014). Alongside this, 21 out of 32 Core Members had been recorded as reporting changes in their motivations and attitudes after being involved with a CoSA. These included increased coping skills, a reduction in anger, greater insight into their offending and the development of coping strategies. Unlike previous studies, negative or mixed reports of CoSA were also documented. These included the Core Member having a lack of engagement, openness and honesty along with a reluctance to engage with the relapse prevention plan and manage their risk. Whilst it is essential to include all aspects of a CoSA project to make future improvements, the study did not document what the result of these negative cases were, for example whether the Core Member was recalled to prison or dropped out of the CoSA early.

In 2013, Höing Bogaerts and Vogelvang (2013) conducted a systematic coding process of Core Member narratives from both Dutch (n=10) and UK (n=4) CoSA. The core concepts derived from these were then explored using a temporal card sorting task with six of the Dutch Core Members. This involved the participants first choosing relevant concepts and then placing the cards in a temporal order to represent the development in their CoSA. Within the findings, Core Member progress was represented by less rumination and stress, more active problem-solving behaviour and improved social and relationship skills. In addition, some of the Core Members had developed a more positive outlook on the future and their ability to live a 'normal' life. This finding in particular is significant due to the links made between hope and desistance. For example, LeBel, Burnett, Maruna and Bushway (2008) reported from their research with repeat offenders that a belief in one's ability to leave crime behind, along with a sense of hope, is a necessary condition for an individual to be able to desist from crime. Höing et al. (2013) also reported some of the difficulties faced by Core Members during their CoSA, something that has been arguably missing from the early CoSA research generally (Elliott, 2014). Some of the Core Members had difficulties with open communication, especially at the beginning of their CoSA and the volunteer interviews in particular reported some Core Members' behaviour as secretive, avoidant and even manipulative.

From their findings, Höing et al. (2013) argued that in order to be effective in supporting the Core Member to successfully desist from sexual crime, a CoSA must be inclusive; defined by trust, openness, belonging, equality and acceptance. These qualities support the internal motivation to change within the Core Member and provide a safe place for the new pro-social

identity to be developed. Further evidence for this can be taken from Weaver and McNeill's (2015) research involving repeat offenders and the exploration of social relationships. They argued that it is the sense of belonging and social bonds, such as those highlighted by Höing et al. (2013), that can encourage change within an individual and a shift towards desistance.

To explore further the impact of CoSA on the Core Members' level of desistance, Höing et al., (2015) collected both qualitative and quantitative data. Data collection took place at three different time-points during the Core Members' CoSA journey. At each time-point both an interview and questionnaire was administered (n=17). The qualitative analysis discussed the internal and external transitions deemed to be necessary in order to reach successful desistance from crime (Paternoster & Bushway, 2009). After six months of being involved with CoSA, Core Members reported cognitive, internal transitions such as improvements in openness, self-reflection and assertiveness, along with the development of self-regulation and social skills. With regard to external transitions, little change was reported at the six-month point, although two Core Members had begun to develop more appropriate leisure activities. In addition, some Core Members reported feelings of stress which they attributed to volunteers being too demanding or demonstrating excluding behaviour.

By the 12-month time-point Höing et al., (2015) reported a continuation of the positive changes in interpersonal skills, which they state coincided with increased self-confidence or a more positive self-image. Increased problem-solving skills were identified as the most prominent positive change from the Core Member interviews. External changes had also taken place by this point for some Core Members, with reports of improvements in existing relationships or the extension of social networks outside CoSA. In contrast however, the quantitative data, highlighted no change with regard to the Core Members' participation in society and the size of their own network. This could possibly indicate a level of social desirability present in the qualitative answers the participants gave. As the authors acknowledge in their conclusions, further research is now required, over longer periods, to explore this deeper along with the impact CoSA can have on the external transitions of the Core Members.

In summary, the research appears to identify CoSA as having a positive impact on the psychological well-being of Core Members, resulting in substantial internal transitions towards a crime-free life. Although the Core Members appear, through the support of the CoSA, to be progressing towards desistance, further research, after the CoSA journey has ended would help to determine whether this desistance was reached.

How does CoSA impact on the volunteers?

Whilst research into the effectiveness of CoSA has mostly focused on the Core Members involved, such projects would not exist without the volunteers (Bates et al., 2007; Wilson et al., 2010). It has been argued that gaining a deeper understanding of how volunteers engage the Core Members so effectively is essential (Bates et al., 2014).

The use of volunteers has also been described as the strength of CoSA, allowing Core Members to feel part of the community by having contact with 'real people' other than just professionals (Armstrong & Wills, 2014a). Indeed, the importance of using volunteers has been highlighted many times by Core Members too who believe the success of CoSA is down to involving members of the community who want to spend time with them and support them and are not being paid to do so (Hanvey et al., 2011). Despite this, until recently, very little research has focused upon the direct impact participating in a CoSA has on the volunteers. A review of the literature by Höing, Bogaerts and Vogelvang (2014) revealed only 3 studies that had considered the impact of volunteering on a CoSA (Haslewood-Pócsik, Smith & Spencer, 2008; Snatersen, 2011; Wilson et al., 2007a). Due to the small scale of research they tentatively concluded that volunteering on a CoSA could result in an increase in personal growth and self-esteem and an increase in social connectedness. In addition, they warned of the potential emotional demands of volunteering on a CoSA through having to deal with complex feelings and hear of difficult experiences from the Core Member.

In 2015, Höing, Bogaerts and Vogelvang conducted research on volunteers, focusing on a sample of 40 active volunteers on Dutch CoSA. Using a quantitative research design, volunteers were asked to complete a web based questionnaire, which explored the positive and negative aspects of being involved with CoSA. Several measures were used to examine outcomes in volunteers' satisfaction, mental well-being, social capital, job demands, self-esteem, external job resources and volunteer connectedness. Similar to Wilson et al., (2007a) the findings demonstrated that volunteers' main motivation for participating in a CoSA was community improvement, through the reintegration of the Core Member and prevention of further sexual reoffending. This provides evidence in support of CoSA as a restorative justice initiative, a concept which is debated within the literature (see chapter one for more detail on this).

Volunteer-led initiatives, such as CoSA, empower the community to take responsibility for their own protection and participate in decisions about the reintegration of offenders (Bazemore & Erbe, 2004; McAlinden, 2005); behaviour, which Höing et al., (2015) reported to be satisfying with positive effects on the volunteers' mental well-being. An increase in social awareness as a result of volunteering on a CoSA, was also documented within the findings. Included within these were low

levels of burnout or secondary traumatic stress. The finding of increased connectedness, however, was reported as both a benefit and a risk to volunteers. Höing et al., (2015) explained how an increase in connectedness can potentially blur the boundaries between the volunteers and Core Member involved, resulting in observations of risk being biased in favour of the Core Members. Although acknowledging that the dual role of connectedness and vigilance is a complex issue, the authors contended that this issue can be overcome through expert supervision of the volunteers by an experienced coordinator. Supervision of this nature, they argued, ensures observations of risk are still recognised alongside support being given. Although the authors acknowledge that further research is required, the findings highlight to CoSA providers, the benefits of volunteering on a project and the importance of the role of the coordinator with regard specifically to the supervision they offer.

Perceptions of those who sexually offend and the impact on CoSA

Despite the seemingly positive benefits of CoSA for both Core Members and volunteers, it has been argued that, rather than questioning whether society can resettle offenders on release from prison, whether it really *wants* to should be the focus (Maguire & Raynor, 2006). This is even more relevant for those convicted of sexual offences who, despite consistent support from CoSA volunteers, may still be faced with the stigmatization from the community (Tewksbury, 2012). Indeed, Northcutt Bohmert, Duwe and Hipple (2016) reported, from their research focusing on the Minnesota CoSA programme in the US, that despite the support received some Core Members were still unable to overcome the structural barriers to reintegration. In some cases, the stigmatisation they experienced resulted in a violation of their parole. For example, one of the Core Members experienced housing difficulties and the other financial difficulties, which ultimately resulted in them both returning to prison. Only a small sample was used (n=10 Core members) however, limiting the conclusions that could be derived from the study.

To explore this area further Richards and McCartan (2017) have taken a different approach to the evaluation of CoSA. They considered public perceptions of CoSA and explored their opinion on the effectiveness of such initiatives. As they argue, this is an important area of research to consider, due to the fact that CoSA projects rely upon volunteers from the local community. This deems therefore, that at least some community support necessary. In addition, they acknowledge that public policy on community safety is swayed by public opinion, meaning that informing the government of the public's view on CoSA may encourage more resources to be channelled towards the initiative. Richards and McCartan's sample consisted of individuals (n=768) who had posted on four online social media sources, in response to the stories relating to the introduction of CoSA in Adelaide, Australia. As Richards and McCartan (2017) acknowledge, data collected from English

language social media sources do not have the same representativeness expected from random samples and can result in exclusion of, for example, those who are illiterate in using online technologies or who are non-English speaking. Despite this limitation recruiting participants through this method still produced a large sample for the study.

The results demonstrated that the majority of the individuals who had posted a comment online regarding the subject opposed the introduction of CoSA in the community. The two main reasons given for this opposition were first, a belief that the perpetrators of sexual crime did not deserve, and therefore, should not receive government funding. It was believed that the resources should be spent on the victims of sexual offences instead. Second, there was a perception held that those who offend sexually against children could not be rehabilitated, thus programs or initiatives that support this would be ineffective and a waste of resources. In addition, some people stated that CoSA providers and supporters were 'idealistic', 'naïve' and 'do gooders' (Richards & McCartan, 2017, p.8).

These negative views towards those who commit sexual offences are in line with the wider literature. For example, Brown, Deakin and Spencer (2008) conducted a large-scale study (n=979) examining how individuals perceive those who commit sexual offences in the UK. They reported that although there was a general acceptance that these individuals would return to the community, their risk of reoffending was significantly overestimated, resulting in feelings of fear, anger and anxiousness. Similar to the Richards and McCartan (2017) study, a high level of pessimism was expressed in relation to the ability for those who commit sexual offences to be rehabilitated. A particular concern identified was in regard to those individuals living within close proximity to them. Similar results were reported in Northern Ireland (McAlinden, 2007) with individuals, in relation to the potential for effective CoSA, unwilling to recognise the role of the community in helping those who have previously been convicted of sexual offences to reintegrate successfully.

Within Richards and McCartan's (2017) study a small number of participants did resist the dominant view, expressing support for CoSA due to its potential to help prevent further sexual victimisation and therefore prevent future victims. The views were overall, however, heavily weighted towards the negative with the majority opposing the establishment of a CoSA project in their community. It is important to consider public attitudes towards those who commit sexual offences due to the detrimental impact negative perceptions can have on their successful reintegration back in to the community. For example, as highlighted previously in the chapter, stigmatisation may lead to the denial of suitable housing or employment opportunities and therefore encourage individuals to withdraw from society (Tewksbury, 2012). In addition, the fear of potential stigmatisation may lead individuals to avoid seeking treatment for their risky behaviour,

preferring instead to socialise with similar groups of stigmatised individuals (Jahnke et al., 2015). All of which can result in the social isolation recognised within the literature as a risk factor for further sexual offending (Marshall, 2010).

It can be argued therefore, that the effectiveness of CoSA may be restricted whilst public perceptions of CoSA projects, and those who commit sexual offences, remain as they are. Richards and McCartan (2017) acknowledge that due to these ingrained community attitudes, simply providing further information regarding the topic is unlikely to be effective in promoting positive change. They do suggest however, that community education may be more effective if delivered by the volunteers themselves who are involved in the CoSA projects; an area that is yet to be investigated.

General discussion; Do CoSA work?

In conclusion, the literature to date demonstrates promising and encouraging evidence of the effectiveness of CoSA with psychosocial benefits for the Core Members. For the Core Members, a reduction in social isolation and loneliness along with an improvement in psychological well-being have been reported, both of which have positive effects on the likelihood of achieving a crime-free life. The volunteers also appear to benefit from their involvement in CoSA, although this is a separate issue and further research is required to confirm this.

The initiative, however, cannot yet be considered evidence-based due to a lack of high-quality, experimental evaluations that demonstrate a reduction in reoffending rates when compared to a control group (Elliott & Zajac, 2015). Elliott (2014) has stated that the intense *wanting* of CoSA to be successful has resulted in an evidence base vulnerable to many valid and grave criticisms, which in turn may damage the initiatives credibility. Indeed, there is very little independent evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of CoSA.

Despite the mixed views of CoSA both within the literature, and from the public, there seems to be a general consensus that researchers and practitioners should remain optimistic and continue to develop a research base that involves a thorough and comprehensive evaluation of CoSA projects (Elliott & Zajac, 2015). The following section will now discuss the underlying theoretical frameworks of CoSA relevant to the research in this thesis.

Theoretical frameworks

This thesis aims to place CoSA within the wider desistance literature. There are two areas to be considered, therefore, in relation to theoretical frameworks underpinning CoSA. The first section considers the 'traditional' theories surrounding the concept of desistance. This involves the critical

discussion of research focusing on maturation, social bonds and cognitive change and how these may be relevant to CoSA. Following this, a desistance framework developed by Göbbels, Ward and Willis (2012) in relation to those who commit sexual offences specifically will be considered, along with relevance of this framework to CoSA.

Desistance from crime: The 'traditional' theories

Theories relating to desistance from crime are important to consider in relation to CoSA outcomes. There has been disagreement within the literature regarding a clear definition of desistance from crime, with some viewing it as a gradual slowing down of criminal behaviour and others viewing it as a complete termination of the criminal behaviour. Willis, Levenson and Ward (2010) argue that the most appealing definition of desistance is viewing it not as an event but a dynamic ongoing process, complete with relapses and recoveries. Desistance theories, and the research they are based upon, seek to understand and explain the processes that are involved in this change, which lead individuals towards becoming a productive member of society and a new life away from crime. The relevance of these theories in the explanation of desistance from sexual offending specifically is therefore critical in understanding what aspects of CoSA encourage this move away from crime and therefore reduce reoffending.

Age and maturation

The earliest explanation for desistance from crime involved a focus on maturation and the 'ageing' process. Evolving from research in to delinquency in teenage boys, it was recognised that many of the participants had deaccelerated or ceased their involvement in crime once they had left their teenage years behind (Farrington, 2001). Ward and Laws (2013, p. 13) describe ageing as "the most powerful influence on desistance" due to its biological effect on an individual's ability and willingness to engage in criminal behaviour. Indeed, an age crime curve does exist, whereby criminal behaviour declines with age (Sampson & Laub, 2005). This has also been observed for sexual recidivism as well (Barbaree & Blanchard; Hanson, 2002). There is some debate, however, surrounding the extent sexual offending decreases with age when compared to other types of offending, thus making the true age effect difficult to interpret (Cossins, 2008; Harris, 2014; Lussier, Tzoumakis, Cale & Amirault, 2010).

The static-99 (Hanson & Thornton, 2002), the most commonly used actuarial risk assessment scale used in the US and Canada for those convicted of sexual offences, has recently been adapted to take in to account the complex relationship between age and recidivism with this population (Helmus, Thornton, Hanson & Babchishin, 2012). The study reported how the original version of the scale over-estimated the risk of sexual recidivism in individuals aged 60 and above,

which were actually considerably lower. The age weightings were therefore adapted to take in to account the lower sexual recidivism rates, for the older groups. The authors acknowledge however, how much more research is required to explore the relationship between age and sexual crime.

Harris (2014) carried out a study including 21 men, who had all previously served a custodial sentence for a sexual offence but had been living in the community for a mean of 4 years. To examine the extent to which desistance theories of offending explained desistance from committing sexual crime specifically, semi-structured, face to face interviews were carried out. Despite the sample being limited deliberately, according to the authors, to participants of a relatively mature age (mean = 52.6) only 3 participants (14%) offered age as the reason they no longer offended. Additionally, these 3 participants had committed a variety of offences including drugs, property and violent crime and talked about 'aging out' of the criminogenic lifestyle generally. This may suggest that whilst the maturation explanations may give some insight as to why people 'grow out' of a criminal lifestyle, they are inadequate in explaining desistance from sexual crime specifically. The average age of the participants being defined as mature can also be questioned due to the ages of 55 and upwards routinely being used as a starting point for 'older' categories (Omolade, 2014).

Although establishing the correlation between age and sexual crime may be desirable, for the purpose of this thesis it is more important to consider the processes involved in crime cessation. Identifying these, along with relevant protective factors, can then be considered in relation to how CoSA can assist desistance more effectively.

Social bonds

Sampson and Laub (1993; 2005) believed that the path to successful desistance involved more than just ageing. They therefore expanded the research into desistance by considering the relationship between individuals and society, which they termed a bond. They argued that underlying desistance from crime is the individual's commitment and attachment to these social bonds. These can be strengthened by various formal social institutions, such as school, employment and by turning points in one's life, such as marriage or breaking away from criminal peer groups. From this perspective, strong social bonds are associated with desistance, whilst offending behaviours are thought to occur where these bonds are weakened, broken or absent (Laub & Sampson, 2001). From a study using a sample of convicted offenders who had committed sexual offences, Kruttschnitt, Uggen and Shelton (2000) stated that job stability significantly reduced the probability of reoffending. They acknowledged however, that those who have previously been convicted of sexual offences are not given the opportunity to develop social bonds within the community, particularly in terms of being offered employment. It is argued that many risk management

strategies used to keep the community 'safe' from those who commit sexual crime loosens the social ties between these individuals and the communities they live in (Laws & Ward, 2011), which in turn impedes the process of desistance. In addition, because these turning points and 'hooks for change' as they are also known (Giordano, Cernkovick & Rudolph, 2002), such as employment and marriage, are not randomly assigned in research it is difficult to determine whether or not these events are causes rather than correlations of desistance (Kazemian & Farrington, 2010).

McAlinden, Farmer and Maruna (2017) have explored the role of social bonds, such as employment and relationships, in the successful desistance from sexual offending. From interviews with individuals who had been successfully desisting from sexual offending for at least 5 years, they concluded that, whilst employment and successful relationships were relevant to a positive sense of self, their role in desistance was still unclear. Rather than providing turning points towards a life of desistance, as Laub and Sampson suggested, they stated that for those previously convicted of sexual offences, social bonds such as employment and relationships were part of clear, formulated goals and aspirations for their pro-social identity. In addition, a sense of agency and purpose was reported as important factors underpinning the transition towards desistance. Indeed, although expanding the understanding of desistance, the social bond theory has been criticised previously for de-emphasising the role of the individual and personal agency in moving away from a life of crime (Aresti, Eatough & Brooks-Gordon, 2010; Vaughan, 2007).

Despite the debate surrounding the exact role of social bonds in the desistance from sexual offending, it is generally accepted within the literature that structural changes do have some significance on creating a successful life away from crime (Laws & Ward, 2011; Maguire & Raynor, 2006; McAlinden et al., 2017). Desistance-oriented interventions therefore, offer support to help those individuals convicted of sexual offences specifically rebuild the social bonds with their families and develop new social bonds with the wider community such as employers, faith groups etc, which are required for desistance to take place (McNeill, 2009). CoSA is one such intervention and being part of one can assist in the development and strengthening of these social bonds in cases whereby the individual faces the barriers to desistance outlined above. From her research involving 60 probationers, Rex (1999) identified that over half (68%) of those interviewed stated their desistance had been assisted by supervision, in particular that which was engaging, active and participatory. The probationers stated they felt motivated to desist by supervisors who were empathic, non-judgemental and interested in their well-being. Rex concluded that when advice about personal and social issues was delivered to the ex-offender by supervisors with these traits, their social ties were strengthened thus encouraging desistance. As McNeill and Weaver (2010) acknowledge, case managers within the probation service in the UK today rarely have the resources to provide this

level of assistance. With many probation services contracted out to external agencies individuals can be left feeling undervalued, unsupported and neglected (King, 2013a). CoSA however, using volunteers rather than paid employees, can take on this role in assisting desistance in high-risk individuals previously convicted of sexual offences (McCartan & Kemshall, 2017).

Cognitive change

Returning to the theories of desistance, the third perspective focuses on successful desistance requiring a shift to a pro-social identity. This is achieved through the individual reconstructing their internalised life narratives and separating their past self from their current self (Maruna, 2001). A moral assessment and evaluation of past behaviour takes place along with a reconstruction of present and future non-offending identities (Vaughan, 2007). Cognitive transformation is thought to be key to desistance, with those who are able to desist having higher levels of self-efficacy, a clear sense of purpose in their lives and having discovered agency. In addition, it is argued that for maintained desistance to take place, the individuals must be able to maintain a positive sense of self (Maruna, 2001). For example, in 2004, Maruna reported, from a UK sample of 55 participants who were actively desisting from crime, and 34 persistent criminals, that the way in which an individual attributes positive life events influences their ability to stay crime free. As with much of the previous research on desistance, however, those who had committed sexual offences were excluded from the sample, making the generalisation of the findings to this type of offender questionable.

LeBel, Burnett, Maruna and Bushway (2008) also examined the cognitive transformations that take place in desistance by interviewing a sample of 130 repeat male offenders who were approaching their release from nine UK prisons. Ten years later 126 of the sample were re-interviewed. In addition to having a sense of control of their future and strong internal beliefs about their own self-worth and perceived successfulness, desisting individuals were identified as experiencing shame and remorse leading them to align or re-align themselves with pro-social values. Again, this study can be criticised, in terms of relevance to the desistance of sexual offending, due to the sample not involving those convicted of sexual offences. However, the authors reported that a belief in self-efficacy and a sense of hope is what enabled a person to take advantage of positive social opportunities such as marriage, having children or obtaining employment.

Indeed, it is more frequently being argued within the literature that both external factors (e.g. employment) and internal processes (e.g. a sense of agency) are required to facilitate the change process associated with desistance (King, 2013c; McAlinden et al., 2017; Willis & Ward, 2011). Another example of this is Aresti, Eatough and Brooks-Gordon (2010), who, from their

qualitative research with 5 male ex-offenders, highlighted the importance of the role of personal agency and external factors in the desistance process and facilitating change. Being given the opportunity to engage in activities that conform to society's conventions, such as employment or education, were seen as instrumental features in the cognitive restructuring towards a more positive conceptualisation of the self.

As Maguire and Raynor (2006) warn however, external problems such as a persistent lack of housing or employment can severely undermine an individual's intent to change, no matter how strong their internal cognitive transformation has been. King (2013c) similarly criticised theories that focus on the role of agency in desistance alone as they suggest a level of freedom and choice, which is not always available to ex-offenders. This is particularly the case for those previously convicted for sexual offences who face harsher prejudices by members of the community and more structural barriers than any other type of offender. As Maruna, LeBel, Mitchell and Naples (2004, p. 272) assert, ex-offenders are viewed as 'risky until proven innocent', with non-deviant acts not being enough to earn someone recognition of desistance, particularly in the case of those previously convicted of sexual offences. Laws and Ward (2011) strongly believe that the community has an ethical obligation to allow and encourage those previously convicted of sexual offences to reintegrate back into society once they have served their sentence. One way this can be achieved is through community members volunteering to be involved in a CoSA. Embedding individuals within support networks that accept and encourage pro-social identities can arguably encourage desistance from future crime (Paternoster & Bushway, 2009).

Although some of the desistance research can be applied to CoSA initiatives, the majority of previous desistance research has neglected or excluded entirely those convicted of sexual offences (Harris, 2015; McAlinden et al., 2017). Göbbels, Ward and Willis (2012) have therefore developed a model that incorporates the above theories to effectively explain why and how individuals, previously convicted of sexual offences specifically, desist from future offending. CoSA will now be discussed in relation to this specific model of desistance.

The Integrated Theory of Desistance from Sex Offending (ITDSO)

To effectively explain desistance within those who have previously committed sexual offences specifically, Göbbels, Ward and Willis (2012) have developed the Integrated Theory of Desistance from Sex Offending (ITDSO). Their model complements and expands previous theories and aims to outline a comprehensive psychological and social account of the whole desistance process. Clarke, Brown and Völlm (2015) have argued that the theoretical framework for how and why CoSA works requires further development. The following discussion of the ITDSO therefore, will include the

examination of CoSA and its role in the desistance process according to the four phases of this model.

Phase 1: Decisive momentum

The first phase of the ITDSO model involves the turning points described above by Sampson and Laub (2005), which make it possible for an offender to 'knife off' their criminal past. However, alongside the presence of the static turning point, Göbbels, Ward and Willis (2012) state that the offender must also possess the cognitive and emotional capacities to take advantage of such opportunities, which they term *decisive momentum*. They believe that, despite the presence of a turning point, without this decisive momentum, change is unlikely. Rather than use the term turning points, they instead refer to the concept as life events, which act as 'a necessary, but not sufficient condition for behaviour or identity change' (Göbbels et al., 2012, p. 455). Phase one of the ITDSO states that in order for a person to reach the end goal of desistance a critical evaluation of their identity as an offender has to take place following a life event. The offender has to realise that their identity is undermining their capacity to achieve a valued goal or self-improvement. This self-evaluation continues throughout the following phases, however the outcome of this first phase, according to Göbbels, Ward and Willis (2012, p456) is an emerging replacement or possible self. At this point the individual is able to imagine, and begin to develop, a more conventional and positive self. As argued by Ward, Fox and Garber (2014), CoSA can act as an artificial turning point, hook for change or life event, offering the offender the chance to reintegrate themselves back into the community as a productive, pro-social member of society. From this model's perspective, therefore, it is believed that, for individuals to use their place on a CoSA to achieve desistance *both* an exposure to the opportunity for change and a recognition by the individual to view the opportunity as a potential 'way out' of crime is needed (McNeill et al., 2012).

Cognitive distortions can involve the minimising of the offence or blaming of the victim (Ward, Hudson, Johnston & Marshall, 1997). These can serve to legitimise sexual behaviour and are believed to be a barrier to this self-evaluation that in turn can impede decisive momentum (Göbbels et al., 2012). In these cases, where self-evaluation is hindered, social support (also defined in the ITDSO as social capital) can promote and encourage positive change. Social capital is construed within the theory as being related to a network of relationships, which facilitate social action and have significant implications for successful identity change. Sex offender treatment programmes (SOTP) can be successful in guiding those who have committed sexual offences to this first phase by helping them to recognise their cognitive distortions (Bourget & Bradford, 2008). However, to maximise the decisive momentum and continue this identity change, it is argued that social

environments that support these new self-views are also needed (Göbbels, Ward & Willis, 2012). Willis, Levenson and Ward (2010) agree, stating that positive community attitudes towards those previously convicted of sexual offences are essential due to their ability to encourage the implementation of what it learnt on treatment programmes into life in the community. CoSA provide such environments for ex-offenders, who have made the cognitive shifts towards desistance but require extra support to increase their social capital and continue towards desistance (Fox, 2015a).

In addition, SOTP may not be as effective as previously thought for all ex-offenders. For example, Mews, Di Bella and Purver (2017) reported how those who completed Core SOTP in prison reoffended at higher rates than a matched comparison group. There are many caveats, however, underlying these findings. In particular, the study used individuals released from prison between 5-15 years ago, possibly deeming the results not as relevant as the publication date would suggest. Kim, Benekos and Merlo (2015), however also reported how community treatment was more effective in reducing recidivism than treatment carried out in prisons. This therefore indicates that there could be individuals leaving prison who may need extra support and guidance, through initiatives like CoSA, to help continue any identify change or cognitive shifts made.

Returning to the ITDSO, alongside the self-evaluation process exists the 'crystallisation of discontent' (Paternoster & Bushway, 2009) whereby dissatisfactions and feelings of guilt all become attributed to the identity as a 'sex offender'. Indeed LeBel, Burnett, Maruna and Bushway (2008) reported how an individual's regret for their past crimes appeared to contribute positively to the desistance process and result in decline in the probability of reconviction. This discontent with the current identity, along with the desire to achieve a more positive identity, results in the outcome of the first phase of the ITDSO; an openness and readiness to change.

Phase 2: Rehabilitation

The second phase of the ITDSO involves a successful reconstruction of the self and draws on the desistance theories outlined above. Of particular relevance in the rehabilitation phase is the role of cognitive transformation towards a pro-social identity as emphasised by Maruna (2001). As stated above, the outcome of the rehabilitation phase is a recreation of the self, which is achieved through creating new, pro-social self-narratives (Ward & Laws, 2010). CoSA can provide additional support during this phase by helping to reinforce plausible pro-social narratives of desistance and encourage social capital to be reached through more socially acceptable means. In fact, King (2013a) argues that it is relationships like those identified between the volunteers and the Core Member of a CoSA, which provide support whilst at the same time nurturing pro-social narratives, that influence the

desistance process the most. Indeed Fox (2015a) reported from her research on CoSA that volunteers, through their inclusion of the Core Member, could encourage a more enduring pro-social identity and help maintain the optimism for this positive sense of self.

The final element to play a part in the rehabilitation phase of desistance is hope. In previous research hope is reported to be experienced frequently by early desisters, with a positive and optimistic mind set viewed as a necessary condition for successful desistance (LeBel et al., 2008; McAlinden, 2011; Visher & O'Connell, 2012). Hope is defined by Porporino (2007, p.74) as an 'overriding and optimistic sense of agency' regarding the present and the future. Within the literature, the narratives of those who have been able to desist from sexual offending specifically, have been reported as optimistic and containing a sense of hope for the future (Farmer, McAlinden, & Maruna, 2015). Not only can a CoSA provide support for someone convicted of a sexual offence, but it can also encourage hope and motivation to change, keeping it alive when their belief in themselves wavers (Maguire & Raynor, 2006; McNeill, 2009). This is vital due to the belief in their ability to achieve desistance often wavering during the third phase of the ITDSO; re-entry.

Phase 3: Re-entry

As Göbbels, Ward and Willis (2012) highlight, the third phase of re-entry can be construed as both an event and a process. Re-entry as an event is the day the offender is released from prison and re-enters the community. As a process however, re-entry can begin well before release and continue after they have re-joined society. As Elliott and Zajac (2015) assert, the lack of support offenders receive during this transitional period from prison to community can make the process difficult and uncertain. One limitation of the community CoSA that are most commonly used currently in the UK, is that they are unable to offer support during this difficult and uncertain phase. This is due to the CoSA not starting until the offender has been back in the community, sometimes for a period of up to twelve weeks. The difficulties of the transitional phase between prison and community is covered in the following section of this chapter.

According to the ITDSO, successful re-entry involves not only protecting the community from further offences but also the successful reintegration of the offender. Alongside this, Göbbels, Ward and Willis (2012) argue that the most essential part of this phase is the maintenance of the commitment to change. Maguire and Raynor (2006) had previously acknowledged this, stating that sustaining the motivation to change is vital in the desistance process. This maintained commitment to change requires the practical identity as non-offender, constructed in the previous phase, to be not only adopted by the individual but also acknowledged and accepted by others. The recognition and acceptance of this new non-offender identity, by people in their social environment, serves to

reinforce the commitment to change and weakens further the deviant, offender identity. Indeed, King (2013b) has reported from his research the importance of positive reactions from others during the early stages of desistance. For those who have been convicted of sexual offences however, this is not always easy to accomplish due to society's reaction to this type of offender (Lussier & Gress, 2014). Indeed, desistance theories view those who commit sexual offences as individuals who deserve the opportunity to live normal lives in society following punishment. Their reality once released from prison, however, is often very different (Willis et al., 2010). Göbbels, Ward and Willis (2012) expand on this further stating that, although increased social capital is a facilitator for re-entry, negative social capital, such as the loss of relationships, inability to gain employment or housing and stigmatisation (Lussier & Gress, 2014; Tewksbury, 2012), can be a barrier to re-entry. They acknowledge that even ex-offenders who have undergone significant identity changes do not always re-enter communities that reinforce these new non-offender identities. As has been previously discussed, these barriers to desistance, in particular the stigmatisation and scepticism by others, can feed a self-fulfilling prophecy leading the ex-offender to 'internalise this view of themselves and fulfil the prediction by returning to criminal behaviour' (Maruna et al., 2004, p.31).

One suggestion Göbbels, Ward and Willis (2012) make to prevent this from happening and help increase positive social capital instead is artificial mentoring. This, they argue, is someone who can provide social modelling to the individual along with sustained and empathetic support to encourage the motivation to maintain desistance. The volunteers who make up a CoSA may be able to act as this type of mentor. They can offer support to the Core Member, helping them maintain their non-offender identity but also encouraging them to build social networks, outside of the CoSA, which verify the ex-offender's change in identity and behaviour. Elliott and Zajac (2015) agree with this, stating that the promotion of pro-social identity and peer engagement provided by the volunteers in CoSA encourage desistance within the Core Members. As highlighted previously however, community CoSA cannot provide this support throughout the entire re-entry phase. A prison-based model of CoSA, whereby volunteers meet with the Core Member and form relationships before being released from prison, would be able to assist desistance throughout the entire sequential process within this model.

Phase 4: Normalcy/reintegration

The final phase of the ITDSO is normalcy and can be seen as an extension of the previous phase. According to the model, normalcy occurs once ex-offenders define themselves as a non-offending member of society who is fully reintegrated within the community. During this phase, successful desistance from crime is reached through an increase in social capital. This is particularly important

when considered in relation to the social relations of individuals due to the influence they can have on behaviour and therefore the desistance process (Weaver & McNeill, 2015). From their research involving those who had managed to successfully desist from crime, Weaver and McNeill (2015) reported that a sense of belonging and solidarity derived from strong social relationships could support desistance from crime. To maintain these new social bonds a pro-social identity and behaviour was required, thus encouraging and reinforcing desistance. Farmer, Beech and Ward (2011) had previously outlined similar findings from their research involving those convicted of sexual offences. Those who were successfully desisting reported experiencing a sense of unity, either from family, friends or the church. In contrast, those who were potentially still active offenders conveyed a sense of alienation from society.

For those individuals who are motivated to desist from sexual offending but do not have these types of support networks, CoSA may be useful. It is possible that the bonds formed between the Core Member and the volunteers may encourage desistance in this way instead. This is by providing social relations during a difficult and lonely period. Alongside supporting the Core Member, the volunteers encourage them to increase their social capital outside the CoSA until they no longer require support to maintain the non-offender identity. This is a concept that requires more consideration however, and will therefore be returned to throughout this thesis. The ITDSO as a model of the desistance process is not intended by the authors to be final and definitive (Göbbels et al., 2012). Instead, they encourage further research to flesh out the theory on the complex phenomenon of desistance in those who have previously committed sexual offences.

Summary

A review of the relevant literature highlights how both structural changes and cognitive transformation appear important for an individual to successfully desist from crime (McAlinden, et al., 2017; Willis & Ward, 2011). Those who offend sexually are routinely absent within the desistance literature meaning the theories applicability to these crimes are questioned. It may be, therefore that a model of desistance specific to those who desist from sexual crime is more useful. One such model is the ITDSO, developed by Göbbels, Ward and Willis (2012).

Desistance-orientated interventions, such as CoSA, aim to support and assist individuals through the desistance process encouraging them to reintegrate back in to communities (McNeill, 2012). The community model of CoSA however does not start until the Core Member has been released from prison, sometimes for a period of several weeks (Höing et al., 2015). This means they are unable to provide assistance during, according to the ITDSO, one of the key phases of desistance; re-entry. It is possible however, that a prison-based model of CoSA, as introduced in the

following section, could provide assisted desistance throughout the four phases of the process. This concept will be returned to and explored throughout the rest of this thesis.

The transitional phase from prison to community

Alongside theoretical considerations, the government in the UK is now also recognising the importance of support during the transitional phase from prison to community with regard to desistance from crime. A review by the Ministry of Justice in England and Wales has stated that a supportive relationship with at least one person from the community can encourage individuals to prepare for release and subsequent resettlement (Farmer, 2017). In relation to this, previous research by the Ministry of Justice had reported how individuals who received visits from a family member whilst in prison were 39% less likely to re-offend than those who do not (May, Sharma & Stewart, 2008). Those who are imprisoned for sexual offences are less likely to receive visits from family members and significant others due to the nature of their offence (Farmer, 2017). This leaves these individuals socially isolated during the lead up to their release and cut off from the community they will be expected to resettle in.

In addition to the lead up to release, the first few weeks in the community can be a particularly sensitive period in terms of achieving this desistance (Aresti et al., 2010; Fox, 2015a) and can also be a heightened period of risk to the individual themselves. For example, in 2006 Pratt, Piper, Appleby, Webb and Shaw reported males within one year of release from prison were eight times more likely to commit suicide than would be expected by men in the general population. This risk of suicide was increased particularly during the first 28 days of release from prison, with a fifth (21%) taking place during this period. Although the causes of these suicides cannot be known for sure, the authors suggest that, alongside issues such as drug use and mental illness, barriers to re-integration involving a lack of accommodation and isolation from family and friends, could be contributing factors. LeBel, Burnett, Maruna and Bushway (2008) reported from their research into desistance from crime, how problems experienced in relation to re-entry into the community, were a significant predictor of both reconviction and reimprisonment. This again highlights the importance of the transitional period from prison to community when considering how individuals can be best assisted in reaching desistance.

In addition, Fox (2015a) acknowledges how individuals can quickly become overwhelmed on release from prison, particularly if they have served a long sentence. In addition, Van den Berg, Beijersbergen, Nieuwbeerta and Dirkzwager (2017) reported from their sample of Dutch offenders that there was no difference between those who were convicted of sexual offences and those convicted of all other offences, in terms of their level of loneliness whilst in prison. Upon release, therefore, the differential negative treatment those convicted of sexual offences face once in the

community, could lead to further feelings of being overwhelmed. Indeed, the literature reports that once in the community feelings of isolation and loneliness are prevalent, particularly amongst those convicted of sexual offences (Tewksbury & Mustaine, 2009).

This all highlights the benefit of 'through the gate' support, something which a prison-based CoSA model can offer.

CoSA in Minnesota, US

A project that has successfully implemented a continuum of support from prison to the community, for individuals convicted of sexual offences is MnCoSA in the US. In 2008 a CoSA project was implemented in Minnesota, US (MnCoSA), involving individuals convicted of sexual offences who were due to be released from prison. As Duwe (2012) explains, MnCoSA developed from the promising results of Wilson, Picheca and Prinzo's (2005) initial evaluation study, with the design and operation being very similar to that of the Canadian CoSA. One fundamental difference, however, is that unlike in Canada whereby CoSA begins after the offender has been released from prison, MnCoSA is systematically designed to begin at least four weeks prior to the offender's release (Duwe, 2012). Offered through the Minnesota Department of Corrections, MnCoSA focuses upon the successful transition from prison to community for individuals convicted for sexual offences (MnCoSA, 2017). The volunteers meet with the Core Member approximately three times whilst in prison before the sessions move with the Core Member as they re-enter the community (MnCoSA, 2017).

Duwe (2012) highlights the importance of a continuum of social support from prison to community and believes this is a main factor in why MnCoSA has demonstrated some success in reintegrating those who commit sexual offences back in to the community (see earlier in the chapter for more detail on his RCT of MnCoSA). Indeed, Maguire and Raynor (2006) believe that for offenders to re-settle effectively on release, throughcare is needed involving the establishment of a close relationship with the offender while they are still in prison, which is continued on release. It is believed that this relationship should be well-established, involve trust and a willingness to travel together on the path towards desistance (McNeill & Weaver, 2010).

When considering offenders who are still residing in prison, Rocque, Biere and MacKenzie (2011) have highlighted how increasing the attachment and improving social bonds to pro-social individuals results in a positive outcome. For the purpose of their study, they defined attachment and social bonds as a feeling of closeness to significant others and their impact on the intention to conform. For individuals who have committed sexual offences, however, achieving and developing an attachment or social bond with members of the community is difficult, particularly when family

and friends may have cut ties due to the nature of their crime, or restraining orders are in place preventing contact (Lussier & Gress, 2014).

It is also important to consider that the volunteers involved in a prison-based model of CoSA will have met the old (criminal) self as well as the new desisting self. It is argued that, to desist from crime successfully, offenders need to develop a new pro-social identity separate to their past self. It is therefore possible that some potential Core Members will want to leave their past behind and not want to be involved with anyone who knew them in that part of their life. As Serin and Lloyd (2009) acknowledge however, desistance from crime takes time, with the offender gradually committing themselves to pro-social lifestyles. They go on to explain that because of this therefore, there will be a transitional period whereby the offender and the ex-offender overlap. The MnCoSA, unlike the community model of CoSA, is, therefore, able to provide social support to the Core Member through this period of change. In addition, through this model of CoSA, social support is provided during the often difficult period of release from prison outlined previously, thus encouraging and motivating the Core Members to continue on their journey to desistance.

The first prison-based model of CoSA in the UK

In 2014, the first ever UK prison-based model of CoSA was established at HMP Whatton with a focus on elderly (55+) and Intellectually Disabled (ID), high to very-high risk individuals convicted of sexual offences. HMP Whatton is a category-C treatment prison for males convicted of sexual offences and participating in (or waiting to participate) in one of the Sex Offender Treatment Programmes operating there. The CoSA initiative was set up by the Safer Living Foundation (SLF); a charitable organisation and joint venture between HMP Whatton, Nottingham Trent University, Nottinghamshire Probation Trust and Nottinghamshire Police. The SLF is a member of Circles UK enabling access to national training, regular coordinator forums and the annual national conference.

There was a concern felt by members of the SLF that individuals, particularly those who were elderly (55+) or who has intellectual disabilities (ID), were leaving the prison without any family or community support. It was evident that those who were elderly or had ID were particularly vulnerable and experienced the transition from prison to community to be the most difficult and socially isolating (this will be discussed more later on in the chapter). Due to the knowledge that social isolation can be a risk factor for further sexual offending (Marshall, 2010) it was agreed that further support was needed for these individuals, both prior to release whilst still in prison, and on release into the community. This support was decided to be given through a prison-model of Circles of Support and Accountability.

As with community CoSA, participation in a prison-model CoSA was voluntary and choosing not to take part did not have a detrimental effect on the individuals in any way. The CoSA in the UK prison-based model began around 3 months prior to the Core Member's release from prison with the volunteers visiting the prison for weekly CoSA sessions. These sessions continued with the Core Member through the transitional period from prison to community and for up to 18 months once in the community.

Criteria to become a Core Member on a prison-model CoSA

All of the Core Members of the prison-model CoSA were individuals convicted of a sexual offence, were categorised as being a high to very-high risk of reoffending, either elderly (55+) or diagnosed as having ID and had a severe lack of social support outside of prison. These criteria will now be considered in more detail, including why ID and elderly offenders, convicted of sexual offences, are given priority for the Core Member positions of the prison-model CoSA.

The first criteria are that the individual must have committed a sexual offence and currently be residing in HMP Whatton where the prison-model CoSA were due to start. The second criterion is that the individuals must be facing release from prison with little to no pro-social support in the community. This is operationalized through self-report from the individual, along with supporting evidence from their offender manager and offender supervisor. The third criteria are that these individuals must either be elderly or be defined as having ID to ensure that resources were targeted towards those who are most likely to experience reintegration back in to the community as being difficult. Using the IQ tests already carried out by the prison to determine treatment suitability, individuals are considered as a potential Core Member if they have an IQ of >80 or are over the age of 55 years. This is discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

Alongside being either elderly or having intellectual disabilities it was essential that the resources of the prison-model of CoSA are allocated to those who are most at risk of recidivism. The most widely used actuarial risk assessment tool in the English and Wales prison and probation services is the Risk Matrix 2000 (Thornton et al., 2003). This risk assessment tool measures static risk of reoffending and is used to help inform decisions about appropriate treatment pathways and management of offenders in the community. As Barnett, Wakeling and Howard (2010) state, the use of such assessment tools enables effective allocation of resources to those at a higher risk of reoffending and the same applies for the prison-model of CoSA. The tool was developed for use in the UK with males aged 18 and above who have been convicted of a sexual offence and has three scales; the RM2000/s, the RM2000/v and the RM2000/c. At the time, the research in this thesis was carried out, to be considered as a potential Core Member on a prison-model CoSA the individual

needed to fall within the medium to very-high risk categories on the RM2000/s scale. Since the project has expanded, however, and popularity has increased, only high and very-high risk individuals are accepted.

Intellectual disabilities in those who commit sexual crime

The term 'intellectual disabilities' (ID) is used within this research as it has international recognition with reference to the population it describes (Lindsay & Taylor, 2010) and is used throughout the prison service in the UK. ID is synonymous with the term 'learning disability' which is a term also used within the UK. It is not however synonymous with the term 'mental incapacity'. Mental incapacity may arise due to reasons other than ID such as, mental health issues, dementia and brain damage in adulthood (BPS, 2001). To be assessed as having intellectual disabilities there are three core criteria; significant impairment of intellectual functioning (IQ = < 70, borderline = IQ of 70-80), significant associated impairment of adaptive or social functioning and age of onset below the age of 18 (BPS, 2000).

Individuals with intellectual disabilities are likely to experience a range of cognitive deficits, which can affect the way they process information and express themselves through language. For example, concentration on and comprehension of what is being said to individuals with ID is likely to be limited, with their ability to communicate messages to others in a clear and concise way reduced (Craig & Hutchinson, 2005). Alongside this, individuals with ID may acquiesce when not understanding questions asked, due to both their cognitive impairment and also their desire to comply socially with the perceived demands of an authority figure (Arcsott, Dagnan & Kroese, 1998; Shaw & Budd, 1982). There are, therefore, many factors to consider when carrying out research with individuals with intellectual disabilities. For more information on how this research was carried out, please see Chapter 3 on the methods used and Chapter 8 for a reflection on how successful these methods were.

Those with intellectual disabilities who commit sexual offences have received a specific focus within the literature, with intellectual disability often being described as overrepresented amongst this group of offenders (Hayes, Shackell, Mottram & Lancaster, 2007; Lambrick & Glaser, 2004). This has been debated extensively however and the use of varying definitions and methodological differences between studies has resulted in an uncertainty surrounding the actual prevalence rates (Craig & Hutchinson, 2005; Lindsay, 2002; Riding, 2005). In terms of recidivism rates Lindsay et al., (2002) reported, from their review of community treatment services, for offenders convicted of sexual offences with ID (n=62), that 4% reoffended within the first year and 21% reoffended within 4. Klimecki, Jenkinson and Wilson (1994) had previously reported, from a

sample of ID offenders within a prison setting, a 34% recidivism rate after 2 years. From these two studies Craig and Hutchinson (2005) calculated that the re-conviction rate for ID offenders convicted of sexual offences was 6.8 times, at two years follow up, and 3.5 times, at 4 years, that of non-ID offenders convicted of similar sexual offences. It must be acknowledged however, that the research on this group of individuals is extremely flawed, with methodological differences between the studies being so great that conclusions regarding the true prevalence of sexual offences by men with ID are difficult to state (Craig & Hutchinson, 2005; Lindsay, 2002).

Lack of sexual knowledge, also referred to as 'counterfeit deviance', is a long-standing theory put forward for why those with ID sexually offend (Hindsburger, Griffiths & Quinsey, 1991). Further evidence however, indicates that men with intellectual disabilities who offend sexually are no different to non-ID offenders, who commit similar crimes, in terms of their level of sexual knowledge (Lockhart, Guerin & Coyle, 2010; Michie, Lindsay, Marton & Grieve, 2006). In fact, Rice, Harris, Lang and Chaplin (2008) affirmed, through the use of phallometric testing, that similar to non-ID men, individuals with ID commit sexual offences largely due to deviant sexual interests.

Low-esteem has been another area of discussion surrounding the reasons why men with ID commit sexual offences. To explore the predictors of sexual re-offence, Lindsay, Elliot and Astell (2004) carried out a study with male individuals convicted of sexual offences who were defined as having mild to moderate ID. They interviewed two highly experienced members of staff, asking them to rate 52 individuals with ID on a number of variables. The results indicated that anti-social attitudes and low self-esteem were among the variables significantly correlated to the evidence of sexual reoffending. Although the use of clinical judgement can be questioned as a reliable method, this low self-esteem is reported as evident within ID populations (i.e. Dagnan & Waring, 2004). This is particularly worrying for ID offenders convicted of sexual offences, who are about to be released from prison, as their self-esteem can be raised during incarceration due to feeling supported by staff and other prisoners (Johnson, 2012). This could be the case particularly at HMP Whatton due to the ID specific treatment they established there and ID trained members of staff. Going from a supportive prison environment such as this, to release into the community can be a daunting prospect for many offenders. When the other problems ID individuals face, such as a lack of pro-social influences or unsuccessful community integration, are also considered (see below for more detail on this), the high reoffence rates begin to make a little more sense.

In terms of preventing reoffending it is assumed that the individual will have some level of supportive relationships around them on release from prison, for those with ID however, this is not necessarily the case (Cummins & Lau, 2003; Lindsay, 2005). Individuals with ID are reported to have a lack of social networks and resultant lack of feelings of connectedness; both of which are

identified as being required for successful community integration (Cummins & Lau, 2003; Knox & Hickson, 2001). When this is combined with the stigma those who commit sexual offences face within the community (as described earlier in the chapter), the ability for those with ID to successfully integrate themselves within the community becomes a serious concern. Lindsay (2005) and Steptoe, Lindsay, Forrest and Power (2006) have therefore argued, that alongside the cognitive re-structuring and techniques for self-control taught on the cognitive behavioural programmes (such as SOTP and the Adapted SOTP), it is important to promote greater commitment and engagement within society. This, in turn, could encourage those with ID who have committed sexual offences to engage in occupational and leisure activities and form a sense of friendship with pro-social community members. One way this may be achieved is through the prison-based model of CoSA described above and therefore explains why those with ID, who have been previously convicted of sexual offences are prioritised for the Core Member places.

Elderly offenders who have committed sexual crime

Alongside those with ID, elderly offenders, who had previously been convicted of sexual offences, are also considered as a priority for the Core Member places on the prison-model of CoSA. With the population of people aged 65 and over increasing within England and Wales, and predicted to increase even further, it is unsurprising that there is a rapidly increasing ageing prison population (Bows & Westmarland, 2016; Hewson, 2017). With regard to the elderly individuals, 55 years old is used as the starting point to which individuals can be considered for a Core Member place. There is no universal definition of 'elderly', however within criminal justice literature 'older' is defined as starting anywhere between 45 and 65 years old (Bows & Westmarland, 2016). Until recently, retirement age in the UK was 65 years old (Gov.uk, 2017). However, as Howse (2003) acknowledged in his report for the Prison Reform Trust, individuals residing in a prison setting tend to have a biological age of 10 years older than individuals in the community, due to the chronic health problems. Indeed, the mental and physical health problems offenders in prison experience, as well as the effects of their previous lifestyle choices, have been documented by others as the cause of accelerating the ageing process (Bows & Westmarland, 2016; Omolade, 2014). This provides an argument for a lower threshold for an 'elderly' category, thus leading the prison-based model of CoSA to determine the age at which individuals could be considered for a Core Member place to be 55 years old.

Elderly prisoners, as Crawley and Sparks (2006) highlight, represent a unique population in terms of both their age-related health care needs and problems of maintaining relationships with family and friends. Many elderly offenders find the lead up to release a particularly anxious time,

often not knowing where they are to resettle or how they will be supported on release (Crawley & Sparks, 2006). Hayes, Burns, Turnbull and Shaw (2013) identified, from interviews with 244 prisoners in the North-West region of the UK, that individuals who were aged 60 and over were more vulnerable to social isolation in prison. They reported that 40% of the elderly prisoners received no social visits whilst in prison with a third feeling like they had nowhere to go on release. This is often due to their social networks in the community being non-existent with many having no marital or family ties (Crawley & Sparks, 2006). With regard to health issues Fazel, Hope, O'Donnell, Piper and Jacoby (2001) reported, from a sample of 203 prisoners in England and Wales aged 60 and over, that 83% considered themselves to have a long-standing illness or disability. Both mental and physical issues were a concern for this population of offenders with the most common illnesses recorded being psychiatric, cardiovascular, musculoskeletal and respiratory. Clinks (2013) reported a similar finding, stating that over 80% of male prisoners aged 60 and over suffered from a chronic illness or disability. In the media, some have gone as far to suggest an upper age limit for criminal responsibilities with British prisons being likened to dysfunctional nursing homes (Katzen, 2015).

In regard to those who commit sexual offences specifically, the decrease in societal tolerance, along with a greater readiness for the police and prosecutors to pursue and secure convictions for non-recent sexual offences, has seen a growth in the amount of elderly individuals in prison for a previous sexual offence (Crawley & Sparks, 2005; Hart, 2008). For example, in 2006 Fazel, Sjöstedt, Långström and Grann reported that around half of all male prisoners in England and Wales over the age of 60 were convicted for a sexual offence. Similarly, Hewson (2017) reported, in a recent report for the Prison Reform Trust, how 45% of the male prison population aged 50 and over have been convicted of a sexual offence.

The fear of isolation on release can be even greater for this subsection of elderly prisoners, with many nursing homes and elderly care facilities reluctant to accept them (Hart, 2008). This is due to the fear that both other residents and those visiting them, such as grandchildren, could become victims (Bows & Westmarland, 2016; Hard, 2008). Another key concern for those convicted of sexual offences is the fear of the 'label' paedophile and how this may result in them being unable to reintegrate back in to the community on release (Crawley & Sparks, 2006). As older offenders convicted of sexual offences often foster friendships with other older offenders, who have committed similar crimes, whilst in prison (Mann, 2012), the transition into an unwelcome community can be even more difficult. Alongside this, as has been highlighted, isolation, fear, housing issues and health concerns can leave these elderly individuals in an extremely vulnerable position on release from prison. In terms of the probability of reoffending it is often stated within the literature that as age increases, sexual recidivism decreases (Doren, 2006). However, as Bows

& Westmarland (2016) caution, this does not automatically mean all elderly men convicted of sexual offences are low risk. For all of these reasons, elderly offenders (55+) convicted of a sexual offence are also prioritised for Core Member places on the prison- model of CoSA.

The thesis in context of the literature

The aim of this chapter has been fourfold. The first section introduced the concept of CoSA and described how they work in practice. The debate surrounding volunteers being additional support or extended risk management was also outlined. The second section of this review discussed the research into the effectiveness of CoSA, derived from projects internationally, including the limitations and gaps in knowledge. The third section considered the applicability of the traditional desistance theories to those who have committed sexual crimes and in turn their relevance to CoSA. From this, a desistance model specific to this group of individuals was discussed; the ITDSO. The final section highlighted the potential for a prison-based model of CoSA to provide support through the transitional period of release, particularly for specific groups of individuals.

Wilson, Bates and Völlm (2010) have previously argued, that to inform best practice, the factors involved in the success of CoSA need to be identified. This is of particular importance when considering the new prison-model of CoSA, due to there currently being very limited empirical research published on this type of model and none at all from the UK. In addition, rehabilitative initiatives within prisons have not always been evaluated effectively (Mann, personal communication, 16/04/2014). This highlights the importance of evaluating new initiatives thoroughly and from the very beginning, in order to learn more about effective rehabilitation. Indeed, one benefit of the prison-model CoSA project is that the research element was implemented from the start, allowing as much knowledge as possible to be gained from this new initiative. The research in this thesis also enables an exploration of the successes and challenges of this new model, which in turn could impact public policy and safety.

Within the literature there is a specific demand for qualitative studies involving the Core Members and volunteers taking part in CoSA (Bates et al., 2010; McWhinnie, 2015; Wilson & Wilson, 2014). As Clarke, Brown and Völlm (2015) have stated, whilst good quality evaluations of recidivism are important, they do not capture the full extent of the impact participating in a CoSA can have. The research in this thesis therefore, provides a detailed, in-depth exploration of the experiences of the Core Members as they progress through their prison-model CoSA. The research aims to explore how being involved in a prison-based CoSA can impact on the transitional period from prison to community. It also aims to gain an insight into the construing and sense-making of the Core Members on their prison-based CoSA journey, particularly with reference to self and

others (see chapters 4, 5 & 6). In addition, the volunteers' perspective of being involved in this new initiative will be explored in detail (see chapter 7).

As has been highlighted throughout this chapter there appears to be a gap in the social support offered by the community of CoSA during the transitional period of release from prison in to the community. The research in this thesis, therefore, considers the potential of the prison-model CoSA to assist individuals during this time. McNeill and Weaver (2010) have called for further research on assisted desistance to determine what practices best support desistance and for whom. The research within this thesis intends to go some way towards this by discussing the extent to which the prison-model of CoSA maps on to the ITDSO model, and therefore provides a desistance oriented intervention for those who have been convicted of sexual offences.

In summary, this thesis aims to develop a knowledge base pertaining to the new UK prison-based model of CoSA. This includes developing an understanding of the experiences of those involved, thus contributing to the literature on the transition from prison to community for those convicted of sexual offences.

Chapter 3: Methodological Review

This chapter concerns the research methodology that was used throughout the thesis. The chapter begins by offering an outline of the empirical studies and a rationale for the methodological approach taken. The underlying theory is considered in detail with the philosophical stance of the thesis made explicit. The chapter continues by detailing the methods of data collection following which, the relevant issues of reliability and validity are discussed.

The chapter concludes by addressing the research procedures adopted including the recruitment of participants, issues of participant access and ethical considerations. The sampling strategies are also outlined along with the potential issues and how they could be overcome.

The empirical studies

This PhD thesis comprises four empirical studies with each study linked to the research aims and questions. The main purpose of this thesis is to shed a more phenomenological light on a new UK prison-based model of CoSA. As is stated within the literature in chapter 2, CoSA within the UK is not generally used as a sole tool of risk management, meaning it was not sensible to use purely statistics to measure its results (Armstrong & Wills, 2014a). Maruna (2001) has also argued that quantitative data collection methods are not adequate to assess the complex nature of desistance. This is due to desistance being viewed within the literature as a process rather than a one-off event (Willis et al., 2010). As Chen (2006) defined; 'mixed method research is a systematic integration of quantitative and qualitative methods in a single study' for purposes of obtaining a fuller picture and deeper understanding of a phenomenon. To achieve the research aims therefore, whilst considering the limitations of a purely quantitative approach, a mixed method approach was decided upon for the data collected within the first three empirical studies of this thesis.

The first three empirical studies are concerned with the Core Members' journey throughout their prison-based CoSA. Collecting data from the Core Members over three time-points enabled longitudinal qualitative research to be conducted. Research of this nature can be used to explore how the lived experience of participants may change or evolve over time, in relation to a specific phenomenon (Snelgrove, 2014). This enabled therefore the Core Member's journey through a prison-model of CoSA to be explored, thus allowing following research aims to be achieved:

- To provide an in-depth understanding of the experiences of the Core Members (individuals convicted of a sexual crime) as they engage with the prison-based model of CoSA.

- To gain an insight into the construing and sense-making of the Core Members on their prison-based CoSA journey, particularly with reference to self and others.

The fourth study outlined in this thesis, involved data being collected with the volunteers of the prison-model CoSA. Conducting interviews with the volunteers enabled the third aim of the research to be achieved, which was:

- To understand the views and perspectives of the volunteers involved in the prison-based model of CoSA thus contributing to the knowledge base on this new initiative.

Study 1: Core Member pre prison-based CoSA study

For ex-offenders to re-settle effectively on release it is argued that ‘through care’ is needed involving the establishment of a close relationship between pro-social individuals and the offender while they are still in prison, which is continued on release (Maguire & Raynor, 2006). One way it is hoped this can be achieved is through the new prison-model of CoSA established by the Safer Living Foundation charity, in a treatment prison in the UK for those who have sexually offended (Saunders, Kitson-Boyce & Elliott, 2014). The prison-based model CoSA start approximately 3 months prior to the Core Members release from prison. This study (chapter 4) involved interviews and repertory grids being conducted with Core Members, who had accepted a place on a prison-model CoSA and were waiting to begin. These methods of data collection and the underlying epistemological stances will be discussed in more detail throughout this chapter. The purpose of this first study was to explore the research question of ‘how the Core Members viewed their release from prison and subsequent reintegration, prior to them starting the prison-model CoSA’. In addition, further consideration was given to how the participants construed themselves now, compared to the past, and where they would like to be in future.

Study 2: Core Member post-prison/pre-community CoSA study

This study (chapter 5) focused on the same Core Members as the previous study at a second time-point; after they had completed the prison sessions of the CoSA and just before they were released back in to the community. Interviews and repertory grids were again used to collect data during this time-point. This enabled the research question of ‘how their views of their future release, and following reintegration in to the community, had developed during their journey so far’ to be explored. In addition, the repertory grids enabled any changes in the participant’s construing and sense-making to be considered and the interviews allowed their experience of the prison sessions

in particular to be explored. Leading from this the research question of how the prison-model of CoSA relates to and impacts upon the desistance from crime started to be explored in more depth. The phases of the ITDSO developed by Göbbels, Ward and Willis (2012) were considered in more detail during study 2 to add a theoretical element to the discussion.

Study 3: Core Member prison-based CoSA community study

This study (chapter 6) again focused on the same Core Members as the previous two studies at a third time-point; once they were in the community but were still participating in the CoSA. Interviews and repertory grids were conducted for a third time to continue to achieve the research aims and questions highlighted in the previous two studies. These included exploring Core Members' experiences of being involved with a prison-model CoSA once they had been released from prison and were living in the community and the extent to which they had achieved reintegration. This study explored the impact the prison-model of CoSA had in encouraging the Core Members to progress through all the phases of the ITDSO, a model of desistance introduced in the previous two studies. In particular, the ability for the Core Members to be considered by themselves, and others, to be a fully integrated, pro-social member of the community. Finally, as in the previous two studies also, the way the Core Members construed themselves and those around them was explored, including how this had developed during their journey on a prison-model CoSA.

Study 4: Volunteer prison-based CoSA study

The final study focused on the volunteers who were involved in a prison-model CoSA. Whilst it is important to consider the benefits and risks for the individuals volunteering on a CoSA generally, this has been explored elsewhere (i.e. Höing et al., 2014; Höing et al., 2015) and has been discussed previously within chapter 2 of this thesis. The purpose of this study therefore was to consider the experience of the volunteers in relation to the prison-based model of CoSA specifically. This enabled depth and breadth to be added to the data collected in the previous three studies with the Core Members. Exploring the experience of the CoSA volunteers enabled the positives and challenges of volunteering on this new initiative to be considered. This included the extent to which they felt able to support the Core Members through the transitional period of prison to community.

Methodologies

A methodology refers to a perspective or theoretically informed approach to research, which stems from the underpinning epistemological stance (Ryan, 2006). Epistemology can be defined as what is acceptable knowledge within a discipline and how the social world is understood (Walliman, 2015). The epistemological assumption for qualitative research is interpretivism,

involving a recognition that subjective meanings play a crucial role in social actions (Walliman, 2015). The philosophical assumption underlying this is that reality is a socially constructed phenomenon involving multiple perspectives and experiences (Yilmaz, 2013). The role of research within this is to understand and reveal the subjective meanings that individuals use to make sense of and interpret their world (Walliman, 2015). As Giorgi (1994) acknowledges, the interest is in the perceived reality, and distortions, of the research participants involved, explored through methods such as interviews or observation (Yilmaz, 2013). The data collection method used for the qualitative part of the research in this thesis was semi-structured interviews, which were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Research involving this type of analysis can provide an in-depth understanding of personal experiences of a given phenomenon (Burke-Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Further elaboration on the rationale of using IPA, along with the philosophical and epistemological assumptions underpinning this approach will be provided in the following section.

Unlike qualitative research, quantitative research is often underpinned by a more positivist epistemology, whereby reality is viewed as static (Bryman, 2004). From this approach, reality can be examined objectively, through a system of causes and effects, thus providing generalisable knowledge (Howitt & Cramer, 2005). As Yilmaz (2013) acknowledges however, in doing this, quantitative approaches to collecting data do not provide an insight in to the personal experiences of participants. Therefore, due to the aims of the research stated at the beginning of the chapter, quantitative methods alone were not deemed appropriate for collecting the data outlined in this thesis. A third research paradigm, however, often referred to as mixed method research (Burke-Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Burke-Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner, 2007) was considered as a useful means of collecting relevant data for this research. From this perspective, the importance of both the qualitative and quantitative philosophical underpinnings are recognised and a middle ground between the two is sought (Burke-Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Research in this form combines elements of both quantitative and qualitative methods in a single study and is, therefore, thought to draw from the strengths, whilst minimising the weaknesses, of both (Burke-Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Expanding upon this, Collins, Onwuegbuzie and Sutton (2006) identify a rationale for conducting mixed method research as facilitating significant enhancement to the thickness and richness of the data. This, they believe, increases the usefulness of the findings, thus providing a justification for the use of the mixed method technique of repertory grids in this thesis. Personal construct theory, with the epistemological assumption of constructive alternativism, underpins this mixed method approach to collecting data and will therefore be discussed also.

Combining methodology

To achieve the research aims discussed at the beginning of the chapter a qualitative and mixed method approach to data collection was taken involving both interviews and repertory grids. The data collected with the Core Members involved the participants taking part in the research at three different time-points. The research design therefore, can therefore also be considered longitudinal in nature (McCoy, 2017). For studies 1-3 in this thesis (chapters 4-6), interview and repertory grid data were collected with each participant. The triangulation of two methods such as this, can be used to increase the understanding of a given phenomenon, over and above that which one method alone could provide (Howitt, 2010). With regard to research in a prison setting specifically, Liebling (1999, p.164) has stated how a mixed methodology can provide both 'experience and emotion' along with 'structure and measurement', which when combined together feels like a credible 'understanding' of the participant. To do this effectively, Burke-Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) argue, that the methods should be chosen and mixed in a way to best answer the research questions. In the case of the research in this thesis, both phenomenological interviews and repertory grids were used to collect data.

The blending of IPA with the repertory grid technique is growing in popularity as a method of rigorous exploration of participants' meaning making (Blagden et al., 2014; Turpin, Dallas, Owen & Thomas, 2009; Yorke & Dallas, 2015). Indeed, the methodology used in PCT attempts to merge the richness of idiographic data with statistical rigour (Horley, 2008), thus making it an ideal partner to IPA. A limitation of qualitative research is that the researcher's personal biases may unintentionally influence the results of the research (Burke-Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Both the methodology of phenomenological interviews and repertory grids, however, allows the participants to reveal their own ways of sense making (Blagden et al., 2014). This in turn decreases the likelihood of research bias in the research overall. In addition, the researcher can increase their understanding of what was known about the phenomenon in question (Howitt, 2010); in this case the experience of being involved in a prison-model CoSA.

Alternative methodologies

The limitations surrounding the existing quantitative research on CoSA, along with the calls for more qualitative approaches meant the decision to take a mixed-method approach to this research was relatively straightforward. When deciding on the methodological underpinning of the qualitative component, however, there were different positions that could have been adopted such as grounded theory and discourse analysis.

Grounded theory was developed to systemise qualitative research involving sequential guidelines to generate a theoretical account of a given phenomenon (Smith et al., 2011). Analytic interpretations are developed from the data collected to focus further data collection and involves sampling on larger scales than IPA studies (Howitt & Cramer, 2005). Grounded theory may therefore be appropriate for the analysis of community CoSA projects generally. The prison-model of CoSA, however was the only project of this type in the UK, at the point of data collection, meaning only a small number of participants were available to be recruited. A detailed exploration of the experiences of this small number of participants was needed therefore instead. In addition, from a Grounded Theory approach the literature review is conducted after the data has been collected and analysed so as to limit influencing the theory development (Howitt & Cramer, 2005). The research in this thesis however, was guided by specific overarching research objectives and areas which the researcher wanted to explore. For example, the ability of the prison-model to impact on the desistance processes of the Core Members was a pre-determined area to consider based on the previous community CoSA literature. In any case, the assumption in Grounded Theory that researchers can suspend awareness of theories and concepts until the latter stages of research has been criticised in the literature (Bryman, 2004). For these reasons, IPA was considered a more preferable method of analysis for the research outlined in this thesis.

A further approach this thesis could have taken was discourse analysis. Discourse analysis is concerned with the role of language in the construction of reality (Willig, 2008). Discourse is viewed as a focus of enquiry itself whereby language is purposeful and creates meaning (Bryman, 2004). This approach is therefore only appropriate for research interested in language as a social action (Howitt & Cramer, 2005). To achieve two of the research aims in this thesis, an approach that was rooted in the lived experiences and perspectives of individuals was required. An approach was needed which understood that while language shapes rather than just represents lived experiences, it did not view such experiences as reducible to language. Proponents of IPA claim that talking to participants and analysing what they say is only part of what is happening and can enable researchers to learn about how they are making sense of their experience (Smith, 2011). This was therefore chosen as the most suitable methodology for the qualitative research outlined in this thesis.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

The growth of interpretative approaches within psychological research has stemmed from dissatisfaction with the methods and procedures of positivistic research, which are perceived to have theoretical limitations when it comes to advancing our knowledge of human phenomena (Sandberg, 2005). An interpretivist approach rejects the view that the world is an objective,

knowable reality separate to the human mind (Sandberg, 2005), instead viewing it as an experienced world whereby reality is a subjective construct (McCoy, 2017).

The aim of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is to gain an in-depth understanding of the way in which people make sense of their personal and social worlds (Aresti et al., 2010). This involves a detailed examination of the participants lived experiences (Smith, 2011). The philosophical underpinnings of IPA combines the two compatible epistemological and philosophical positions of phenomenology and hermeneutics. Rather than seeing human beings as passive perceivers of an objective reality, phenomenology is concerned with individuals' subjective experience and how they perceive, understand and interpret their world, (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). The philosophy of Phenomenology was first developed by Husserl (1927) who believed that to examine everyday experience effectively a reflexive move was needed, which prioritised experience. He was critical of the way psychology was beginning to identify itself as a natural science, instead stating that individuals' consciousness should be examined. This involves uncovering the meanings, essences and core constructs of an individual's experience (Husserl, 1927). From this approach reality is constructed by the individuals' perceptions of their experience; what appears to the participant is reality (Ashworth, 2003; Walliman, 2015). As Skrapec (2001) argued quantitative approaches do not allow this internal experience and perceived reality to be explored. Research from a phenomenological approach, however, enables the participant to reveal how they construct their world. This includes how they organise their thinking, which determines their perceptions, feelings and consequently behaviour (Skrapec, 2001). Due to the aims of the research in this thesis being to explore the participants experiences of their journey through a prison-model CoSA, methods with this phenomenological underpinning appeared to be a best fit.

Heidegger (1926/1996) developed Husserl's theory of phenomenology further in the form hermeneutics; the interpretation of meaning. Heidegger (1926/1996) believed that researchers should interpret the participants' cognitive and affective reaction to their experience. This enabled their true meanings and intentions to be translated (Houston & Mullan-Jensen, 2011; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Indeed, Gadamer (2004/1960), whose work is also influential in the field of hermeneutics, argued that a person always 'projects' when making an interpretation. He believed that examining this projection enables the researcher to understand the true meaning. Conducting IPA, therefore, involves not only a description the experience of the participants but also an interpretative account of the meanings behind what the participant is saying (Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006). As Aresti, Eatough & Brooks-Gordon (2010) explain, a double hermeneutic process is used whereby the participant is trying to make sense of their world and the researcher is trying to make sense of their interpretative process. Smith and Eatough (2007) refer to this as second

order sense making, previously described by Schutz (1962) in his notions of how we make sense of social reality. For Schutz (1962) phenomenology seeks to explain how people construct meaning in their lives with intersubjectivity being a key proponent. It is vital, therefore, that researchers continually revisit their interpretations to ensure they are not replacing the participants world with one created by themselves.

Within IPA therefore, the researcher begins the analysis process from a phenomenological perspective, empathically hearing the participants' story. They then move to a more central, interpretative position, using hermeneutics to make sense of the participants' experiences and concerns (Reid, Flowers & Larkin, 2005). This enables critical engagement whereby the researcher can ask questions and interpret meanings in a manner the participants may have been unable or unwilling to do themselves (Smith, 2004). This combination of both phenomenological and interpretative analysis is particularly important for the research in this thesis. Considering the data from this approach will enable a more detailed analysis of the participants' progression through the desistance process, which is often highly individualised, complex and perhaps at times contradictory.

Finally, a third theoretical orientation of IPA needs to be briefly mentioned; idiography. The influence of idiography involves an in-depth analysis of the particular, whereby each case is explored thoroughly and systematically before any general statements about the particular context are produced (Smith et al., 2009). For the research in this thesis, this will enable the participants' experience of the prison-model CoSA to be considered in depth before important themes are compared and contrasted with other participants' narratives and more general claims are stated (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). The process, in which this is achieved, is outlined in the following sections.

Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews involve a set of questions used by the researcher to guide the interview, rather than dictate it (Smith & Osborn, 2003). The aim of this type of interview is described within the literature as 'capturing the richness and complexity of participants' meaning making' (Aresti et al., 2010, p. 173). Therefore, due to the main aim of the research being to explore the experiences of the Core Members and volunteers involved in a prison-model CoSA, semi-structured interviews were chosen as the main method for the data collection.

Described by Smith, Flowers and Larkins (2009, p.57) as a 'conversation with a purpose', qualitative one to one interviews were carried out with participants in order to facilitate in-depth discussion and explore their personal experience. The face-to- face interaction, such as that

involved in a semi-structured interview, has been argued to provide the fullest condition to participate in the mind of another human being (Bryman, 2004). Alongside this, the flexibility of the data collection instrument enables areas that were deemed to be important by the researcher to be probed and the participants' interests to be followed. In line with Smith and Osborn's (2003) view, the participants were considered the experts on the experiences being discussed, thus deeming it essential that they were given maximum opportunity to share their story with as little input from the researcher as possible. Using this method of data collection over others did therefore mean that the researcher had reduced control over the direction of the interview, thus reducing the reliability of the data. However, as is explained in more detail later, reliability is arguably not an effective criterion to use with qualitative research and therefore is deemed as less relevant (Willig, 2008).

Arguably other methods could have been chosen and different methods were given careful consideration. Focus groups are used within qualitative research and have been used on occasion in IPA studies due to their ability to enable multiple voices to be heard in one sitting (i.e. family units as a focus group in Macleod, Crauford & Booth, 2002). However, as Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) state, it can be difficult to elicit in-depth, experiential narratives from each participant in a focus group. In addition, participants may feel uncomfortable discussing the interview topics in a group situation resulting in only dominant, more confident individuals being heard (Smithson, 2000). Therefore, to enable every participant to be allowed the opportunity for an in-depth discussion, whereby they could speak freely and reflectively, one to one interviews were used.

Structured interviews were also considered as a form of data collection, which would increase the reliability of the data due to a rigid set of questions being used and not deviated from in each interview. A disadvantage of this data collection tool, however, is that constraints are placed on both the researcher, in terms of questions they can ask, and the participant in terms of subjects they can discuss (Smith & Osborn, 2003). As the aim of the research was to explore the experiences of both the Core Members and volunteers involved in the prison-model CoSA, structured interviews would exclude any areas of discussion deemed important to the participant that had not been predicted beforehand by the researcher. Semi-structured interviews were therefore decided upon as the main method of data collection for the research.

Interview schedules

Developing interview schedules for each study (see appendix 7, 8 & 9) enabled a loose agenda to be set by the researcher including questions to be asked and probes to be used. The use of an interview schedule in this way enabled cross-case comparability between multiple participants

(Bryman, 2004) and allowed the researcher to be a more engaged, flexible and attentive listener (Smith et al., 2009). In addition, it enabled each question to be constructed beforehand in language appropriate to the intellectual ability of each participant. The order of the questions, as Smith and Osborn (2003) explain, was less important as long as they were relevant to the research question. It was important, however, that the questions were not used as a guide for the themes derived during the analysis stage (Brocki & Wearden, 2006); an issue that will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

Each interview schedule was developed in accordance with the guidelines set out in Smith & Osborn (2003), which asks the researcher to first think about the overall area to be discussed before breaking it down into separate issues. Following this, appropriate open-ended, neutral questions relating to each area were constructed, then re-drafted several times to ensure they were not loaded in anyway. For example, they were read by the researcher and the supervisors to ensure the questions were not leading a participant towards giving a certain answer. Finally, gentle probes were considered; which could be used, if required, to facilitate the discussion further in a particular direction of interest (e.g. 'how did that make you feel?'). Individuals with ID often have difficulty in describing their experiences coherently and concisely (Cederborg & Lamb, 2008). In these cases, more directive probes can be useful to enable the researcher to re-focus the participants and gain more information specific to what the participants may have previously mentioned (Cederborg & Lamb, 2008; Smith, 2004). Probes were therefore used in this way throughout some of the interviews along with re-wording the questions where needed.

Conducting IPA

Although there are no rigid rules for conducting IPA, Smith and Osborn (2003) offer a flexible set of guidelines, which were adopted for this research and will be briefly discussed.

The interviews were transcribed verbatim to preserve the participant's speech (e.g. where appropriate 'gonna' was used instead of 'going to'). Significant pauses and relevant nonverbal actions (e.g. pounding on the desk) were noted in the transcripts. Unless they were excessive, verbal ticks or speech fillers (such as 'um', 'like' or 'you know') were retained. Each transcript was checked back against the original audio recording for accuracy. As Landridge and Hagger-Johnson (2009) note this simple system of transcription is satisfactory when wishing to conduct an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of what is being said.

The aim of IPA is to try and understand the content and complexity of the meanings of the participants, rather than measure their frequency. The researcher must engage in an interpretative relationship with the transcript to capture and do justice to the meanings of the participants' mental

and social world (Smith & Osborn, 2003). The first step considered by Smith and Osborn (2003) when doing IPA is to familiarise yourself with the data by reading and re-reading the transcripts several times, as each reading may provide new insights. Transcribing the interviews enabled the researcher to make this first step of engagement with the data and enabled the analysis to begin right from the start. Notes were made on the sense of the person themselves, their use of language and any similarities or contradictions in what they were saying thus providing a preliminary analysis. Personal reflexivity was also commented upon here in order to record any way in which the researcher's experiences, characteristics and biases may have affected the rapport with the participant and therefore influenced the data in anyway (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

The second step was to begin to transform these initial notes in to emerging themes which aimed to capture the essential quality of what was identified in the text. Here the notes become themes of a slightly higher level of abstraction and invoked more psychological terminology. At this stage, it was important to find expressions which were high level enough to allow theoretical connections within and across cases but were still grounded in the particularity of the specific thing said. This is an example of the hermeneutic process described earlier. IPA can be viewed as a descriptive and simple method of analysis, however this second level of analysis combined with the theoretical underpinnings proves this not to be the case (Larkin et al., 2006). Instead the participants' concerns and experiences are not only described but also developed further to a more interpretative and conceptual level. The researcher begins to think about why the participants have made the claims they have (Larkin et al., 2006). The approach described here was repeated for each transcript with similar themes that emerged throughout the transcripts given the same theme title. Alongside this, it was important to recognise and acknowledge the ways in which the accounts of the participants were different.

The next step in the process was to list the themes in a more theoretical and analytical ordering as the researcher began to try to make sense of the connections emerging between themes. The themes were reduced, with specific themes being dropped if they did not fit well with the emerging structure or had a weak evidential base (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). As the clustering of themes began to emerge, the transcripts were checked to make sure the connections made worked with the actual words of the participant. The researcher used a double hermeneutic process to interpret what the participant was saying but also constantly checking their own sense making against what the participant had said.

By this stage a table had been produced whereby sub-themes were clustered to represent the superordinate themes. For each theme extracts from the original sources were recorded, along with their page number. It was difficult to prioritise the themes to focus upon as they were not

selected purely on prevalence; relevance to the accounts and importance to the individuals were also taken into account. The final stage involved translating these themes into a narrative account, both telling the story of the participant and incorporating the researcher's interpretative commentary. This narrative can be seen for each study in the thesis, with a discussion section relating the themes identified back to existing literature, as is typical in most IPA research (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

Reliability and validity

Reliability is achieved in research through the stability of a measure over time (Bryman, 2004). Validity can be defined as the extent to which the research measures what it intended to measure (Howitt, 2010). Reliability and validity are criteria used for justifying knowledge produced within positivist research, which are based on the notion of a single, objective reality beyond the human mind. This knowledge represents a truth that can therefore be measured through quantitative methods (Sandberg, 2005). There is much debate surrounding reliability and validity in qualitative studies with no universal criteria for qualitative research (Howitt, 2010; Kornbluh, 2015; Morse, Barret, Mayan, Olsen & Spiers, 2002). Indeed, an interpretivist approach, however, rejects the positivist view, instead believing the world and the person to be connected through lived experience thus producing many different, subjective truths. The juxtaposing criterion of 'trustworthiness' has therefore been proposed to ensure rigour is still achieved in qualitative research, and was adopted for the research in this thesis. Trustworthiness is made up of four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1986), which will now be discussed.

Credibility

The aim in qualitative and IPA research is to ensure the credibility of the final account as one of many possible interpretations rather than a single true account (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). One technique to assist in achieving this was the use of prolonged engagement involving lengthy and intensive contact with the phenomena (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). In addition, a successful analysis is viewed as interpretative; the results are not seen as facts rather transparent, grounded in examples from the data, and plausible to both supervisors and general readers (Reid et al., 2005; Houston & Mullan-Jensen, 2011). The researcher therefore included a second level of analysis, whereby an attempt to make sense of the participants' sense making was carried out.

Member checks were a further method for achieving credibility which was considered by the researcher. Member checks involve the informal testing of information through supplying

participants with a written copy of the findings and soliciting their reactions of accuracy (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). Although there are many benefits of doing this, the participants may not understand the findings, particularly in the case of this research, which involved participants with ID. In addition, they may feel unable to question the findings due to the perceived researcher-participant power differences; exaggerated further by the fact the participants were offenders (Kornbluh, 2015). Indeed, Morse, Barret, Mayan, Olsen and Spiers, (2002) argue that member checks can force the researcher to restrain their results to a more descriptive level (so they are understood) and therefore invalidate the work of the researcher. For these reasons, member checks were therefore not used as a method of checking the credibility of the data outlined in the studies below.

Transferability

Generalisation is a quality criterion used in quantitative research, whereby the results are viewed as being able to make predictions of other samples of people in different situations. Due to the aim of IPA research being to explore in depth the experiences of a small, select group of people, generalisability to the whole population is not considered possible (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Willig, 2008). Transferability is therefore a concept used within qualitative research instead that refers to the extent that the findings can be applied to contexts similar to the original context, in which the results were derived (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1992). The research discussed in this thesis involves almost all of the Core Members involved in the prison-model CoSA during the period of data collection, which at the time was the only CoSA model of this type in the UK. The research can therefore be considered to have transferability due to the findings being applicable to any new prison-model CoSA projects established in the UK. The climate of the prison setting however, needs to also be considered when applying the results in this thesis to future prison-model CoSA projects. This is due to HMP Whatton previously being described by prisoners as generating feelings of acceptance and safety (Blagden, Winder & Hames, 2016), which may have had an effect on the effectiveness of the prison-model CoSA project (see chapter 4 for further discussion on this).

Dependability

Dependability has been referred to as a parallel to reliability in quantitative research, which is achieved by adopting an auditing approach (Bryman, 2004). This was achieved through the creation of detailed records of fieldwork notes, interview transcripts and data analysis decisions. In addition, the supervisors of the research in this thesis audited the project, thus ensuring dependability was achieved (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). This intersubjective judgement by other researchers assisted in ensuring the lead researcher's knowledge claim was grounded in the data (Sandberg, 2005). Audit

trials such as these are believed to ensure that correct procedures are being adhered to (Bryman, 2004). They also enable any problems and issues to be captured accurately (Morse et al., 2002), which can then be considered as learning points for further research.

Confirmability

Finally, the criteria for confirmability again emphasises the importance of in-depth understanding. Whilst complete objectivity cannot be achieved, the researcher should not overtly allow personal values or theoretical inclinations to sway the conduct, and subsequent findings, of the research (Bryman, 2004). A reflexive critique can assist in achieving this and therefore help bolster reliability and validity (Winter, 1989). Within qualitative research, and that involving IPA specifically, the role of the researcher is recognised in terms of how their prior assumptions may influence the collection and analysis of data due to their own lived experiences (Howitt, 2010). Within this reflexive critique, the researcher must therefore state their own experiences and values (see chapter 8 specifically), thus bracketing their own personal reactions and hopefully limiting the possible effects of researcher bias (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1992; McCoy, 2015; Willig, 2008). Keeping a reflective diary such as this enabled the trustworthiness of the results to be maintained and helped ensure the social worlds of the participants had been correctly understood.

Personal Construct Theory

Personal construct theory (PCT) was developed by Kelly in 1955. The epistemological assumption underlying this approach is the principle of constructive alternativism whereby the focus is on the participants' construction of the world (Ashworth, 2003). Within this principle, there is no 'concrete' real world, instead people interpret and make sense of their personal, daily events in ways that make sense to them, thus explaining the rich diversity of human experience (Horley, 2008; Kelly, 1991). Personal construct psychology is a way of understanding participants' idiosyncratic beliefs and the many alternative ways individuals interpret the world (Blagden et al., 2012). It can therefore be construed as a psychology of human concern (Shotter, 2007), in that it deals with experiences and beliefs central to the participant, not the researcher. This is similar to phenomenology's concern with human existence and experience. Although not influenced by phenomenology directly, personal construct theory is concerned with enabling participants to reveal their own methods of construing and sense-making (Shotter, 2007). This phenomenological essence therefore makes it an ideal partner to the underlying epistemological assumptions of IPA.

According to PCT, to interpret the current situation and predict future experiences each individual develops a unique personal construct system; a continuum on which aspects of our

environment can be appraised and hypotheses tested (Kelly, 1955). These constructs are bipolar involving two poles that are contrasts rather than diametric opposites (Horley, 2008). In addition, they are not all equal, instead there is a complex hierarchy involving both superordinate and subordinate constructs, which are tested and refined through experience (Paget & Ellett, 2014). Superordinate constructs are also known as core constructs, which Kelly (1995) believed governed the maintenance of an individual's identity, lying at the heart of the individual's sense of self and therefore essential to determining existence. Subordinate constructs, however, are much more peripheral and easier to alter or replace, thus playing a less important role in the identity of self (Kelly, 1955).

Kelly (1991) regards construing as 'placing an interpretation' on something thus giving it meaning and structure. People tend to construe in ways that make sense to them and their personal construct system (Blagden et al., 2012); thus, each construct has no meaning or existence beyond the individual whose thinking it characterises (Kelly, 1955). Kelly (1955) argued that personal constructs permit us to interpret life experience and to figure out what might befall us should we attempt a particular course of action. A strength of PCT is therefore its central concern with choice and personal agency. People are active construers of their own experience, thus invoking the notion of will and will power (Horley, 2008). Each individual is personally responsible for choosing the specific constructions of events that will inform his or her actions and is able to evaluate and revise these hypotheses in light of this behaviour (Horley, 2008). All behaviour is seen as experimental in that it provides validation or not for current constructs and thus serves as the basis of future construction (Horley, 2008). We as individuals are therefore able to construe and re-construe, thus making PCT a dynamic theory of human functioning (Horley, 2010). This again has similarities to phenomenology. Schutz (1962) believed that individuals are continually trying to make sense of their existence and daily life, however such sense-making is not straight forward and is seldom free from contradiction. Instead our experience of the world is intersubjective, experienced with and through others. This seems to drive at the heart of personal construct theory, focusing on how people make sense of their lives and how they construct social reality. The triangulation of these two methods therefore, as outlined earlier, increases the understanding of the phenomenon explored in this thesis, providing a deeper analysis than one method alone could provide (Howitt, 2010).

Repertory Grids

One of the main methodologies for understanding and assessing an individual's personal construct system is the repertory grid technique (Paget & Ellett, 2014). Derived from Kelly's (1955) Role

Construct Repertory Test, the repertory grid used in this research is essentially a complex sorting task, which helps the researcher to develop an understanding of the way a participant makes sense of their world and interprets their experience (Neimeyer, Bowman & Saferstein, 2005; Mason, 2003). Blagden, Winder, Gregson and Throne (2014) argue that one of the primary aims of using this type of data collection tool is to identify underlying patterns of participants' thinking, through the elicitation and examination of the participants' array of personal constructs. This is of particular use when working with offenders as issues relevant to their offending thoughts and behaviour can be explored along with any psychological change. In fact, due to the level of detail the analysis of a completed repertory grid can provide, even small psychological changes in a participants' cognitive system that may represent important progress in the rehabilitation of offenders, can be identified (Mason, 2008). In addition, a repertory grid enables an exploration of the participants' relationships with meaningful individuals in their life. This in turn can highlight how the participants construe their future desistance from crime. For example, McNeill (2006) has argued that desistance can only be understood within the context of human relationships between the offender and those who are important to them.

The basic repertory grid consists of a topic, elements, constructs and ratings, which are used in order to allow a unique insight into the way a participant construes aspects of his or her world (Blagden et al., 2014). Each grid is conducted in relation to a particular 'topic' whether it be for research or more clinical uses (Jankowicz, 2004). The purpose of these repertory grids was to explore the difference in how those convicted of sexual offences construed themselves before they started the prison sessions of a CoSA compared to just before they were released and also once in the community. Due to CoSA's being designed for those with little to no social support the grids also focused on how the participants construed themselves compared to others around them. See appendix 10 for an example of a blank grid and appendix 11 for an example of a completed repertory grid.

Elements

Elements of the grid are examples of this topic and as Easterby-Smith (1980) states should be homogenous and provide representative coverage of the area to be investigated. These usually take the form of people, with whom the participant has either a positive or negative relationship with. It is recommended that no more than 12 elements are used and can be supplied to or elicited from the participants. However, when researchers are interested in comparing responses from various participants, as was the case in this research, it is advised that they are supplied as this allows for greater statistical comparison (Tan & Hunter, 2002). As Jankowicz (2004) states, using the right set

of elements is crucial as it indicates the realm of discourse and enables the person's constructs to be discovered (see below for more detail on constructs). Supplying the elements may not be personally meaningful for the participant, which works against the method's concern with how the participant construes their world (Blagden et al., 2014). For the purpose of this research therefore, elements were both supplied 'self in the past', 'self now'; 'self in the future'; 'mum'; 'dad'; 'partner' and elicited 'ex-partner'; 'friend'; 'non-offending person'; 'sex offender'; 'prison officer'; 'someone you don't like'.

In cases where the elements were not applicable i.e. 'partner or mother', participants were asked to think of another meaningful person in their life either currently or in the past. For example, one participant stated they had not had a relationship with their mother and father but were brought up by an aunt, which was therefore used as an element instead. This ensured that participants could relate to all of the elements, thus enabling the process to be meaningful.

Constructs

The constructs used in a repertory grid can be defined as the participant's interpretations of the elements supplied (Tan & Hunter, 2002). Mason (2008, p37) explains further how 'constructs can be thought of as the psychological mechanisms used by an individual to make sense of the world around them, which are applied in an active, ongoing process'. Like the elements they can be both supplied to or elicited from the participant, or as was the case in this research a combination of both. Using a mixture of both supplied and elicited constructs again allows for greater statistical comparison between different participants' grids (Mason, 2008; Tan & Hunter, 2002), whilst still eliciting constructs that are particularly meaningful to the participant.

The process of eliciting a meaningful grid is, according to Mason (2003) not a standardised one. A semi-structured interview procedure is used to ask participants to quantitatively evaluate the degree to which each element could be characterised according to their own personal constructs (Borell, Espwall, Pryce & Brenner, 2003). In doing this, a dialogue is opened allowing the researcher to explore deeper the way in which the participants construe their social world (Borell et al., 2003). The main method used to carry this out is the triadic method. This involves the participant being presented with three elements and being asked to identify how two of them are alike and in what way different from the third e.g. two are ambitious whereas the third is easy going (Neimeyer et al., 2005). The aim for doing this is for the participants to identify two contrasting constructs, which make up both the implicit and emergent poles of the repertory grid. This triadic process of elicitation however, is a complex one resulting in participants providing logical opposites rather than opposites of meaning as is required e.g. ambitious and not-ambitious rather than

ambitious and does not trample on colleagues (Easterby-Smith,1980). Another issue with the triadic method is the increased likelihood of it producing 'bent' constructs; two entirely different constructs within a single dimension e.g. ambitious and athletic (Neimeyer et al., 2005). In research involving individuals with intellectual disabilities in particular, Mason (2003) acknowledged that participants struggled to consider the differences between people and could only think of the similarities.

Due to the issues raised above, combined with the fact that almost half of the participants whom the repertory grids were administered to in this research had intellectual disabilities (n=4), a simpler dyadic method of elicitation was used. The dyadic method involves only two elements being presented to the participant, who is asked to describe two ways in which they are similar. Following this, the participant is asked to identify the opposite of this characterisation (Neimeyer et al., 2005; Shorts, 1985). The dyadic method has been criticised due to it, in some cases, producing less complex personal construct systems (Neimeyer et al., 2005). However, when considering the fact that some of the participants would have intellectual disabilities, and therefore the difficulties they would face with the triadic method (i.e. bent constructs), the limitations of the dyadic method were arguably likely to be less damaging to the research. Alongside this, Mason (2003) acknowledges that the process of eliciting a meaningful grid can be adapted to a format best suited to deriving useful information from participants.

Advice was sought from those with expertise of the language and techniques used with individuals with ID, to ensure the grids were administered the most effectively. The exact elicitation process used within this research was adapted from a number of sources including those relating to using repertory grids with those convicted of sexual offences (Blagden et al., 2012) and offenders with intellectual disabilities (Mason, 2003; Mason 2008). To begin, participants were asked to name a person who fitted each of the elements stated above (i.e. partner, friend, mother). The initials of these people were written down under the element which was on a piece of card. For example, if the participant named a friend as John Smith, J.S would be written on the piece of card under 'friend' to remind them each time who they were talking about. Once this had been completed for each element, the elicitation of the constructs began. Participants were presented with pairs of elements and asked to consider how they were similar i.e. 'how is your friend (J.S) similar to you in the past (self in the past)?' If they answered that 'they were not similar', participants were asked to explain how they were different.

Once a construct had been stated a laddering down process was used with the aim of uncovering a deeper level and more superordinate construct. As Binder (2006) states, laddering is seen as one of the most powerful procedures for eliciting the values and meanings behind why a

person organises their world the way they do. However, to achieve a successful laddering process, the researcher is required to suspend their own construing and instead accept the construing of the participant, thus enabling them to get as close as possible to the experience of the individual being questioned (Butler, 2006). Following this, participants were asked to think of the opposite of the construct forming the bi-polar (implicit) constructs. For example, the elements self now and father may be similar in terms of being 'caring' (the emergent pole) and participants may state that someone who was the opposite of 'caring' would be 'selfish' (the implicit pole). This process was continued using a variety of element combinations until, either 7-9 constructs had been elicited or saturation had been reached, i.e. the same constructs were being repeated.

As recommended by Easterby-Smith (1980) the supplied constructs were given after the rest of the constructs had been elicited so as not to influence the type of constructs the participants thought of themselves. At the end of each grid, at each time-point, therefore the participants were supplied the following constructs 'socially supported'/'socially isolated'; 'trusts others easily'/'untrusting'; 'intimate and meaningful relationship'/'the opposite was elicited from participant'. Supplying these constructs ensured that the topic of social networks around the participant had complete coverage.

The rating-process

Once the elements and constructs had been either supplied or elicited the rating process commenced. This involved the elements being rated against each pair of constructs using a 7 point Likert Scale, thus providing a meaningful rating scale for statistical analysis (Tan & Hunter, 2002). Each pole of a given construct could be seen as a logical boundary with every rating indicating the element's degree of membership towards that pole (Horley, 2008). For example, on a scale of trusts others easily and untrusting, a rating of 1 would indicate they trusted others easily 100% of the time, a rating of 7 would indicate the element in question was untrusting 100% of the time and a rating of 4 would indicate they were untrusting and trusted others easily in equal measures. In order to ensure all of the participants, including those with intellectual disabilities, understood this part of the repertory grid process, visual aids were used. Each point of the scale was written on pieces of cardboard and laid out in order (1-7) with each pole of a construct written down and laid at either end of the scale i.e. trusts others easily would be placed on a piece of card at one end with untrusting placed at the other. Time was spent explaining what the scale meant in detail and understanding was checked at various points throughout the rating process. Participants were asked to place each element (also on pieces of card) under the number of the scale they believed fit them best.

Following this procedure each of the constructs were worked through and the ratings for each element on each construct were recorded by the researcher.

The ratings elicited from the participants during the repertory grid process was analysed using the computer programme Idiogrid (see Grice, 2002). Idiogrid allows repertory grid data to be entered and manipulated to provide both univariate statistics (basic descriptive statistics), or bivariate statistics. In producing bivariate statistics, the relationships between pairs of constructs or elements can be analysed. In addition, a principal component analysis can be carried out on the correlations computed from the constructs and a self-identity plot produced for the elements of the grid. These analyses were conducted for each participant using Idiogrid with specific statistics chosen that best illuminate the data.

The repertory grid method of collecting data is growing in popularity in both clinical and research-based psychology (Gaines Hardison & Neimeyer, 2012). One of the reasons for this is due to it being a flexible technique, thus allowing individualised data to be collected in relation to how that individual construes a certain part of their world (Bell, 2005). An additional benefit of using repertory grids as a data collection tool is that that the process has been described within the literature as an opaque one. This means that the overall aim of procedure is unclear and difficult to see through, thus socially desirable response sets are likely to be reduced (Blagden et al., 2012; Mason, 2003).

Reliability and validity

Repertory grids are a mixed method approach to collecting data, providing both qualitative and quantitative data. Reliability and validity are therefore more relevant here than when discussing qualitative interviews alone. As Paget & Ellett (2014, p.274) argue 'it is the unique combination of individual richness allied to statistical analysis that makes the repertory grid technique so valuable'. Winter (2003) has previously agreed, stating that the repertory grids allowed the rare combination of an idiographic approach with the objectivity in scoring and examining the structural feature of construing.

The stability, and therefore reliability, of the repertory grid method can vary greatly due to there being no standard format or rating system (Bell, 2005; Horley, 1996). It is argued instead that the stability should be examined in relation to the specific format used (Sperlinger, 1976). Repertory grids have previously been used with offenders including those convicted of committing a sexual offence (Blagden et al., 2012; Mason, 2003). The use of repertory grids in forensic settings have the potential to be beneficial. This is due to the focus being on individual and personal constructs and elements, thus making the techniques very different from most others used in forensic settings (Blagden et al., 2012; Horley, 2008). When used with samples of offenders, including those

convicted of sexual offences, Horley (1996) reported moderate reliability in content areas. He reported how the content stability varied between individuals, from 40% to 80%, from one administration of the repertory grid to the next. Due to the longitudinal nature of the research outlined in this thesis, the repertory grids were administered to the same participants up to three times. If similar constructs are elicited by the researcher on several occasions care should be taken to explore the participants' interpretation of these constructs to clarify their meanings. The aim of the research, however, is to explore any changes in how the participants construe themselves and others. Therefore, this also needs to be considered with the reasoning behind any changes explored.

It is important to acknowledge here that some of the participants involved in the research in this thesis were assessed as having ID (see chapter 2 for more detail on this). Spindler-Barton, Walton and Rowe (1976 cited in Mason 2003) have noted that repertory grids can be used with people with IQs as low as 50 and will still provide both a reliable and valid assessment of a client's construct system. The dyadic elicitation method was deemed the most appropriate to elicit the constructs effectively from all participants including those with ID (see above for a detailed justification of this). Caputi and Keynes (2001) examined both the tryadic and dyadic elicitation methods to assess the stability of the grid measures over time. From their findings, it was reported that the method of construct elicitation methods had no effect on the measure scores and noted no significant difference in the retest coefficients.

With regard to validity, the use of repertory grids allows for systematic assessment of the constructions relevant for sexual offending (Mason, 2003). As Bell (2005) acknowledges however, the validity of the repertory grid technique has rarely been addressed in the literature. As the participants were allowed to generate their own constructs it is possible that some of the constructs that could be considered relevant to the psychological components of sexual offending were not included. This could be due to the fact that they did not occur to the participants or that they felt offering sexualised constructs may be incriminating in some way. The purpose of the research, however, was not to offer any sort of formulation on the participants' offending behaviour, rather to gain an understanding of what was important and meaningful to the participants at that point in time. If repertory grids were to be used to aid formulation of sexual offending behaviour, then a solution to the problem would be to supply constructs based on the literature of sexual offending.

The final point to acknowledge in relation to the discussion on validity is that the repertory grid process in this research was adapted to make the process more visual (cards were used for the elements, constructs and rating grid). The process was therefore piloted first to ensure that the repertory grids used with the participants were as reliable as possible. The process was piloted with

three different non-offending individuals, of different ages, prior to using with participants. This ensured that the process ran as smoothly as possible, for example the wording of the instructions given were changed several times in order to find the most simple and clear explanation. The researcher was able to act as an impartial guide during the process rather than influencing the participants' opinions (Borell et al., 2003). Piloting the process in this way ensured researcher effects were limited and the process still worked as a valid method.

Research process and process issues

Procedure

For studies 1 and 2 the data was collected in the purpose-built interview rooms at HMP Whatton, which allowed for the research to take place in a private and safe environment. For the community study (study 3), the interviews and repertory grids were carried out wherever the Core Members had their CoSA meetings to encourage the participants to feel more comfortable in their surroundings. Finally, for the volunteer study (study 4) volunteers were given the option for the interviews to take place at the university or their own home, providing they were able to talk without being overheard.

The interview process lasted for an average of 1.5 hours for the Core Members and 1 hour for the volunteers. In the studies involving the Core Members (1, 2 & 3) there was also a repertory grid interview which was conducted on a second separate meeting, within the following week. The repertory grid interviews lasted on average 1.5 hours, which included eliciting elements and constructs, laddering and rating the grid.

Ethics

Research ethical proposals were submitted for approval to NTU Business, Law and Social Sciences college research ethics committee and National Offender Management System (NOMS) ethics board, prior to carrying out any data collection. Ethical practice, however, is a dynamic, ongoing process that should be monitored through the entire data collection and analysis stages of research and not just considered during the design (Smith et al., 2000; Winder & Blagden, 2008). There are many aspects to carrying out ethical research practice. These considerations, and how they were addressed, will now be discussed, including the additional considerations required when using a vulnerable sample.

Informed Consent

In line with the British Psychology Society's (BPS, 2009) and Health Professions Council's (HCPC, 2010) guidance, informed consent was sought from all participants. As Bryman (2004) defines, obtaining informed consent is a process whereby potential participants are given as much information as is needed for them to make an informed decision about whether or not they would like to take part in a particular study. Not only could a lack of informed consent cause harm for the participants they were not prepared for, i.e. personal distress, but researchers become more liable than if informed consent was obtained (Bryman, 2004).

As is evident from the above, it was important that all the potential participants were clear about and understood fully what it was they were consenting to. The participants in all studies (apart from study 4) were individuals, convicted of a sexual offence and had intellectual disabilities or were elderly (55+). Therefore, the information and consent forms (see appendix 1 and 2) for these studies were written in a format that ensured they could be understood by all participants i.e. written in simple language and divided into small relevant chunks of information (Craig & Hutchinson, 2005). In addition, as recommended by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009), the researcher ensured that the study was verbally explained to potential participants (taking into account their level of understanding) and the implications of them consenting. The potential participant's understanding of what had been explained to them was checked using techniques recommended for use with men with ID; for example, asking them questions that would determine understanding, such as what they believe the research to be about. In addition, advice was sought in relation for how to work effectively with men with ID, prior to collecting data, from the Treatment Manager of the Becoming New Me Sex Offender Treatment programme, developed specifically for these individuals. Any difficulties that arose during data collection were discussed with supervisors one of whom has expertise with ID (Dr Gayle Dillon).

Due to the longitudinal nature of the research, the Core Members were asked to consent to being contacted to participate in further studies. It is recommended that, in cases such as these, researchers are transparent from the start (Neale, 2013). The aims and time commitments of being involved in the entire research project were therefore explained during the consent interview. It was made clear to all that participation was voluntary, was not required by their employers (if a volunteer) and would not affect their sentence, access to treatment or release date (if they were a Core Member). Due to the acquiescence of ID individuals in particular (Shaw & Budd, 1982), this was an important point to highlight. For example, as Arscott, Dagnan and Kroese (1998) explain, participants with ID may be eager to please the researcher and therefore feel unable to state if they wish to drop out from the research. The participants were reminded of their choice to continue

with the research or not at the beginning of every data collection session thus serving to empower the participants and ensuring informed consent at all times. All participants were given the opportunity to take time to think about whether or not they wanted to take part in the research and any questions they may have wanted to ask.

It was important for the researcher to document their identity as a researcher for Nottingham Trent University, not as an employee of the prison service, so as to situate themselves outside of any power relations, which may exist inside the prison (Waldram, 2007). A reward, monetary or otherwise, was not given to any of the participants for their participation. It was explained that they could choose to stop the interview at any point and withdraw any data they had given so far, without giving an explanation. All participants were given the opportunity to take time to think about whether or not they want to take part in the research and any questions they may have wanted to ask. If consent was given the interviews were arranged, where at all possible, around the participants' schedules. Empowering the participants in this way is argued to result in data of a much richer quality and enable them to feel vested in the research (Waldram, 2007).

In the debriefing sheet (see appendix 3) contact details were provided in case, at a later date, participants decided they would like to withdraw their data from the research. A deadline was also provided on the debriefing sheet, which indicated the latest date by which this could be requested. This information was also delivered to the participants verbally to ensure that any participants who may have had ID understood who to contact if they needed further support or to withdraw their data. As Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) state, it is important to provide support following the research, particularly if the research involved the discussion of sensitive and upsetting issues. For this reason, avenues of support were outlined on the debrief sheets specific for either the volunteers or the Core Members. For example, suggestions for the Core Members included the Listeners or Support Volunteers who worked in the prison. For the volunteers, charities such as the Samaritans or Stop It Now were recommended. Finally, the debrief sheets were again also verbally explained to the Core Member participants, due to them having Intellectual Disabilities or being elderly and therefore possibly having reading difficulties.

The interviews and repertory grids were recorded using a password protected dictaphone to ensure that the data they provided was accurately documented. Prior permission had been granted by the prison to use the dictaphone and explicit consent for the audio recording was sought from the participants through an additional signature on the consent form.

Confidentiality

As BPS (2009) guidelines state, researchers should anticipate and guard against any possible consequences that may be harmful to the participant. One way this was achieved was by ensuring that the confidentiality of participants' identity, along with any other personal data, was maintained.

The possibility of eliminating identification during qualitative research is sometimes difficult (Bryman, 2004). Participants were made aware at the consent stage of the potential risk of being identified due to the small sample size. It was made clear to participants however, that, although the results of the research would be published and may include an extract or quote from their data collected, any identifiable information would be altered to make it anonymous. This was explained to the participants in language, which individuals with ID would understand. In addition, participants' names were only used prior to the interviews or repertory grids for rapport building purposes and were not mentioned at any point once audio recording had started. A unique identifier was allocated to each participant for the storing of and referring to the data later.

A dictaphone was used to record both the interview and repertory grid data collection session. Being able to take the dictaphone and the completed repertory grids outside the prison to transcribe and analyse the data was necessary given some of the qualitative and mixed method analysis software that was required to analyse the data. This was in line with standard protocol used by researchers from NTU at HMP Whatton and an authorisation form was completed and signed by the Head of Security at the prison before any data collection commenced.

The confidentiality concerns surrounding the removal of the research data from the prison were noted by the researcher. All procedures outlined in prison policies and documentation, relating to the transportation and removal of research data, from the prison establishment were carefully adhered to. For example, the dictaphone that was used to record the interviews and repertory grids was password protected, which ensured that only the research team were able to access the material recorded. The data remained on the dictaphone at all times whilst in the prison and was kept either with the researcher, when in use, or in a locked drawer. Any paper work related to the research project, i.e. consent forms and completed repertory grids, were kept in the same locked drawer. The dictaphone and the anonymised repertory grids were transported by the researcher directly from the prison to the researcher's home using a locked briefcase. Here, the data was transferred onto a password protected file on the researcher's personal computer. The data were not held on any other computer.

Dialogue which is transcribed verbatim runs some risk in terms of identifying the participant. For example, it was possible that, due to there being just a small sample of Core

Members and volunteers, there may have been concerns about anonymity. This risk, however, was noted by the researcher and active efforts were made to remain alert to possible ways that the participants may be identified. For example, any identifiable information was removed or changed appropriately and gender specific language was not used. Alongside this, discretion was used when deciding which extracts of the descriptive data were to be used in the final thesis. For example, one participant discussed specific health conditions, which would have distinguished him from other participants. To protect the anonymity of the participant, the term used to describe his health conditions was therefore omitted from extracts used within the research. In order to safeguard this further, prior to publication of the empirical studies, relevant individuals from the prison and NOMS were sent a final draft to read and provide feedback on if necessary. Finally, transcripts, data and paperwork will be shredded and destroyed in a secure manner once the research becomes inactive i.e. publication is still being sought for the empirical studies in this thesis.

Limited confidentiality

When working with individuals previously convicted of crime complete confidentiality is rarely offered by researchers, due to the dual commitment of wanting to protect the participant's anonymity and also protect others from potential harm. For example, as Cowburn (2010) highlights, to know of unreported offences or intentions of further harm and take no action can, not only leave potential victims at risk, but also put the researcher in a position of collusion and failing to protect members of the public. The position researchers usually therefore take, when working with these individuals, has been referred to in the literature as 'limited confidentiality' (Blagden & Pemberton, 2010; Cowburn, 2005), which was the position taken during this research. Participants were made aware of the circumstances in which confidentiality could and would be broken both on the information sheet and consent form, and verbally. In regard to the Core Members this was in cases where they disclosed actual or intent to harm themselves or others, actual or intent to break prison rules or the disclosure of crimes they had not been convicted of. When their understanding of the concept was checked, the participants appeared comfortable with the use of limited confidentiality during the research. This is possibly due to limited confidentiality being a standard practice followed during interviews with all psychology and programmes staff in the prison system.

Alongside this, due to data collection taking place over more than one session, it was important to remind participants of the limited confidentiality agreement (and their consent to it) at the beginning of each meeting (Cowburn, 2005). Both the intellectually disabled and elderly participants were prone to memory difficulties, therefore a reminder of what they were consenting

to and in which cases confidentiality would be broken. In cases where it would be broken the information would only be passed to the relevant authorities.

Participant Access

Circles of Support and Accountability were established within the prison by the Safer Living Foundation (SLF); a charity consisting of representatives from HMP Whatton, Nottinghamshire probation and police services and Nottingham Trent University. Although the research was carried out independently from this charity, under the Data Protection Act the participants were accessed via gatekeepers at the prison and via those involved in the charity i.e. the CoSA co-ordinator. The use of gatekeepers is standard practice when conducting research in a prison, with researchers depending on those who work there to identify and ask potential participants if they wish to take part (Bosworth, Campbell, Demby, Ferranti, & Santos, 2005). This prevents researchers from having identifiable information about prisoners who are not involved in the research i.e. if they choose not to take part.

The inclusion criteria for the research was that participants must either be a Core Member or volunteer involved in the prison-model of CoSA started at HMP Whatton under the Safer Living Foundation. Core Members' and volunteers' suitability to take part in a CoSA was assessed by prison staff and the designated CoSA coordinator at HMP Whatton prior to being contacted to take part in any research. For example, once a Core Member place or volunteer role had been offered they were asked, by either a member of prison staff involved or the prison-model CoSA project coordinator, if they consented to being contacted by researchers to take part in the evaluation project. It was necessary for this consent to be given before the researcher in these studies could contact potential participants so as not to influence their decision-making. Once this consent had been gained the volunteers were contacted via email and Core Members via the internal postal system at the prison and suitable appointments were arranged.

Sampling Strategy

Within applied, field-based research, particularly that involving hard-to-reach and stigmatised populations, such as those convicted of sexual offences, more traditional, probabilistic sampling methods are virtually impossible to carry out (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006). Instead purposive sampling, whereby participants are selected according to predetermined criteria related to the research aims (Guest et al., 2006), was used. As Smith and Osborn (2003) state, purposive sampling produces a closely defined, homogenous group of participants for whom the research question will be significant. Within this strategy the researcher goes to where the answers to the research

questions are most likely to be located and a relevant sample is built up (Ryan, 2006). In the case of this research both Core Members and volunteers involved in a prison-model CoSA were selected by the SLF as outlined above. The researcher therefore purposively approached these individuals (after they had given consent for this through the SLF) as they were able to provide a perspective on the phenomenon (prison-model CoSA) under study.

Sample size

Within qualitative research there is overall consensus within the literature of 'quality and not quantity' (Brocki & Warden, 2006; Smith, 2004; Smith et al., 2009) when it comes to sample size. The degree of analysis required to ensure a rich and detailed account of the data required in qualitative research (Smith & Osborn, 2003) means that small sample sizes are the norm. Purposive sample sizes in particular are determined by theoretical saturation; the point at which no additional data is being identified (Guest et al., 2006). Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) from their study in to the size at which theoretical saturation is reached recommended a sample size of between 6 and 12, depending upon the depth of meaningful themes and interpretations required. Similarly, Reid, Flowers and Larkin (2005) have stated that for a study using IPA 10 participants is at the higher end of most recommendations for sample sizes needed to retain the idiographic focus. As Maruna and Matravers (2007) paper 'N=1' acknowledges, however, even studies with sample sizes as small as one can hold psychological truth by providing a sense of meaning and purpose to the participant's experience. Instead of producing generalizable findings, a smaller sample size provides an in-depth exploration and understanding of an under-researched area (Blagden et al., 2014).

The sample sizes used within the studies in this thesis can, therefore, be considered appropriate providing rich and meaningful data (please see the method section for each individual study for the sample sizes used in this research). Indeed, with regard to the exploration of desistance within ex-offenders specifically, other IPA studies have used similar sample sizes. For example, Aresti et al., study (2010) 'Doing time after time' consisted of a sample of 5 ex-offenders.

Researching the vulnerable

The research discussed in this thesis is of a sensitive nature and conducted with participants that can and should be seen as vulnerable (Blagden & Pemberton, 2010). A prison sentence for someone convicted of a sexual offence is characterised by stigmatisation, feelings of anxiety and fear of being outed as a 'sexual offender' (Schwaebe, 2005). Even when segregated on a vulnerable prisoners' wing, those convicted of sexual offences have reported frightening events, such as having insults and objects thrown at them, resulting in damaged self-esteem as well as physical harm (Ilevins,

2013). The prison in focus here however, is one of the largest sex offender treatment prisons in Europe, specialising in both rehabilitative programmes and sex offender treatment and only housing those convicted of sexual offences. The prison has been described by prisoners themselves as a place of acceptance, generating a feeling of safety they had never experienced before (Blagden, Winder & Hames, 2016; levins, 2013). This could arguably therefore, reduce the level of vulnerability within the participants. This aside, those who commit sexual offences undoubtedly experience stigmatisation on release from prison once in the community (Brown, Spencer & Deakin, 2007). Data were collected during the lead up to release and once they had re-entered the community. It was likely therefore, that the participants were experiencing vulnerability on some level regarding their reintegration in to a society that perceives them negatively (McAlinden, 2006).

Researching vulnerable and stigmatised groups requires great care and sensitivity. When working with those who commit sexual offences it is believed that a humanistic approach works best, whereby the person is separated from the offence (Blagden & Pemberton, 2010). This enables a more genuine rapport to be established between researcher and participant, without which the participants may struggle to trust and therefore talk freely to the researcher (Bosworth et al., 2005; Miller & Tewksbury, 2001). Establishing trust and encouraging openness in this way is believed to create credible research due to participants perceiving the researcher's intentions as genuine (Bulmer, 2005). In addition, the nature of the content discussed can expose painful and emotional issues for the participants, which can result in them becoming distressed or visibly upset. It was important that the participants did not feel either patronised or neglected during these occasions. A reflexive and sympathetic approach was therefore adopted enabling a genuine duty of care towards the participants (Blagden & Pemberton, 2010).

One benefit of collecting the data face to face with the participants, as Bosworth, Campbell, Demby, Ferranti and Santos (2005) assert, is that emotion and distress can be easily addressed and dealt with at that time. For example, in the case of the research in this thesis, two participants in particular, became visibly upset and distressed whenever they discussed their childhood. It would have conflicted with the epistemological stance of the research to simply record the participants' distressing experiences and withdraw from the interview (Cowburn, 2010). Indeed, Fisher (2009) goes as far as to state that dispassionate researchers, who are solely concerned only with their data, should be suspended from researching vulnerable groups. Instead it was important for the researcher to take prompt from the participant and only continue if they were happy to do so (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Winder & Blagden, 2008). For example, in one case a discussion took place with the participant, who appeared drained and exhausted after becoming emotionally upset at several points. After the options to continue, pause or withdraw from the research were

explained to the participant they decided that the rest of the data could be collected later in the week giving them chance to relax and recuperate mentally. At the second data collection meeting their consent to continue was explored to ensure they felt comfortable in continuing with the research.

On another occasion, a different participant expressed his preference for continuing with the interview, which was respected whilst giving him time to recompose himself. On both of these occasions, as is suggested by Blagden and Pemberton (2010), it was particularly important to end the interview positively by focusing upon the participant's hopes for the future. In addition, staff members of the participants' wings were informed immediately following the interview. This enabled the participants to receive further support if required after the interview had finished and they had returned to their wing. In addition to this above, it was also important to remember that the role of a researcher is to gain knowledge from the participant, not facilitate change as a clinician would, or make them feel better as a therapist would aim to achieve (Cowburn, 2010). Debrief sessions with the supervisors involved in the research, which will be discussed in more detail below, encouraged this consideration.

The participants involved in studies 1-3 had the additional vulnerabilities of being either elderly or having ID. Lambrick and Glaser (2004) suggest that the simplification of concepts, the use of visual imagery and client generated key work statements are useful when working with the specific needs of ID offenders. This can involve breaking information down in to small chunks of information, reducing the speed of what is being said and the use of pictures and drawings to help explain complex concepts such as emotions and thought (Craig & Hutchinson, 2005). Although all of this was taken in to account before carrying out the research there were still some issues that arose during the collection of data. For example, interviews with the participants with slow processing levels were lengthy due to the time it would take for them to process and answer a question. It was important to be patient and comfortable with silence, allowing the participant time to process and answer the question. This however, also needed to be balanced with keeping them on topic, which at times was sometimes difficult to achieve. The interviews with these offenders were carefully managed, with debriefs used by the researcher to discuss the any issues they had encountered.

In addition, whilst protecting the participant from unnecessary distress is essential, the needs of the researcher also need to be considered. Conducting research within a prison can be a complex, isolating and sometimes stressful experience owing to the difficult topics covered and issues that are raised by the interviews (Liebling, 1999). For example, other PhD researchers in the department are unable to relate to the complex difficulties of carrying out prison research and are

nevertheless not covered by ethics agreements in order for a discussion to take place if they did. The clinicians and psychologists who work in the prison, however, were available for debrief sessions, something which is strongly encouraged in the prison environment. Indeed, those who receive professional peer support, such as supervision, when working with those who have committed sexual offences have reported reductions in their levels of distress (Ennis & Home, 2003). The supervisors of the research project were available to offer advice and support at any time, with ad hoc meetings arranged if the concerns raised need to be dealt with immediately. In addition, a research assistant was covered under the ethical agreements of the research in this thesis, due to being part of the larger CoSA evaluation. This therefore provide the researcher with a further avenue for debrief.

Summary

This chapter has outlined the overarching methodological approach for this thesis and offer both a rationale and justification for the research design. The procedure of data collection and analysis were explained with the debates surrounding reliability and validity in qualitative and mixed-method research also outlined. Ethical considerations, issues of access and some of the characteristics of the sample were also discussed. This thesis now turns to the four empirical chapters detailing the research carried out to achieve the aims of the project.

Chapter 4: Core Member pre prison-model CoSA study ‘The turning point’

Introduction

The relationship between a detachment from society and continued engagement with crime has been explored extensively within the desistance literature (Fox, 2015a; McAlinden et al., 2017). As discussed in chapter two, desistance is generally defined as a slowing down or stopping of criminal behaviour (Harris, 2014). Social relations, characterised by a sense of belonging and solidarity, are reported as the one of the most influential factors supporting this process (Weaver & McNeill, 2015). Desistance from crime, it appears, is much easier for those who are able to embed themselves within social networks, which support their new pro-social identities (Paternoster & Bushway, 2009). Indeed, Farmer, Beech and Ward (2011) reported alienation to be the largest difference between a group of successful desisters, when compared against a group of active offenders. The desisters reported a sense of belonging whereas those still active in crime expressed feelings of not fitting in with society.

Successful reintegration and the establishment of a pro-social network on release from prison is difficult for any type of offender (Berg & Huebner, 2011). In addition, the negative issues ex-prisoners face as they re-enter the community are thought to be considerably worse for those who have been convicted of sexual offences (Robbers, 2009). Some of the major and most prominent issues are a persistent sense of vulnerability, increased levels of stress, difficulties in finding employment and housing and problems maintaining social and familial relationships (Graffam, Shinkfield, Lavelle & McPherson, 2004; Tewksbury & Connor, 2012; Tewksbury & Copes, 2013). All of this leads to social isolation and works against successful reintegration back into the community (Tewksbury & Mustaine, 2009). This highlights the importance of supporting those who are released from prison to overcome these social problems, to help reduce potential recidivism.

A step towards achieving this is provided through Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA). CoSA are an intervention used with medium to very-high risk individuals who have been convicted of a sexual offence. The aim is to support and encourage their reintegration back into society whilst still holding them accountable for their behaviour (Cesaroni, 2001) (see chapter 2 for a detailed discussion of CoSA). Until 2014 however, CoSA only began once a potential Core Member had been released from prison and was living in the community, sometimes for a period of up to several weeks (Höing et al., 2015). The early stages of release, however, are a particularly sensitive period in terms of desistance (Aresti et al., 2010). It is argued, that for offenders to re-settle effectively on release, ‘through care’ is needed involving the establishment of a close relationship with the offender while they are still in prison, which is then continued on release (Maguire & Raynor, 2006).

In response to these concerns a new prison-model of CoSA has been established by the Safer Living Foundation charity, in a treatment prison in the UK for those who have sexually offended (Saunders, Kitson-Boyce & Elliott, 2014). The prison-model CoSAs start approximately 3 months prior to the Core Member's release from prison and continue into the community on release, with the same volunteers for continuity of support. It is hoped in doing this the volunteers can support the Core Member through the entire transition from prisoner to pro-social member of the community (Saunders et al., 2014).

Mann (personal communication, 16/04/2014) has previously stressed the importance of evaluating new prison initiatives thoroughly and from the beginning to learn more about effective rehabilitation. The purpose of this study therefore, was to explore the Core Members' thoughts and feelings regarding their release from prison and subsequent future in the community, prior to them starting the prison-model CoSA. In addition, how the participants construed themselves now prior to starting the prison-model CoSA, compared to the past and where they would like to be in future, was also considered.

Method

Participants

To be considered for a Core Member place in the prison-model CoSA, individuals needed to meet a number of criteria. First, the individual must have had previously committed a sexual offence and currently be residing in the prison where the prison-model CoSA were due to start. The prison is a treatment prison for those convicted, or previously convicted of a sexual offence. Second, they must have been assessed as medium to very high risk using the Risk Matrix 2000; the most widely used actuarial risk assessment tool in the English and Wales prison and probation services (Thornton et al., 2003). Thirdly, the individuals must be facing release from prison with little to no pro-social support in the community. The final criteria, specific to the prison-model only, was that they ideally would be either elderly (55+) or diagnosed with intellectual disabilities (ID) (see table 1). The identification of an intellectual disability involved an assessment of both intellectual and adaptive functioning (Craig & Hutchinson, 2005; Keeling et al., 2008). In two cases clinical judgement was used, by the lead forensic psychologist involved in the project, to override this i.e. neither elderly or had ID but were selected due to a severe lack of social support. Chapter 2 outlines the SLF inclusion criteria to be a Core Member in more detail.

Within this study purposive sampling, whereby participants are selected according to pre-determined criteria related to the research aims (Guest et al., 2006), was employed. In this case the participants were Core Members who had been offered and accepted a place on a prison-model CoSA and were waiting to meet their volunteers (n= 9 males). Potential participants were

approached initially by the CoSA co-ordinator to assess interest in taking part in the study. If interest was expressed, meetings were arranged with the researcher to discuss the evaluation project, answer any questions they may have and obtain informed consent to take part.

Table 1. Participant information for Study 1

Participant Number	Planned no. of prison sessions prior to release	Participant Age	Intellectual Disability	Health issues	Risk level (RM2000)
1	9 - 2 months, 1 week	60	Yes - mild	Yes - physical	Medium
2	2 - 2 weeks	60	No	Yes - physical	Medium
3	14 - 3 months, 2 weeks	60	Yes - mild	Yes - physical	Very high
4	5 - 1 month, 1 week	45	Borderline	No	Medium
5	4 - 1 month	58	No	Yes - mental	Medium
6	4 - 1 month	78	No	Yes – physical and mental	Medium
7	IPP sentence (parole date not confirmed)	73	No	No	Very high
8	3 - 3 weeks	64	Yes – mild	No	High
9	6 - 1 month, 2 weeks	52	No	No	Very high

As stated previously the prison-based model of CoSA in the UK is designed to begin approximately 3 months before the Core Members release from prison. This process is flexible however and varies with each individual CoSA as can be seen in table 1. The average number of planned prison sessions within the CoSA was six, not including the individual with the IPP sentence. There are several reasons for this with the main one being that a referral for a potential Core Member with high need may not be received by the coordinator until later in their sentence. In the US prison-model of CoSA, however, the volunteers meet with the Core Member only 3 times before their release (MnCoSA), which still provided enough time to ensure a continuum of social support from prison to community (Duwe, 2012).

Procedure

An interview and repertory grid were carried out with each consenting Core Member, prior to meeting the volunteers involved in their prison-model CoSA. The data collection took place in the purpose-built interview rooms at the prison and were split over two sessions.

Semi-structured interviews

Qualitative, semi-structured interviews were carried out with each participant to facilitate in-depth discussion and explore their personal experience of awaiting release from prison (see appendix 7). Open-ended, neutral questions were constructed for each of the separate issues to be discussed, which enabled the researcher to be an engaged, flexible and an attentive listener, using prompts where necessary (Smith & Osborn, 2003). See chapter 3 for a more detailed justification of the methods used.

Due to the participants potentially having intellectual disabilities (ID), the interview schedule was written in suitable language with a Flesch readability score (Farr, Jenkins & Paterson, 1951) of 2.9. This meant the questions posed could be understood by an individual with the reading ability of a 7-year old and were therefore suitable to be used with those who had borderline to mild ID. Each interview lasted on average 1 hour and explored areas such as their expectations and aspirations for the future. For example, 'What do you think it will be like when you leave prison?', 'Who will be there to support/ help you when you leave prison?' Please see chapter 3 for detailed information on how the interview schedule was developed.

Repertory grids

Derived from Kelly's (1955) Role Construct Repertory Test, the repertory grids used in this study were essentially a complex sorting task, which helps the researcher to develop an understanding of the way a participant makes sense of their world and interprets their experience (Neimeyer et al., 2005; Mason, 2003). Repertory grids are idiographic by nature and can allow a unique insight in to the way an individual construes aspects of their world (Houston, 1998). Each repertory grid is conducted in relation to a particular topic and involves elements and constructs. Elements of the grid are examples of this topic and usually take the form of people. For this study, the elements were 'self in the past', 'self now'; 'self in the future'; 'mum'; 'dad'; 'partner'; 'ex-partner'; 'friend'; 'non-offending person'; 'sex offender'; 'prison officer' and 'someone you don't like'. In cases where the elements were not applicable, i.e. they had no partner or no relationship with their mother, participants were asked to think of another meaningful person they had experienced a strong relationship with throughout their life.

The purpose of a repertory grid is to elicit constructs from the participant, which make sense to them and have meaning to a particular experience (Jankowicz, 2004). The constructs within a grid can be both supplied to or elicited from the participant. Using a combination of both, as was the case in this study, allowed for greater statistical comparison between different participants' grids (Tan & Hunter, 2002), whilst still eliciting constructs that were meaningful to the participant. The dyadic process of elicitation was used until between 7 and 9 constructs had been elicited, or saturation had been reached i.e. the same constructs were being repeated (see chapter 3 for more information on the repertory grid process).

Ethics

Prior to any research commencing ethical approval was obtained for this study (along with all others in this thesis) from the Nottingham Trent University Business, Law and Social Sciences college research ethics committee and the National Offender Management System (NOMS) ethics board. In addition, the research adhered to the British Psychological Society's (BPS) guidelines regarding the ethical considerations of collecting data for research purposes (all of which are covered in more detail in the methodology chapter).

Although the participants were asked to consent to participate in all three Core Member studies (see appendix 2), they were still given a debrief sheet at the end of each study (see appendix 3), in case they were unable or chose not to take part in any further studies. They were also given the opportunity to ask any questions they may have had about the data collection studies, future studies or the research in general. If questions were asked specific to the process of their prison-model CoSA they were directed to the coordinator of the project.

Analysis

This study uses two forms of analysis; IPA and repertory grid analysis. The interview data were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The aim of IPA is to gain an in-depth understanding of the way in which people make sense of their personal and social worlds (Aresti et al., 2010). As outlined a small sample size was used for the study. As Smith and Osborn (2013) state this is the norm for IPA studies with the aim being to analyse the cases in detail, thus being able to understand, interpret and discuss the perceptions of the participants in depth (see chapter 3 for more detailed discussion of the analysis used).

The analysis of the repertory grids was on the content and the structure of the participants' grids and conducted using Idiogrid (see Grice 2002), a statistical programme designed for this purpose. Both the methodology of phenomenological interviews and repertory grids allows the participants to reveal their own ways of sense making (Blagden et al., 2014). This enables the

researcher to increase their understanding of what is known about the phenomenon in question (Howitt, 2010). The methodological approach for this study, including the growing popularity of triangulating IPA with the repertory grid technique, has been made explicit in chapter 3.

The following analysis incorporates both interview and repertory grid data, presented together to illuminate and explore the superordinate and subordinate themes derived as outlined in table 2.

Table 2. Superordinate and subordinate themes for study 1

Superordinate Themes	Subordinate Themes
The shadow of release	A daunting process Having no one 'I'll always be a sex offender'
A step in the right direction	In the 'comfort zone' Knowing they'll have support
'This time it's different'	Understanding what's 'risky' Accepting help to change

Results

An analysis of the interview and repertory grid data identified three superordinate themes relevant to all of the participants. Each of these comprised of two or three subordinate themes. These will now be unpacked in detail to provide a rich understanding of the participants' most important thoughts and feelings, prior to them beginning a prison-model CoSA.

Superordinate Theme: The shadow of release

For all participants, their pending release from prison was approaching. Although they were looking forward to re-joining society they also had several fears. The process of being released from prison felt like a daunting process to the participants and they were aware of the lack of social support they would have surrounding them once they re-entered the community. In addition, the participants were aware of the potential stigmatisation they would face on release from prison leading them to consider whether they would ever be truly free of the 'sex offender' label.

A daunting process

Many of the participants interviewed were daunted by the process of release, for example where they would go to live and how they would navigate around a new area.

Extract 1

'I'm gonna be wary as things change don't they over the years especially if you're making a new move somewhere a fresh start somewhere, you're bound to be wary'

Extract 2

'I am absolutely terrified of getting out cause as I said I don't know the area either. I mean as ***** (CoSA coordinator) said there's a ***** apparently that goes straight down to the city centre but where do I get it from, how much is it, how long does it take, where do I get off, where's probation in ***** you know'

These two extracts highlight how being released from prison, in to a new area, will be an unsettling time for the participants and is already creating feelings of anxiety. Extract one highlights how the individuals who have been in prison for several years may be released in to a changed society. Indeed, society is ever-evolving, for example, the cost of living may have increased and the roads much busier than when they first entered prison. Leading from this, extract two in particular, highlights how the participant is struggling to construe future events involving the area they will be released to. Many are not familiar with the area they will be expected to re-settle in and cannot construe how their daily lives will unfold i.e. how they will get to their probation appointments. At this stage in the participants' sentence, release from prison is an unknown entity to them and this is anxiety provoking. This resonates with research which demonstrates that for those who commit sexual offences specifically, release back in to the community can be a stressful time with many hurdles for them to overcome, such as finding stable living accommodation (Tewksbury & Copes, 2013). As Brown, Spencer and Deakin (2007) highlight, the restrictions placed on those who commit sexual offences can result in them being placed in locations where they have little knowledge of the surrounding area making it difficult to negotiate their position in the community. The concerns surrounding release were heightened further for the some of the elderly participants who had severe health problems.

Extract 3

'I don't think I'm going to be able to cope on my own outside, cos the wheelchair if you can't propel it you can't do anything so I've just got to wait and see. Here...the system they have for getting around prison is excellent and healthcare is wonderful but I, obviously I realise how difficult it will be for me (on release)'

In extract 3 the participant explains how being confined to a wheelchair will make coping on their own in the community difficult. Again, the participant here talks about having to 'wait and see', adding further evidence that release is an unknown entity. In contrast, individuals who are wheelchair based are looked after well in the prison, with allocated prisoners who push their wheelchair for them. This is creating further feelings of anxiety for the participant in extract 3 as they are aware of the support they will lose on release. Indeed, concerns surrounding their health issues are not restricted to those who have committed sexual offences. Clinks (2013) have reported that over 80% of male prisoners aged 60 and over suffered from a chronic illness or disability. In addition, to this however, elderly offenders who have previously committed sexual crimes often foster friendships with other elderly offenders whilst in prison (Mann, 2012). Losing these friendships on release add to the difficulty of transitioning from prison to the community.

The anxieties the participants appear to be experiencing are evidenced further in how they construe both themselves and those around them. This is illuminated through an analysis of the structure of their repertory grids. A principal component analysis (PCA) of the repertory grids provides a graphical output of the participants' construal system, showing in spatial terms how the individuals' psychological space is structured at that time (Blagden et al., 2012).

PCA (varimax) for Participant 7 - Pre-circle grid

Axis Range: -1.78 to 1.78

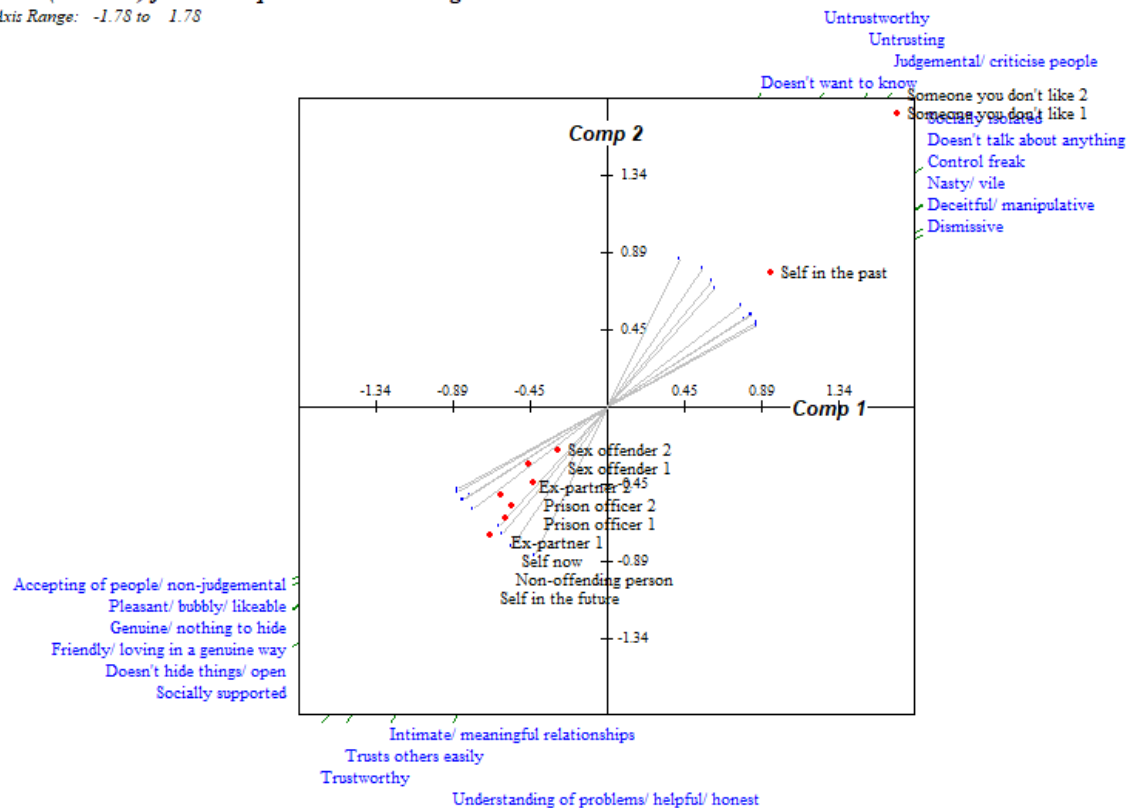


Figure 2. Principal Component analysis: Participant 7

The use of a principal components analysis is often used to try and uncover cognitive complexity or simplicity within repertory grid data (Fransella, Bell & Bannister, 2004). The PCA output for participant 7, as shown here in figure 2, includes two tight groupings of constructs falling in only two quadrants of the graph, which is indicative of tight construing. Tight construing is viewed as a form of cognitive simplicity, characterised by black and white, 'all or nothing' thinking (Houston, 1998; Winter, 1992). In addition, the eigenvalues for the varimax rotated components show that Principal Components 1 and 2 account for 93.72% of the variability in the repertory grid, which again is indicative of this cognitive simplicity (Houston, 1998). This is important to recognise as tight construing suggests the person is in a state of anxiety, which Kelly (1955) defines as the awareness that the events a person is confronted with lie mostly outside the range of convenience of their construct system. He believes that as humans we respond to this anxiety in two ways. We aggressively confront the unknown area so that we can bring it within the range of convenience of our construct system. Or, alternatively, we withdraw from the area altogether, which involves constriction, or a narrowing of the perceptual field as is the case in many of the participants in this study. This is concerning as this tightness in construing represents a mechanism whereby invalidating events may be ignored with stereotypical interpretations made, further minimizing the importance of this invalidating information. (Catina, Gitzinger & Hoeckh, 1992). For example, with regard to CoSA, the potential support from the volunteers may ease the anxiety felt regarding release from prison. However, due to their tight construing this may be minimised or ignored.

What is positive to note on the PCA output, however, is that the element 'Self in the past' is diametrically opposed to the other elements (apart from someone you don't like 1 & 2) and located within the quadrant of the negative constructs. This demonstrates how much the participant construes themselves to have changed from how they were in the past, particularly as the self now is defined by the positive poles of the two components. This indicates that the process towards change has already begun; something which will be discussed in more detail later on in the chapter.

Having no one

Alongside their anxiety about their pending release, every participant who took part in the study stated that they would have minimal, if any, pro-social support on release and from this came a sense of loneliness. What was particularly interesting was the acknowledgment by nearly all the participants that they had problems forming and maintaining healthy relationships with family and friends.

Extract 4

'I seem to keep myself to myself really. I've always been like a loner person, I don't know why. Maybe when I was younger but as I got older I didn't make friends'.

Extract 5

'I don't make friends with people to be honest, I don't make friends with people anywhere'.

Extract 6

'I know a lot of people but friends no, I don't trust men but at the minute, since I've been here I have done but I want genuine friends, not just friends for wrong things'.

The participants acknowledge that making friends is a problem area for them, particularly, as extract 6 highlights, with pro-social people. This theme of having no one is particularly concerning due to the fact that isolation and emotional loneliness have been reported to be factors significant in sexual recidivist behaviours (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005; Marshall, 2010). In addition, Van den Berg, Beijersbergen, Nieuwbeerta and Dirkzwager (2017) acknowledge that this social isolation may begin whilst the individual is still in prison. From their research, they reported that all other offender types reported significantly more positive relationships with fellow prisoners than those imprisoned for sexual offences. This social isolation appears to be reflected in the participants' extracts. Exploring the correlations between the constructs elicited in the participants' repertory grids highlighted further how for some social isolation and loneliness were construed as important to their 'self now'.

Kelly (1955) theorised that certain constructs might be central to an individuals' system of constructs and therefore their self-definition. Table 3 highlights in bold the constructs the participants construe as important to their definition of the self.

Table 3. Element and construct correlations

Participant No.	Constructs correlated with 'self now'
1	Argues a lot /Walks away from arguments (0.73)
2	Deceitful/ Honest (-0.94) Someone you can't trust/ Trusted (-0.84) Selfish/ Sharing & caring person (-0.94) Wants you to fail/ Best interests at heart (-0.93) Lets you down/ Supportive & always there to help (-0.91) Not listening to others & thinks you know best/ Willing to take advice (-0.89)

	Untrusting/ Trusts others easily (-0.93) Socially isolated/ Socially supported (-0.92)
3	Not trustworthy/ Upfront & honest (-0.93) Doesn't care about others/ Helpful (-0.84) Disrespectful/ Respect for others & self (-0.94) Not bothered where they go/ Planning for the future (-0.94) Thinks of themselves/ Supportive & encouraging (-0.93) Socially isolated & lonely/ Socially supported (-0.86)
4	Tells you what you want to hear/ Tells you straight (-0.59), Judgemental/ Can tell them anything (-0.60), Says one thing & does another/ Listens to you & helps you (-0.61), Untrusting/ Trusts others easily (-0.59)
5	Loner & prefers own company /Outgoing & bubbly (0.87) Locks information away /Shares information about themselves (0.94), Unapproachable / There for you to talk to (0.70), Not able to deal with life's problems / Calm & can deal with problems (0.86), Non-confrontational & buries their head in the sand / Speak their mind & confident to suffer the consequences (0.87) Untrusting / Trusts others easily (0.82), Socially isolated / Socially supported (0.79), Lonely with no relationships / Intimate & meaningful relationships (0.82)
6	Lack of confidence & in the shadows / Sociable& gets on with people (0.59) Socially isolated / Socially supported (0.61) Loner / Intimate & meaningful relationships (0.65)
7	Deceitful & manipulative/ Pleasant, bubbly, likeable (-0.84) Doesn't want to know/ Understanding of problems & helpful (-0.84) Dismissive/ Accepting of people & non-judgemental (-0.86) Nasty & Vile/ Friendly & loving in a genuine way (-0.91) Judgemental & criticises people/ Trustworthy (-0.77) Doesn't talk about anything/ Doesn't hide things & open (-0.83) Control freak/ Genuine & Nothing to hide (-0.88) Untrusting/ Trusts others easily (-0.93), Socially isolated/ Socially supported (-0.94) Untrustworthy/ Intimate & meaningful relationships (-0.85)
8	Neglecting & not showing love or listening/ Caring & kind (-0.72) Wary & reserved/ Non-judgemental (-0.67) Pre-judging & assuming/ Someone who is fair (-0.67) Self-centred/ Supportive & does things for people (-0.67)
9	A loner / Intimate & meaningful relationships (0.38) Work shy & lazy/ Hardworking (-0.31) Moping & complaining a lot/ A sense of humour (-0.37)

The correlations outlined in table 3 highlight how participants 2, 3 and 7 identify the 'socially supported' construct as important to their self-definition. There are two points to consider as possible reasons for this. Firstly, these participants may feel socially supported currently whilst in

prison and secondly being socially supported may be essential to them as a person. In either of these cases, it is possible that the loneliness and isolation associated with the release from prison may overwhelm these participants once they re-enter the community (Fox, 2015a, Tewksbury & Mustaine, 2009). Indeed, participants 5, 6 and 9 identify constructs such as being socially isolated and lonely as central to their definition of self. Participants 5 and 6 in particular, appear to define themselves in a negative context, involving high correlations with constructs such as lacking confidence and not being able to deal with life's problems.

This social loneliness has also been discussed in the literature with regard to its impact on recidivism (Levenson & Hern, 2007; Tewksbury & Lees; 2006). To counter this, positive and stable social relationships are reported as being needed to successfully assist those who have offended sexually, both while in prison awaiting release and upon re-entering society (Berg and Huebner, 2011; Tewksbury & Connor, 2012; Willis & Grace, 2008). This argument has been reinforced by research which stated alienation and 'not fitting in' to be the biggest difference between offenders who have gone on to desist from crime when compared with offenders still active in crime (Farmer et al., 2011). This is particularly concerning when considering the construct 'hides in the shadows' identified by participant 6, as is documented in table 3. This is particularly illuminating as it suggests they construe themselves as almost unworthy to mix with the rest of society. When combined with the next subordinate theme whereby participants believe they will always be deemed a 'sex offender' by society, feelings of loneliness and isolation can be reinforced in further.

'I'll always be a sex offender'

Alongside being unsure of the process of release and having little to no support network, the participants were aware of the stigmatisation by society, towards those who commit sexual offences.

Extract 7

'I'm concerned about going to a hostel where people might find out you're a vulnerable prisoner...that's a worry erm because you don't know what people know or can find out and you know erm so yeah I'm just generally scared to be honest'.

Adding to the feelings of anxiety and apprehension already discussed, the participants were worried about how they will be judged on release with many feeling as if they would never be truly free of the label 'sex offender'. Extract 7 highlights how the participant is 'scared' that people within the community will find out he has committed sexual offences, which may encourage further social isolation. The participant's description of themselves as a 'vulnerable prisoner' is particularly

illuminating, giving an insight in to how they construe their 'self in the future' on release from prison. This resonates with other research in which 92% of the participants (n=150, individuals convicted of sexual offences) perceived themselves as susceptible to devaluation or discrimination due to their status as a sex offender (Mingus & Birchfield, 2012). This is concerning due to the statistically significant effect the authors of the study reported between these feelings of being devalued and discriminated against, as someone convicted of a sexual offence, and the tendency to withdraw from society. In addition, when those who have gone on to desist from crime have been compared to offenders who are still active, stigma has been highlighted as a significant predictor of reconviction (Lebel et al., 2008).

Extract 8

'if anything happens in the future cause I'm a sex offender....and (if) something happens in that area, the person they're gonna come to straight away is me 'where were you on such a date?'

Extract 8 highlights how the participants believe that if a sexual offence is carried out in the area they reside in, they will be one of the first the police approach and question. Despite having served their time in prison and participating on the required treatment programmes some of the participants felt they would have to keep proving themselves over and over again, even after their parole or licence conditions were no longer in place. What emerges therefore within the data is a difference between what the participants would like to be in the future and what they believe society will 'allow' them to be. This is captured in the implicative dilemmas elicited from some of the participants' repertory grids. Implicative dilemmas arise due to an awareness of discrepancies between a person's actual self (self now) and ideal self (self in the future) (Dorough, Grice & Parker, 2007). These cognitive conflicts, based on correlations between congruent and incongruent constructs (Feixas & Saul, 2004), can result in an 'unsatisfied state of self-discrepancy' (Dorough et al., 2007, p.83).

Self now is construed as "Intimate/ meaningful relationships"

...whereas Self in the future is construed as "Lonely"

The dilemma is a "Lonely" person tends to be a "no one likes them" person ($r = 0.37$)

Participant 2

Here you can see a conflict, which links to the previous sub-theme also. Participant 2 would like to have intimate and meaningful relationships in the future, similar to the friendships they have made

whilst being in prison. They believe however, as is highlighted in the extract below, that the view society has of them as a 'sex offender' will mean they are lonely. The problem with this is that they believe lonely people are not liked, which will exacerbate feelings of isolation even further. As Paternoster and Bushway (2009, p.1113) acknowledge the future self is not merely a fantasy, rather it is connected to 'current selves and past experiences' involving not only hopes and goals but also fears and uncertainties. The uncertainty of the future, combined with the perceived stigma, means in reality they construe their future as lonely, in which the 'real' person is unlikable. This is concerning due to the links made previously between social isolation and reoffending (Marshall, 2010). In addition, stigmatisation and feelings of 'being doomed' to always be a 'sex offender', as highlighted in the extracts, have been reported to predict both reconviction and reimprisonment (LeBel et al., 2008, p. 154).

Extract 9

'this time I'm getting out and a bit wary 'sex offender' you know and now I'll have to disclose about my offence and things like that. It's a bit worrying on that side of it you know and to get in to a relationship I'm going to have to tell them beforehand and will they still want to be friends?'

The extract highlights how the participants can envisage while they are in prison that they want meaningful relationships in the future. Coexisting alongside this however, is an expectation that they will be worse off when they are released from prison with regard to being liked and loneliness, particularly if they inform people of their previous offences. In a study exploring the experiences of those convicted of sexual offences, Blagden, Winder, Thorne and Gregson (2011) reported how fear was a factor influencing the disclosure and admittance of previous offences. As the extracts in the current study also highlight, their participants feared being judged, labelled and rejected should they share their past offending behaviour, which may create feelings of loneliness and social isolation.

Overall, an analysis of the data in this study has highlighted the shadow of release the participants have looming over them as they lead up to their release from prison. There are additional positive themes emerging from the data however, which will now be unpacked further.

Superordinate Theme: A step in the right direction

The second superordinate theme explores the recognition by all the participants that involvement in a prison-model CoSA will be a positive step forward for them. Although they were wary of this new initiative that had been offered to them, they were still aware of the potential benefits it held.

In the 'comfort' zone

Prior to starting the prison-model of CoSA all but one of the participants interviewed stated that they were nervous and wary of meeting the volunteers.

Extract 10

'I'll be wary at first, until maybe I've got to know the volunteer a bit, he's got to know or she, either he or she has got to know me, we know each other a bit cause with it being say the first situation or the first meeting, you're bound to be wary cause you don't know what's going to happen.'

Extract 11

'Cause it feels like, how do I explain it, you're in a room like this and you feel a bit nervous cause I don't know them and they don't know them and I'll be a bit on edge, a bit thinking 'are you judging me or something.'

The extracts here link with the last theme, in the previous superordinate theme, with regard to the potential stigma they believe they will receive from members of the public. The volunteers are members of the community, therefore, most of the participants were wary of being judged as a 'sex offender' and nothing else. Höing, Bogaerts and Vogelvang (2013) reported similar findings from their interviews with UK and Dutch CoSA Core Members and volunteers. They stated how, during the first few sessions feelings of insecurity and reservation were reported by both Core Members and volunteers.

For the Core Members, currently in prison in particular, the sensational media representation of those who commit sexual offences and the anger and hatred felt towards them (McAlinden, 2006) is likely to be their view of the general public as a whole. As Nellis (2009) explains, the stereotype the media has created of those who commit sexual offences overlooks those who are motivated to start new lives and desist from sexual reoffending. The Core Members viewed meeting the volunteers whilst they were still in their 'comfort zone' as a positive aspect to their experience. This meant rapport and relationships could be built and any nervousness overcome, whilst they still felt in a 'safe' environment.

Extract 12

'Well I'm in comfortable surroundings, I've got used to this place, it's my comfort zone so it will be ideal for me, you know I can always retreat back in (to his cell), sort of thing so I've got my comfort zone, out there it could be a bit more difficult, a bit

more erm cos it's going to be a whole shock to the system, I've been in prison now nearly 6 years, there's a lot changed out there, it's going to be quite a shock to the system going out on my own and no support apart from my probation officer'.

The extract highlights how for the participants it would be more difficult to meet a group of volunteers and begin to form relationships with them on release from prison, rather than whilst they are still in prison. The nature of the establishment the prison-model of CoSA is established in, however, cannot be overlooked. A prison sentence for someone who has committed a sexual offence is often characterised by stigmatisation, feelings of anxiety and fear of being outed as a 'sexual offender' (Schwabe, 2005). Even when segregated on a vulnerable prisoners' wing, those convicted of sexual offences have reported physically frightening events, such as having insults and objects thrown at them resulting in damaged self-esteem (Ilevins, 2013).

The prison in focus here however, is one of the largest sex offender treatment prisons in Europe, specialising in both rehabilitative programmes and sex offender treatment and only housing those convicted of sexual offences. The prison has been described by prisoners themselves as a place of acceptance, generating a feeling of safety they had never experienced before (Blagden, Winder & Hames, 2016; Ilevins, 2013). This feeling of being 'safe' and the reduction in anxiety has been documented by these authors as creating additional 'head space' for the prisoners to reflect upon the self, work through problems and contemplate change. This leads to the question therefore, of whether a prison-model of CoSA would be as beneficial in a prison whereby potential Core Members were held on a separate, vulnerable prisoners' wing? Or whether the need for them in such a situation would be even greater?

Knowing they'll have support

CoSA in any form are designed for those who have been convicted of a sexual offence and have little to no pro-social support in the community (Wilson et al., 2010). Prior to the CoSA starting in the prison-model the Core Members identified that they would have little to no support on release.

Extract 13

'They (prison-model coordinator) approached me yeah because I haven't got any erm support network out there at all, there's no family, friends or anything.'

Extract 14

‘The support, knowing there was that amount of support out there for me, you know, just a like sad, lonely old git, you know with nowhere to go, suddenly I don’t need to bury my head in the sand, I know there’s people there to support me, so from that point of view I feel a lot more confident.’

Extract 13 highlights how the participants are facing a life in the community with no friends or family to support them. As the participant in extract 14 explains, this creates feelings of sadness and loneliness, a situation that is not uncommon for those who are convicted of sexual offences (Tewksbury & Copes, 2013). This is particularly concerning due to loneliness and social isolation being reported within the literature, as risk factors of sexual reoffending (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005; Marshall, 2010). The participants recognised however, that individuals with a severe lack of pro-social support on release from prison are prioritised for CoSA and were aware of the potential benefits being involved could offer. This improved the confidence of some participants, as extract 14 highlights, meaning they no longer had to hide from the world. The participants were beginning to consider a life on release with the support of others, a concept which, until recently, had been unlikely to be a reality.

Extract 15

‘I realised that circles offers you something that some people get from their families but if you’ve no family or not in contact with your family, you’ve not support out there’

In this extract, the participant is explaining how for them a prison-model CoSA would go some way to provide the support other offenders may receive from their families, both whilst in prison and once released back in to the community. This is particularly important due to the role social support provided by family members, is believed to hold in reducing the likelihood of future criminal behaviour on release from prison (Willis and Grace, 2008). For example, from their research into social ties, re-entry and recidivism, Berg and Huebner (2011) demonstrated that good quality ties to relatives and the social support they provided, was what motivated offenders to reintegrate back into society successfully and live a pro-social life. As the Core Member acknowledged however, such support does not always have to be provided through family relations. Weaver and McNeill (2015) reported, from their research, that the social relations influential in supporting desistance could be friendship groups and faith communities, as well as families. What characterised the social relations that assisted the ex-offender in realising their pro-social aspirations the most, was a sense of

solidarity and 'we-ness'. With this in mind it is possible that the social support offered through a prison-model CoSA may be able to encourage and promote desistance from Core Members.

Superordinate Theme: 'This time it's different'

Even before they had started the prison-model CoSA, most of the participants were, despite their fears, beginning to work towards desistance. The final superordinate theme explores the Core Members' progression towards understanding what is 'risky' for them and their willingness to accept help to make the necessary changes to achieve an offence free, pro-social life in the future.

Understanding what's 'risky'

Many of the participants had developed an insight into their offending behaviour, the consequences of it and potential risk factors in the future. They were beginning to understand where they had 'gone wrong' in the past and how their future needed to be different. This theme is not directly linked at this stage with the prison-model CoSA or the participants' knowledge that they were about to become a Core Member. Throughout the following studies however, this theme develops and becomes intertwined with the accountability aspect of CoSA, deeming it important to discuss at this stage.

Extract 16

'Well it could be anything, it could getting involved with a family that's got children, you avoid that situation, before I probably didn't 'will you babysit for me ****' 'ay no problem' but now you think 'hang on', like say '***** will you babysit I wanna go out?' and I say 'no I can't I've got to...' (it's) your trigger you say 'excuse me I've got something else on tonight I can't do it' I wouldn't say you block it off, you put yourself in a different situation cause if you get in that situation, you're on your own, say the person was 8-9 years old, that's gonna trigger your thoughts back, 'hang on, I could get away with this' even though they may not say something or they might but you don't get in that situation, you reverse and say 'excuse me I'm going out for a meal with a friend' you don't put yourself in that situation. Before I would 'yeah I'll go on do it for you' but now when you think back at your past and you think 'hang on' your future, no.'

Extract 17

'Well I listen to em, I didn't before... Anger, there's three different ways how you're on about, there's 1 I just told you, 2 I'll go to the gym and take it out on the weights and 3 I'll talk to someone I can trust and they'll bring me back down to a level and then you've got to think about what you're gonna lose and everything else, is it worth it.'

With an insight in to their risk factors comes a greater sense of agency. The participants are aware of the situations that may lead them back to reoffending meaning they have more control over their future. Extract 16 provides an example of the participant acknowledging the situations that will be risky for them in the future in terms of re-offending. They are aware that being asked to look after a child may trigger risky, offence-related thoughts and therefore they will need to excuse themselves from the situation. From their current position within prison the participants believe they will be able steer their lives away from situations where previously offending behaviour would occur. As extract 17 outlines, one way of doing this is by reminding themselves of everything they have to lose. This is particularly significant due to the fact that a higher internal locus of control has been reported in individuals that have gone on to successfully desist from sexually offending (Farmer et al., 2011). Desisters express more belief in their ability to control events in their lives when compared to those still actively offending, and identify this responsibility-taking for their own behaviour and actions as a general turning point in their lives (Harris, 2014).

The extracts from this study, should not, therefore, be dismissed as the participants just 'talking the talk', as they may suggest that they are beginning the process of change. From his research into early desistance narratives King (2013b) argued that identity change may begin much earlier in the desistance process than has initially been thought. Although using a sample involving all offence types, King stated that a clarity surrounding past offences and offending behaviour, combined with an increased sense of agency over one's future provided a turning point whereby a new narrative could emerge. These pro-social narratives, as can be seen in the extracts from the participants, can encourage the move away from crime by conditioning future behaviour and social interaction (Presser, 2009). However, it is crucial that these early narratives receive positive reactions and testimonies from others, in order to facilitate longer-term desistance (King, 2013b).

For example, extract 18 could initially be disregarded for being an oversimplified account of release. This is still possibly the case and King (2013b) does acknowledge that an individuals' aspiration to desist from crime does not guarantee that it will take place. However, it can also be viewed as the beginning of a desistance narrative that needs to be encouraged by those around them in order to reinforce the identity reconstruction (King, 2013b).

Extract 18

‘Going to my sheltered housing, if I can I want to get back to college and do some learning, I might do some voluntary work in a shop or something.’

The participant here, believes they will be able to engage in both education and voluntary work on release from prison. Significant barriers may need to be overcome to achieve this, however, the volunteers can encourage the Core Members and help them consider possible solutions. If the volunteers of the prison-model CoSA are able to reinforce the desistance narratives of the Core Members, before they are even released from prison, it may be possible to strengthen and secure them before the reality of release sets in.

Accepting help to change

Alongside gaining an insight into their risk factors and a growing sense of agency, the participants were beginning to realise and accept the support they had around them to help them achieve an offence free life.

Extract 19

‘I realise now that you do need somebody just to have a chat with everything now and again and you know chew the cut over as they say, yeah but I’ve always tried to do it on my own before but it’s never worked.’

Extract 20

‘Because last time I went through all the recall an angry person, I wouldn’t communicate with anybody and it wasn’t so much about the offence it was I just felt unjustly done by and after this one, although there was no physical contact, I realised myself that I put myself back in here. Pressure was put on me and I shouldn’t have took the first option that came in my head, I should have looked far deeper and possibly come up with a proper solution that would have meant me not coming back into prison and I realise that I can’t do everything myself.’

These extracts highlight how for the participants, intertwined with their understanding of past actions, is the acknowledgement that they need the support of others to change. Extract 19 highlights how many of the participants have previously tried to manage their problems on their own. As extract 20 acknowledges this includes struggling to communicate about negative feelings

they may be experiencing, such as anger or injustice. The participants are beginning to recognise however, that they need support to help resolve any future problems, should they arise. This is a big step towards desistance for the participants as many have previously thought they could achieve it alone, only to have been re-called, or even re-convicted, resulting in another prison sentence. Weaver and McNeill (2015) believe, the development of new pro-social relationships along with a disillusionment with criminal lifestyles, as is described in the previous sub-theme, can provide a change-promoting influence on the individual's behaviour. They argue that a sense of belonging established through pro-social relations can encourage desistance in order to maintain the social bonds created.

The self-identity plots, derived from the repertory grid data, illuminate further the way the participants construe themselves in relation to those people (elements) they view as important and meaningful in their world. For example, in figure 3 nearly all the elements fall within the same quadrant with the self now being close in proximity to the pro-social elements of 'prison officer' and 'a non-offending person' in particular.

Self-Identity Plot for Participant 3 - Pre-circle grid
Indifferent Area Limits = 0.80; 1.20.

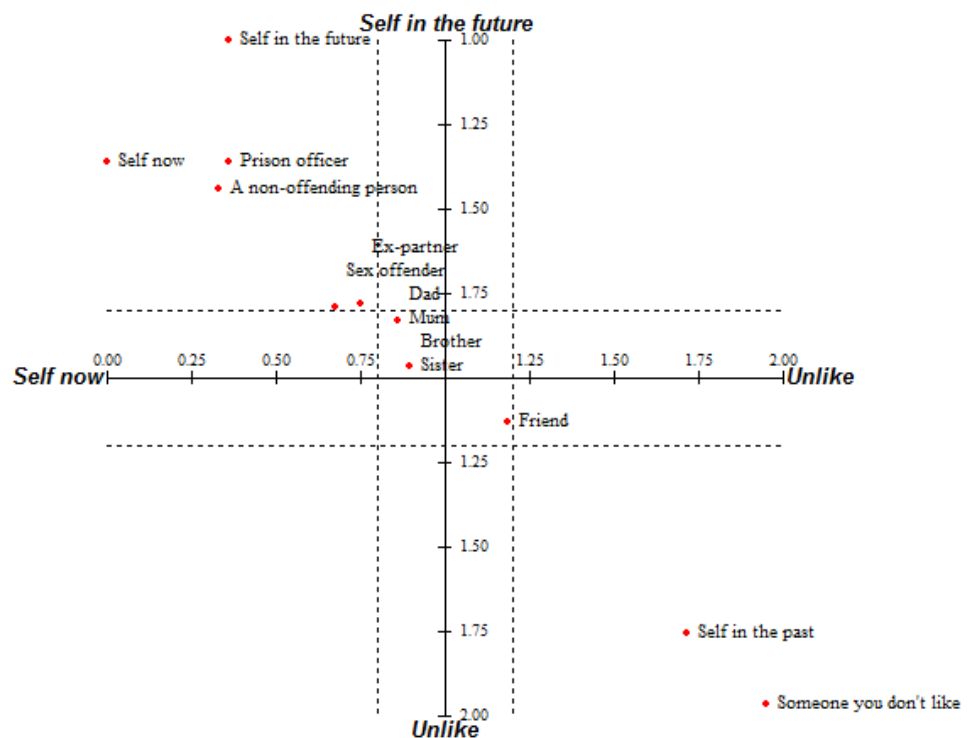


Figure 3. Self-identity plot: Participant 3

This shows that the participant is recognising the support they have around them currently. In addition, this represents a narrow gap between the self now and future self thus demonstrating that they construe their future self as achievable. The element 'friend' and family members 'mum,

'dad' and 'sister' at first appear to have an interesting positioning. During the narrative however, the participant explains how their friend is now deceased and that it has been decades since they have had any communication with any of the family, clarifying why these elements fall in the zone of indifference and have been given little thought. What is concerning is that for participant 3 and others in the study, pro-social support appears to come from elements who will no longer be in their life on release i.e. prison officer.

Extract 21

'**** (mental health worker in the prison) he's my saviour. He's fantastic **** he's worked with me for 6 and a half years and knowing that he's in ****, he's not that far away from me...you know the mental health team here have nurtured me for 6 and a half years, they know how I operate, they know how I tick and to come back (in to prison) and have that support again it was unbelievable.'

This extract illuminates how the support the participant has received whilst in prison is 'unbelievable' compared to when they were in the community previously. With nothing to replace this support on release, the participants could worryingly be left feeling like life is better on the inside. This lack of social support within the community appears common place for those individuals who have previously been convicted of sexual offences. As West (1996) has previously highlighted, individuals who have been rejected by family and friends, and face isolation within the community, may feel they have nothing to lose by re-offending (Mingus & Birchfield, 2012; Tewksbury, 2012). Consequently, when combined with the previous findings, this highlights the importance to the participants of being given the opportunity to be on a CoSA that starts in the prison. This will enable them to have the 'new' support in place ready for when they re-enter the community.

Participants in this study appeared aware of the support the prison-model CoSA could offer and recognised how much they needed this help to change. This will be lost however, if they do not maintain a pro-social, offence free life on release from prison, thus hopefully encouraging desistance from crime.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the participants' thoughts and feelings regarding their release from prison and subsequent future in the community, prior to their experience on a prison-model CoSA. In addition, how the participants construed themselves now compared to the past and

where they would like to be in future, was also considered. Three superordinate themes were identified, 'the shadow of release', 'A step in the right direction' and 'this time it's different'.

The findings indicate that a main concern for the participants was the process of their upcoming release from prison, with regard to where they would live and how they would settle in to a new area. The realisation that they would have little to no pro-social support on release also appeared to weigh on their minds, along with the reality of living with the 'sex offender' label. These findings are significant due to the potential future isolation and loneliness they could indicate. Potential alienation from society on release from prison is concerning due to the link made within the literature with sexual reoffending (Marshall, 2010). Similar concerns are evident within the desistance literature. For example, Farmer, Beech and Ward (2011) reported that the biggest difference between active offenders and those who had gone on to successfully desist from crime was an alienation from society. Desisters reported a greater feeling of belonging compared to the active offenders who presented a disconnectedness from social supports and feelings of estrangement. Similarly, Weaver and McNeill (2015) argued that the social relations most influential in supporting desistance are those categorised by a sense of 'we-ness', which in turn shaped a sense of belonging and reinforced the new pro-social identity.

The participants appeared to consider that partaking in a prison-model CoSA, would hopefully provide a meaningful sense of belonging, inclusion and support during the lead up to release. In addition, some appeared to grow in confidence due to this knowledge. Indeed, Bates, Macrae, Williams and Webb (2012) argued, from their research into 60 UK community CoSA, that having volunteers they could relate and share issues with reduced the emotional loneliness and social isolation for 70% of the Core Members in the study. Although ideally a control group and a longer follow-up period would have been used, the results still have implications for the findings of this study. The additional prison sessions in the prison-model of CoSA may help to provide Core Members with similar support during their lead up to release, enabling them to have a pro-social network surrounding them by the time they enter the community.

The fact that their current situation in prison was viewed as a 'comfort zone' to some of the participants was of particular credit to the establishment the prison-model CoSA was started in. In general, the prison experience for those who have committed sexual offences has been described as full of fear and terror, particularly if their identity as a 'sex offender' is revealed (Schwabebe, 2005). This therefore raised questions as to the applicability of the model in other forensic settings. In addition to meeting the volunteers while they still felt safe, the participants recognised the support that they would offer, culminating in the view that being a Core Member was a positive step in the right direction.

The final superordinate theme highlighted how the participants had reached a turning point with regard to how they construed themselves, their previous offending behaviour and related risk factors. These findings are significant due to their prevalence in those who have successfully gone on to desist from sexual offending (Harris, 2014). Harris (2014) reported how those who desist are believed to undergo a cognitive transformation, which begins with a desire to understand the nature of their offence and the harm they had caused, similar to the participants in this study. In addition, this acknowledgement and reflection upon previous offending behaviour, along with the construction of a new identity can be viewed as an early desistance narrative (King, 2013b). Vaughan (2007) believes that individuals must also pass judgement on their previous offending behaviour in order to successfully reconstruct a future crime-free identity. Due to the future focus of the data collected in this study the participants' moral assessment of their past behaviour was not determined, meaning the extracts may represent nothing more than false hope. However, rather than being dismissed as potential 'empty' plans, the findings from the participants in this study may also indicate a turning point whereby a new desistance narrative is being developed.

As part of this turning point in the participants' lives, they also appeared to be developing a growing sense of agency over their future as a pro-social member of the community. The importance of this is demonstrated by LeBel, Burnett, Maruna and Bushway (2008) who argue that a belief in self-efficacy was a necessary condition for desistance to be successful. Individuals with this belief, they argued, are more likely to select into and take advantage of positive pro-social opportunities, such as a place on a prison-model CoSA as is the case in this study. It is possible therefore that the cognitive transformation, combined with a growing sense of agency, is what led the participants to accept their place on a prison-model CoSA and the subsequent support it will involve.

This 'turning point' highlighted by the participants also indicated a realisation that they needed to accept the help around them to successfully desist from possibly falling back in to old habits and consequential future reoffending. Having a social network more conventional than one self, as is the case in prison-model CoSA, can encourage successful self-change (Paternoster & Bushway, 2009). Weaver and McNeill (2015) develop this further arguing that personal change alone is insufficient to secure desistance without being recognised by members of the community. King (2013b) agrees by stating that positive reaction to desistance narratives in their early stages is thought to be vital in encouraging and facilitating a successful crime-free life. This, therefore, may indicate a need for a prison-model of CoSA, for participants and future Core Members alike, to support the identity change vital to successful desistance.

It is possible that this point in the participants' journey signified the first stages of the desistance process. With regard to Göbbels, Ward and Willis' (2012) Integrated Theory of Desistance from Sex Offending (ITDSO), this first phase of this model involves the presence of a turning point as that described above. Capitalising on this decisive momentum, as the authors term it, can only occur however, if a person is open to change which is highlighted in the findings. This is important to recognise due to the association with future desistance from crime. For example, Farmer, Beech and Ward (2012) reported, in relation to sex offender treatment programmes, that only those who had gone on to successfully desist from committing sexual offences had been able to use the experience as a 'hook for change' (Giordano et al., 2002). Similarly, LeBel, Burnett, Maruna and Bushway (2008) argue that self-identification as a pro-social person, rather than 'offender', can enable an individual to take advantage of positive social opportunities which may reduce the chances of future re-imprisonment.

It may be possible that if accepting a place on a prison-model CoSA is combined with cognitive change as highlighted in the data, future desistance may be more likely. At this stage in the research however, there is not enough evidence to state whether or not this is the case. The model will therefore be returned to throughout the thesis in order to determine whether the ITDSO can be used as a conceptual framework for the prison-model of CoSA.

In summary, it may be possible for the prison CoSA sessions to capitalise on the cognitive change that has emerged within the data, through reinforcement of the new pro-social identity. In addition, the support offered in the lead up to release from prison may help the participants deal with the daunting prospect of release. This study, however has only provided an insight in to the participants' experiences at the beginning of their journey on a prison-model of CoSA. In order to fully explore the impact of CoSA that start in the prison and its role in the desistance process, further research is needed at different time-points. The Core Members were therefore re-visited, before they were released from prison (but had completed the prison sessions of the CoSA) and once they had re-entered the community. These will now be discussed in the following two chapters.

Chapter 5: Core Member post-prison/pre-community CoSA study ‘The reality of the future’

Introduction

In the previous chapter the analysis of the data reflected how the participants construed themselves and their future prior to starting the prison-model CoSA. Whilst the ‘shadow of release’ was ‘looming’ over them they recognised their involvement in the prison-model CoSA as a step in the right direction; towards the offence-free life they wished to obtain on release from prison. This chapter follows the same participants on their journey, with data collected immediately prior to being released in to the community, after they had taken part in the prison sessions of the prison-model CoSA.

Unlike community models of CoSA, in the prison-model the volunteers visit the Core Member whilst they are still in prison. Sessions are held in the prison on a weekly or fortnightly basis, starting approximately three months before they are due to be released. The aim of the prison sessions is the same as when in the community; to offer support to the Core Member, whilst at the same time holding them accountable for their thoughts, feelings and behaviour. It is hoped in doing this the volunteers can support the Core Member through the entire dynamic, individualised and often difficult, transition from prison in to the community (Saunders et al., 2014).

Desistance from offending sexually

It is argued that the most appealing definition of desistance is viewing it not as an event but a dynamic ongoing process, complete with relapses and recoveries (Willis et al., 2010). Expanding on this, Göbbels, Ward and Willis (2012) have developed the Integrated Theory of Desistance from Sex Offending (ITDSO). The model consists of four phases and aims to outline a comprehensive psychological and social account of the whole desistance from sexual offending process. The model is discussed in detail in chapter 2, however a brief explanation of each stage of the model will be outlined here.

The first phase of this model involves the presence of a turning point, which makes it possible to ‘knife off’ their criminal lifestyle. In addition, the offender must also possess the cognitive and emotional capacities to take advantage of such opportunities as turning points. During this turning point phase, a critical evaluation of the offender’s identity must take place in order for a person to reach the end goal of desistance. This is defined as ‘decisive momentum’ (Göbbels et al., 2012). It could be argued that the participants were in this first stage in the previous study; they had accepted a place as a Core Member on a prison-model CoSA and were beginning to consider how they could move away from their previous offending lifestyle.

The second phase of the ITDSO involves a successful reconstruction of the self with the roles of cognitive transformation and hope being of particular relevance. Offenders during this phase are beginning to make changes towards the new pro-social self and have hopes for an offence free future. The third phase focuses upon the process of re-entry and a maintained commitment to change. This requires the practical identity as non-offender, constructed in the previous phase, to be not only adopted by the individual but also acknowledged and accepted by others. The final phase of the model is normalcy, which occurs once ex-offenders define themselves as a non-offending member of society, who are fully reintegrated within the community.

The aim of this study was to explore the expectations of release, of those convicted of a sexual offence, and how this developed during their participation in the prison sessions of CoSA. Leading from this, the research question was to consider how the prison-model of CoSA relates to and impacts upon the desistance from crime, when in particular considering the phases of Göbbels, Ward and Willis' (2012) ITDSO.

Method

Participants

The participants from study one were re-approached to take part in the second study of the research. The participants who were available and willing to take part in this study have been highlighted in bold in table 4. The difference in the sample sizes between the first study (n=9) and the second study (n=6) was due to some of the participants being released quickly from prison with no time for the research to take place, rather than participants 'dropping out' or withdrawing from the research. As Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) state, qualitative research focuses upon depth rather than breadth, relying upon small sample sizes. Rather than making claims about generalisability to larger samples therefore, an in-depth exploration of the topic was conducted.

Table 4. Participant information for study 2

Participant Number	Actual number of prison sessions	Participant Age	Intellectual Disability	Health issues	Risk level (RM2000)
1	6	60	Yes - mild	Yes - physical	Medium
2	2	60	No	Yes - physical	Medium
3	7	60	Yes - mild	Yes - physical	Very high
4	6	45	Borderline	No	Medium
5	4	58	No	Yes - mental	Medium
6	3	78	No	Yes - physical and mental	Medium
7	IPP sentence (parole date not confirmed)	73	No	No	Very high
8	2	64	Yes – mild	No	High
9	6	52	No	No	Very high

Procedure

As in the previous study an interview and repertory grid were carried out with each consenting Core Member. The data collection took place in the purpose-built interview rooms at the prison and were split over two sessions, in the week or two prior to the participant being released. At the point of data collection for this study, the participants had been involved in the prison sessions of the prison-model CoSA, the number of which can be seen in table 4.

Semi-structured interviews

As in study one, qualitative semi-structured interviews were carried out with participants, one to one, in order to facilitate in-depth discussion and explore their personal experience. In line with Smith and Osborn’s (2003) view, the participants were considered the experts on the experiences being discussed deeming it essential that they were given maximum opportunity to share their story and elaborate on any areas of personal meaning. The interviews lasted on average 1.5 hours and explored the same areas as discussed in the previous study. The interview schedule was almost identical to the first study so as to make comparisons in how they construed themselves and their future on release from prison (see appendix 7). The only difference was that some of the questions had been changed to the past tense to explore their experience of meeting the volunteers and the subsequent prison sessions. For example, ‘What were the good or bad things of being on a Circle in the prison?’ and ‘What were the volunteers like?’

The flexibility of the data collection instrument, however, enabled areas that were deemed to be important, to both the researcher and the participant, to be discussed and explored further than if a structured interview were taking place. Due to the same interview schedules being used the questions posed could be understood by an individual with the reading ability of a 7-year old and therefore, were suitable to be used with those who had borderline to mild ID.

Repertory grids

The repertory grid is, essentially, a complex sorting task, which helps the researcher to develop an understanding of individuals' personal construct system, the way they make sense of their world and how they interpret their experience (Neimeyer et al., 2005). As in study one, this method of collecting data was used in conjunction with semi-structured interviews, following exactly the same procedure as was previously outlined in chapter 3.

Ethics

As researchers have pointed out, ethical practice is a dynamic, ongoing process that should be monitored through the entire data collection and analysis stages of research and not just considered during the design (Smith et al., 2009; Winder & Blagden, 2008). Therefore, although the participants had agreed to take part in all three of the studies in the research project when signing the consent form (see appendix 2), the information was reiterated to them again verbally at the start of study two. In addition, it was important to remind participants of the limited confidentiality agreement (and their consent to it) at the beginning of each meeting (Cowburn, 2005). Both the intellectually disabled and elderly participants were prone to memory difficulties and this reminded them of cases whereby confidentiality would be broken and that the information would only be passed to the relevant authorities on a need to know basis. The voluntary nature of their involvement in the research was re-stated and they were re-assured that their Core Member status in the prison-model CoSA would not be affected if they chose not to participate.

As with all of the studies in this thesis, ethical approval was obtained prior to data collection commencing from the Nottingham Trent University Business, Law and Social Sciences college research ethics committee and the National Offender Management System (NOMS) ethics board. In addition, the research adhered to the British Psychological Society's (BPS) guidelines regarding the ethical considerations of collecting data for research purposes (all of which are covered in more detail in the methodology chapter).

Although, as stated, the participants had previously consented to participate in all 3 Core Member studies, they were still given a debrief sheet at the end of the study, in case they were

unable or chose not to take part in the final one. They were also given the opportunity to ask any questions they had about the data collection studies, future studies or the research in general. If questions were asked specific to the process of their prison-model CoSA they were directed to the coordinator of the project.

Analysis

As in study one, the interview data were analysed using IPA and the repertory grid data was inputted in to the statistical programme Idiogrid. The combination of these two methods of analysis enabled the researcher to increase their understanding of what is known about the phenomenon in question (Howitt, 2010); in this case the participants' expectations of release and how these had developed following the participation in the prison sessions of a prison-model CoSA. The following analysis incorporates both interview and repertory grid data, presented together, in order to illuminate and explore the superordinate and subordinate themes derived, as outlined in table 5.

Table 5. Superordinate and subordinate themes in study 2

Superordinate Theme	Subordinate Theme
Hitting the ground running	Building up the trust 'Normal' conversation with 'normal' people 'I'm not going out alone again'
Accountability	'Can't go back to old tricks' Practising for release
The reality of the future	A fresh start I'll never be truly free

Results

An analysis of the interview and repertory grid data, identified three superordinate themes, as presented in Table 5. As suggested by Smith and Osborn's (2003) guidelines for carrying out IPA, the themes prioritised were not selected purely on prevalence; relevance to the accounts and importance to the individuals were also taken in to account. The subordinate themes therefore, were identified by some of the participants involved, however all of the superordinate themes were relevant to all of the participants. The themes will now be unpacked in detail in order to provide a rich understanding of how the participants felt immediately prior to their release from prison, after participating in the prison sessions of the prison-model CoSA.

Superordinate theme: Hitting the ground running

As was highlighted in the previous chapter, all but one of the Core Members were nervous and wary of meeting the volunteers. Having the additional prison sessions, however, enabled the

relationships between the Core Members and the volunteers to be built and trust to be established. The realisation that they would not be alone on release from prison, along with the opportunity to have social interactions with individuals who were not paid to be there, led to positive feelings within the Core Members as will now be discussed below.

Building up the trust

The prison sessions allowed time for the dynamics of the CoSA to settle and for relationships to be built, before the transitional period of release commenced. This enabled the initial wariness to ease and for Core Members to feel more comfortable.

Extract 1

'I don't know, I was a bit dubious cause I didn't know what they were gonna be like, what we were gonna talk about, but once we introduced ourselves and got into a general conversation what I like, what they liked then as the meetings went on, we talked about things...we used to talk about what they sometimes, what I did, how do I feel about (things).'

Extract 2

I: yeah, so you mentioned your first session, how did you feel about meeting the volunteers?

P: Well, it was like I said I didn't know what I was letting myself in to. I don't know what they would say to me or you know what questions they would say to me and I don't know what I was going to say to them but after the first session I was well away, I was on my way like.

These extracts highlight how the participants felt initially nervous and wary about meeting the volunteers. The participant in extract 1 uses the term 'dubious' to describe how he felt. The purpose of the sessions and the volunteers' role had been explained to them but this conflicted with their perception of how members of the community would treat them as a 'sex offender'. As extract 2 highlights however, some of the participants even after just the initial meeting, began to feel more comfortable in talking to the volunteers. As was discussed in more detail in the previous study, it is possible that the nature of the prison the CoSA was established in provided the 'head space' for the Core Members to engage in this way (Blagden, Winder & Hames, 2016). The role of the volunteer style and empathic nature of CoSA in general, however should not be overlooked. Volunteers are

recruited for any CoSA based on their genuine and empathic style leading them to treat Core Members as individuals separate to their previous offence (Saunders & Wilson, 2003). In addition, from research carried out on those undergoing probation supervision, engagement from ex-offenders was more likely to be generated when probation officers used an empathic style, demonstrating the ability to listen and showed understanding. This enabled those under supervision to feel able to talk and discuss their concerns (Rex, 1999). Farmer, McAlinden and Maruna (2015), similarly reported how probation officers who expressed concern and interest were appreciated by ex-offenders. This demonstrates the potential benefits of giving the Core Members additional sessions with the volunteers who are able provide this type of support, whilst they are still in prison.

Extract 3

I: Yeah, so kind of, how do you feel about the meetings as they've been going on then?

P: it's making me feel, how can I explain it, a bit more relaxed and slowly I'm starting to build up that relationship and also that trust and that's how it's gotta be.

This extract highlights how the relationships with the volunteers could be built at a slower pace, which was particularly important for them, particularly if they experienced trust and paranoia issues. In addition, the prison sessions enabled trust to be developed between the Core Member and volunteers before the additional stressors of release set in. An analysis of the repertory grids identifies further the needs of some of the participants in relation to needing time to build trust in people. Certain constructs can be viewed as central to an individuals' system of constructs (Kelly, 1955). As table 6 demonstrates, for one of the participants the constructs important to their self-definition were negative and suspicious (highlighted in bold).

Table 6. Element and construct correlations for participant 4

Participant No.	Constructs important to self-definition
4.	<p>Hit first & ask questions later/ talk to them first & don't get angry (0.63)</p> <p>Judging you & talks down to you/ doesn't judge you & listens (0.62)</p> <p>Tells you what to do/ shares problems & sorts things out together (0.62)</p> <p>Tells a lot of lies/ tells you how it is & tells it straight (0.74)</p> <p>Not interested & not bothered how you feel/ helpful & understanding (0.59)</p> <p>Can't be trusted/ decent person who doesn't go against you (0.59)</p>

The prison sessions of the CoSA however, enabled these issues to be worked through and overcome and gave the participants time to establish relationships with the volunteers and vice versa. In addition to participants who have difficulty trusting others, this may also be useful for individuals with ID who have sexually offended, due to reported difficulties forming healthy attachments in significant relationships (Steptoe et al., 2006). By the point of release the Core Members and volunteers appeared ready to confront and work on any problems the participants may encounter as they enter the community (see Tewksbury, 2012; Tewksbury & Copes, 2013 for a detailed outline of the issues those convicted of sexual offences face on release from prison).

This leads to the question of how likely Core Members with trust and paranoia issues would turn up to the CoSA sessions in the community, if they had not experienced the additional prison sessions beforehand. The reasons for Core Members dropping out of a CoSA or failing to even start the process has only just begun to be explored (Dwerryhouse, Winder, Elliot, Blagden & Lievesley, 2017). In the interim however, to try and prevent this from happening, the SLF now provides additional training for the volunteers regarding how to work effectively with Core Members who display traits in line with a personality disorder e.g. trust and paranoia issues. For example, volunteers are encouraged to take slow and progressive steps with Core Members displaying these sorts of traits. In addition, in the training volunteers are advised to be open with all the documentation including what is included in the minutes. Finally, the volunteers are reminded not to expect Core Members to be grateful and be aware of their own possible frustrations (Wood, 2016).

The majority of the Core Members involved in CoSA in general however, are thankful for the time the volunteers invest in them, as is unpacked further in the following subordinate theme.

'Normal conversation with normal people'

As relationships are developed with the volunteers, a realisation emerges within the Core Members that the support on release will be provided by 'normal' people i.e. not professionals who are paid to spend time with them.

Extract 4

'Also knowing it's there even if I pick the phone... just to phone them up and say 'excuse can I come and see you or can I meet you in a café for a drink, I think I've got a problem' and you know it should be good.'

Extract 5

‘Because you know, they’re volunteers, they come all this way to see a prisoner but they want to come and see you for a purpose...we talked a lot about it and it’s wonderful.’

Extract 4 demonstrates the importance of ‘normal’ relationships for the participants. The prospect of being able to ring and arrange to meet someone to talk to on release if they have a problem appears to be a novel experience for the participants, and a positive aspect to the CoSA. In addition, extract 5 highlights how having individuals support them who are not ‘professionals’ appears not only important, but also appreciated. The volunteers are not paid to work with Core Members, they are there because they choose to be, resulting in their actions being perceived as genuine. This was often the first time, since being convicted of a sexual offence, the participants had received such support from members of the community who were not professionals or, in some cases, members of family. This theme is consistent with research on CoSA in general, whereby Core Members attribute the success of CoSA to the involvement of members of the community who are ‘not doing it to get paid, it’s something they wanna do’ (Hanvey et al., 2011, p.105). In addition, these ‘normal’ social interactions therefore can be used as a practice for when the volunteers return to the community. Practicing developing relationships with ‘normal’ people, including disclosing their previous offences to them should hopefully improve their well-being as is explored further in the following theme.

Positive pro-social relationships are believed to orient ex-offenders towards an optimistic and hopeful perspective of the future thus motivating them to live pro-social, crime free lives on release from prison (Visher & O’Connell, 2012). A disconnectedness from social supports and a sense of alienation from society, however has been identified within those who were still actively offending (Farmer et al., 2012). To overcome this, Weaver and McNeill (2015) explain how social relationships, such as those established in both a CoSA and the subsequent ones in the community, can encourage a shift in identity towards desistance through a sense of belonging that enables an individual to realise their aspirations without becoming dependent. They argue strongly that in order to achieve desistance personal change alone is not enough, instead it should also be recognised and supported by the community. In the case of the participants this may possibly be achieved through the prison-model CoSA.

Extract 6

‘That’s the social aspect isn’t it, you know, which is what I need more of, ideally it’s someone that knows your offence and just treats you no different to anybody else and you can sit down and talk.’

Extract 7

‘Circles are different as in they’re there to help and support you, they’re there if you need someone to talk to they’re non-judgmental whereas you try to talk to a probation officer about something and it’s just ‘not interested, you’ve done this, you’ve done that, you’re classed as this for this reason’ and you end up, although they’re there you don’t feel they actually listen to you.’

Here the extracts outline how the volunteers treat the Core Members as normal human-beings. Unlike professionals who are paid to be there and talk about their offences with them, the participants feel the volunteers genuinely listen and care. This is significant to the participants due to their knowledge of the stigmatisation by society generally towards those who commit sexual offences. As Blagden, Winder, Thorne and Gregson (2011) documented from their research, the fear of no one wanting to ever speak to them due to their ‘sex offender’ label is a real and prominent concern. The stigmatisation these individuals both fear and face from members of society is well documented within the literature (i.e. Jahnke et al., 2015b; Mingus & Burchfield, 2012; Tewksbury & Lees, 2006), deeming it unsurprising that being treated in this non-judgmental, humane way by the volunteers on the prison-model CoSA was viewed as positive by the participants. The ability to be able to separate the individual from the offences they have committed is a prerequisite of all CoSA (Hannem & Petrunik, 2007) and indeed, this resonates with research on community CoSA whereby Core Members reported, that having ‘normal people’ who were able to see past their offences was ‘life-changing’ (Thomas et al., 2013, p.194).

‘I’m not going out alone again’

The relationships the Core Members had developed during the prison sessions, with ‘normal’ individuals who supported them without judgement, led to a recognition that they would not be alone when going ‘through the gate’ from prison to the community.

Extract 8

I: For you so far what have been the main benefits you know of the circle sessions?

P: That knowing I'm not going out on my own again, I've got someone at the end of the phone that I can talk to if I need to. If I'm not getting on as well as I hope I've always got someone that I can talk to or we can meet and have a coffee or whatever and sit and looking at problems from a different light.

I: yeah definitely, how do you feel, you say you're not going out on your own, how do you feel about going out?

P: Mostly happy, a lot happier that I've ever been in the past

This extract illuminates how the participants are aware that without the volunteers they would be in a different situation coming up to release; they would be alone. Instead though, the participants involved in the prison-model CoSA will have the support of those involved over the transitional period of release and as mentioned previously, this can increase their psychological well-being.

Release can be a vulnerable period in any offender's life. As Fox (2015a) acknowledges individuals can quickly become overwhelmed on release from prison, particularly if they have served a long sentence in prison. In addition, the release back into the community for those convicted of sexual offences can involve feelings of stress, loneliness, fear of being recognised and alienation from society, particularly if they have also been rejected by family and friends because of the nature of their crime (Tewksbury, 2012; Tewksbury & Copes, 2013).

Extract 9

'before all you had was your probation officer, maybe who you saw twice a week, there was no support there like there is now. I mean I can pick my phone up if I feel I've got a problem coming up or if I feel something's wrong. I can pick the phone up and say 'excuse me, can I meet you and have a word, I think I've got a problem arising' and I'll kick it in the butt before it does so it's, I think anybody gets the chance or gets asked would they like the Circle of Support or support off somebody, I think they should take it, I really do. They've helped me a lot, with what we've talked about I mean I know they'll help me again when I get out.'

This extract highlights how some of the participants have previously been in and out of prison at several points during their life. The extract outlines specifically that for some participants, probation officers do not and have not previously provided any support on release from prison. This is a finding evident within previous research whereby, due to government pressures, ex-offenders on probation felt unsupported and undervalued by their supervising officers, with issues such as housing and employment being contracted out to external agencies (King, 2013a; McCartan & Kemshall, 2017). The participants in this study however, recognise that in addition to their probation officers they will also have the support from the volunteers, as they have had in the prison sessions.

The positive findings within this subordinate theme resonate with research carried out on the first 60 community CoSA in the UK, in which 70% of the Core Member's case files documented an improvement in well-being through being part of a CoSA. The Core Members stated that it was their involvement with other individuals whom they could relate to (as also highlighted in this study in the theme above), which helped to reduce feelings of loneliness (Bates et al., 2012). As has been expressed previously throughout this thesis the reduction in these feelings of isolation is important to note, due its links with future reoffending for those convicted of sexual offences (Marshall, 2010).

Overall, this superordinate theme illuminates the benefits of the prison-model CoSA. The prison sessions specifically enabled relationships to be built between the Core Members and the volunteers and trust to be established. There was a recognition by the Core Members that support was being offered by 'normal', non-judgemental individuals from the community, which in turn helped reduce the feelings of loneliness they had previously experienced on release from prison. As Cesaroni (2001) points out however, in addition to supporting the Core Members, the purpose of all CoSA is to also hold them accountable for their thoughts, feelings and behaviour, which will now be discussed in the next superordinate theme.

Superordinate theme: Accountability

It was apparent within the data collected that the Core Members were aware of the dual aspect of CoSA; Support *and* accountability. The prison sessions were used to help prepare the Core Members for potential risky situations on release by discussing their risk factors and any restrictions they may have on release. In addition, it gave the Core Members an opportunity to discuss what they had learnt on any previous offending behaviour programmes they had participated in. Through all of this, the volunteers were encouraging the Core Members to be accountable for their own thoughts and behaviour.

'Can't go back to old tricks'

Building on the theme in the previous chapter whereby Core Members were beginning to understand what was risky for them was the acknowledgement that their life on release from prison would need to be different to how it had been previously. Although the Core Members did not use the term 'accountability', it was clear that they were aware of the dual purpose of a CoSA.

Extract 10

'Well you can go back to your old tricks can't you...I've gotta do things for myself but (the volunteers are) like a friend but trying to help me stay on the right path if I come off the path, don't do any crimes or anything like that'

Here the extract highlights the participants' understanding of how the purpose of the CoSA is to help the Core Members focus on their new pro-social life. What is important however, is that they recognise that they must make these changes for themselves, thus being accountable for their own behaviour. This resonates with previous research into a community model of CoSA by Thomas, Thompson and Karstedt (2014). They reported confusion from the Core Members when asked to define the term 'accountability'. However, when explored further, Core Members recognised that they were accountable for their own thoughts and behaviour and could provide instances where the volunteers had encouraged this.

Extract 11

'say I'd been out now 2 years this week say and a family got to know me quite well but not knowing my past, say I didn't disclose my past, which I would, I wouldn't get involved in that situation anyway, cause if they've got kids between 8 and 12 say the risk is there, so you don't get in that situation, you block the situation off before it ever comes.'

Extract 12

P: I've got to stop running away from problems and solve the problems. In the past I would run away from problems and a small problem would soon become a massive problem, this time it's about dealing with any small problems that crop up and getting on so that small problems are easily fixed. Massive problems are a lot harder to fix and they're the ones that are likely to lead to me getting into trouble. Small problems if they're dealt with, they're not really problems.

I: Yeah what do you think's bought on this kind of shift?

P: It's me taking responsibility as I say in the past I would run away from problems but I realise now that running away from problems just creates more problems.

Here the extracts demonstrate how the participants' sense of agency emerging within the first study is being developed further regarding their future after release from prison. The final extract identifies the role of their previous experience in this growing sense of agency, as well as their involvement in CoSA. This sense of agency is particularly important when considering the pathway to successful desistance from crime. From their analysis of multiple interviews with repeat offenders LeBel, Burnett, Maruna and Bushway (2008) argue that belief in one's ability to 'go straight', along with an adequate sense of hope, was a necessary condition for an individual to be able to desist from crime. For the participants in this study therefore the increased sense of agency over their future could indicate a future free from crime.

The development of these cognitive changes was illuminated further in the repertory grid data, specifically the self-identity plots. These are a graphical method, which use two elements to form a two-dimensional space (Norris & Makhoul-Norris, 1976). Any combination of elements can be used to achieve this, however in the case of all the self-identity plots in this thesis, the 'Self now' and 'Self in the future' were used. The standardised Euclidean distances between the elements in the grid are then plotted in this two-dimensional space providing a summary of the relationships among the elements (Grice, 2002). In doing this, a self-identity plot shows the relationship between those elements a person views as important and meaningful in their world and highlights the way they construe the self and others. In addition, a self-identity plot can document an individuals' self-identity in the process of change and desistance from crime by considering the spatial position of the element 'self-now' compared to the elements 'self in the past' and 'self in the future'.

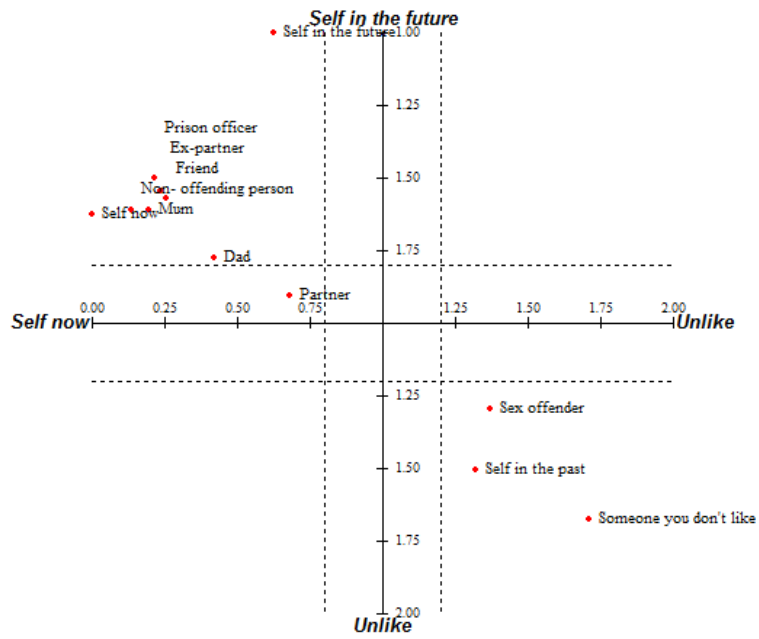


Figure 4. Self-identity plot: Participant 1

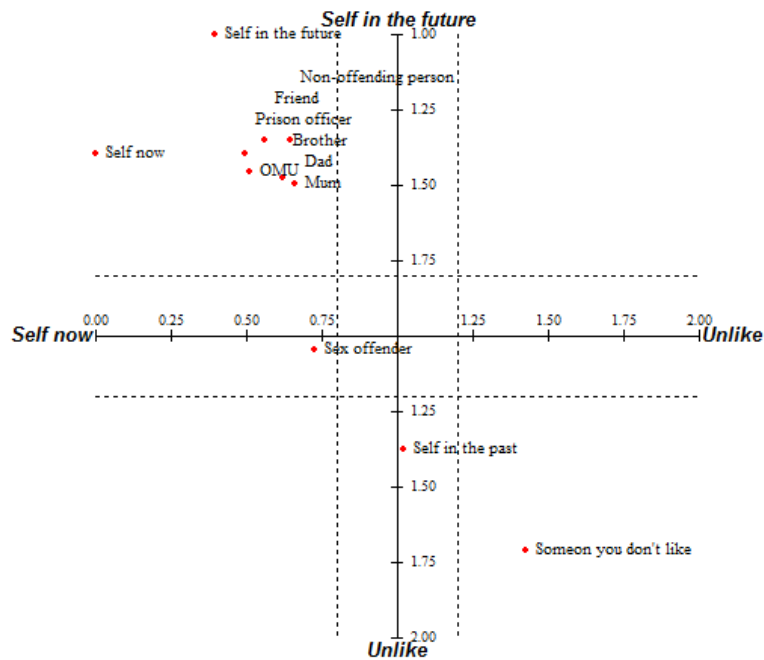


Figure 5. Self-identity plot: Participant 9

Within the self-identity plots in both figure 4 and 5 it can be seen that 'self in the past' is diametrically opposite to the 'self-now'. This indicates that, by the end of the prison sessions, the participants were no longer associating themselves with the person they were in the past

suggesting a cognitive transformation may be taking place. As can also be seen however, although in the same quadrant there is still some distance to be travelled between the 'self now' and 'self in the future'. For example, in both figures there is still some incongruence between how the participants construe themselves now and how they construe themselves to be ideally in the future. This can be interpreted as a healthy approach however, as it demonstrates they are aware of the hurdles they need to overcome, most notably, their release from prison. In relation to desistance, Farmer, McAlinden and Maruna (2015) reported how a clear sense of what their future life held and where they wanted to be, was a key feature for those who had successfully desisted from sexual behaviour. The realistic recognition of their future identified in this theme therefore, can be viewed as a positive step on the participants' journey towards desistance.

Practising for release

In addition to acknowledging future changes to their behaviour, discussing the Core Members' licence conditions and potential risky situations they may encounter during the prison sessions, encouraged accountability within the participants even further.

Extract 13

'she (the volunteer) was giving me questions and I did give some good answers regarding if I get, if I got in to a situation what would I do and I give them, I gave her the correct answer. It's like if a little gal got knocked over by a car obviously I would phone the police and let them deal with it, cause I wouldn't go up and touch her cause if I did that and then the police knew I'd just come out of prison for a sex offence well I'd be back in again wouldn't I so I'd phone the police or if there was somebody else walking by I'd tell them to get the police, I mean I'd stop well away. It's like one instance you know I take the dog on the park, what happens if the kids come up and stroke the dog and I said 'well you know, all I've got to say to the kids, is do not stroke the dog cause I don't want the dog to bite you' and I'll just carry on walking, you know and stuff like that and err I got it all right, it was stuff like that so you know that's one thing I've got out of it.'

Here the participant is explaining how the volunteers discussed potential risky situations with them. For example, situations where they may come in to contact with young children. The participant also talks about how he 'gave some good answers' regarding what he would do in these situations, should they arise on release. Having their solutions and strategies reinforced by the volunteers in

this way, appears to increase the participants' confidence and their sense of agency even further. This was a particular benefit to those Core Members assessed as having ID, as the extract highlights, due to their tendency to feign understanding. For example, individuals with ID may acquiesce when not understanding questions asked, due to both their cognitive impairment and also their desire to comply socially with the perceived demands of an authority figure (Arscott et al., 1998; Shaw & Budd, 1982). The extract highlights how the participant knew a restriction on release was that they would not be able to have contact with children. When this was explored further though, they did not know how they would deal with situations whereby, for example, children approached him or were injured. Talking this through with their volunteers however, gave them clarity and therefore an increased sense of agency. What is also interesting here, is the participant's underlying concern that his behaviour will be misinterpreted as having a sexual motive. This resonates with research conducted with similar offenders in the US by Harris (2015). She reported how rather than a fear of reoffending, individuals previously convicted of a sexual offence were fearful that their behaviour would be misconstrued resulting in them being wrongfully accused. This issue of stigmatisation is unpacked in further detail under the following superordinate theme.

Extract 14

'Err explaining things to me in a different light, how I deal with like err somethings I don't grab and they're on about doing like role-plays, I don't mind doing that, they talk to me and everything so that's a good thing.'

Here the extract again highlights how the volunteers can further understanding in those assessed as having ID, thus helping to prepare them for release. Individuals with ID experience a range of cognitive deficits, which can affect the way they process information, for example, concentration on and comprehension of what is being said is likely to be limited (Craig & Hutchinson, 2005). The volunteer training for the prison-model of CoSA involves specific guidance for how to work most effectively with these individuals. For example, breaking information down in to small chunks, reducing the speed of what is being said and the use of pictures and drawings to help explain complex concepts (Craig & Hutchinson, 2005). The extract indicates that the guidance appears to have been taken on board by the volunteers and being used effectively in the prison sessions.

Some Core Members are even able to reach the point where they are comfortable in discussing the coping strategies they use to manage offence related thoughts and feelings, learnt previously on Sex Offender Treatment Programmes.

Extract 15

'I took all my stuff from HSP (Healthy Sex Programme) and they read it and so on, it was lovely to disclose it. You know it makes you feel better, you don't hide anything inside yourself and you think 'ooh what will they think of me if I tell them what I've done' and so on but none of that, they were superb.'

This extract highlights how an additional benefit of disclosing previous offence related thoughts and behaviour may improve their well-being. The continuation in the prison sessions of CoSA, of the use of concepts and language used during their previous treatment could be viewed as providing further reinforcement of pro-social behaviour. SOTP in a prison setting, however has recently come under criticism for having little to no effect on reducing recidivism (Kim et al., 2015; Mews et al., 2017). The language used on such programmes specifically, has been criticised by Towl and Crighton (2016), who believe terms such as 'treatment' and 'programmes' represent the growing marketisation of the provision of these services. They believe a focus on managerial targets are now favoured in prison settings over a more clinical and individual focus.

Setting the criticisms of SOTP aside however, this focus on accountability is argued to be evidence of the rehabilitative nature of CoSA specifically (Wilson et al., 2010). All of this preparation for release encourages the Core Member to become accountable for their own thoughts and behavior even before they re-enter the community. Both the additional support and encouraged accountability, offered through the prison sessions, can continue with the Core Member through the transitional period of release and in to the community as will be discussed further in chapter 6.

Superordinate theme: The reality of the future

The final superordinate theme illuminates the conflict the participants expressed regarding their future. All of the participants talked about wanting a 'fresh start' on release from prison involving plans for the pro-social path they wanted their lives to take. In contrast to this however, was their awareness of the stigmatisation those convicted of sexual offences face in society today.

A fresh start

The participants all had plans for how they would fill their time on release from prison, which involved pro-social activities with pro-social networks.

Extract 16

'I wanna settle down, well hopefully get my own place eventually and enjoy what life I've got left and as I say join a club with people my age where they may have an activity say once a week or twice a week. They may say 'alright we'll meet in the pub once a week and have a drink and maybe a game of darts' cause I've got me own darts.'

Extract 17

'Yeah quite a few (hobbies), maybe get back to the football but with the look of it, it might be walking football for a while. I'm hoping to do some walking, a lot more walking, possibly go to sports events.'

Both the participants in the above extracts had been convicted previously of sexual offences against children under 16. What is significant about these extracts therefore, is that when asked about what they wanted to participate in on release, both discussed activities involving socialising with age-appropriate individuals. Indeed, Farmer, McAlinden and Maruna (2015) reported from their research with individuals who had committed sexual offences against children, how the narratives of those who had been able to successfully desist from crime were not just optimistic. The narratives also contained realistic plans for the future that were achievable in relation to their social capital i.e. their position in society. As Farrall (2002) acknowledges, early aspirations and motivations to change, such as those described by the participants here, do not guarantee that desistance from crime will take place. Particularly, as in this study, the participants are yet to go through the transition of release from prison to community. King (2013b) argues however, that positive reactions to individuals displaying early desistance narratives, such as those by the participants in this study, are vital in order for them to sustain the newly constructed sense of self. If the Core Members perceived the reactions of the volunteers to these narratives as negative, this could deter them from engaging in the activities they discuss (King 2013b).

In addition, when discussing their plans for the community, half of the participants stated that they would like to become involved in volunteering work, whereby they could help other people.

Extract 18

'I want to work, like erm we had them in *****, a charity shop for cancer, I want to work in there helping or do some deliveries for older people, help people, that's the kind of thing I want to do'

Although the participant in this extract does not express it in this way, this is further evidence of progress towards desistance. From Maruna's (2001) work on desistance, this desire to 'give back' to society is viewed as part of the process towards a crime free life. When combined with a perceived sense of agency over one's future it can encourage a fundamental shift in one's sense of their position within society. In addition, if the participants were to carry out the voluntary work they discussed, this 'giving back' could go some way to erode the negative impact of the labels society places on such individuals, thus again increasing their sense of self-worth (Perrin, Blagden, Winder & Dillon, 2017).

'I'll never be truly free'

In contrast to the positive nature of the previous subordinate theme the participants are acutely aware that the support of the CoSA volunteers may not be representational of all members of the community. The participants express a concern that they will never be truly free from the 'sex offender' label. It is argued that the term 'sex offender' is the most highly stigmatised label in modern societies with the 'sex offender' status becoming the master status above all other identities the person may have, such as a father or even a human being (Mingus & Burchfield, 2012). Despite the participants' positivity when discussing their release from prison, they are also aware of this stigma suggesting that they may be doubting whether the reality of their future will be in line with how they construe it ideally.

Extract 19

'although I was here 26 years ago for a similar offence, there wasn't so much stigma about it back then but this time I'm getting out and a bit weary 'sex offender' you know and now I'll have to disclose about my offence and things like that. It's a bit worrying on that side of it you know and to get in to a relationship I'm going to have to tell them beforehand and will they still want to be friends?'

Extract 20

'I'm concerned about going to a hostel where people might find out you're a vulnerable prisoner...that's a worry erm because you don't know what people know or can find out and you know erm so yeah I'm just generally scared to be honest.'

What resonates here from these two extracts, is the fear the participants associate with release. This fear is unsurprising, given the representation in the media of those who commit sexual offences as terrifying and loathsome (Nellis, 2009). In addition to this, the label 'sex offender' appears to be self-referential, with the participants themselves viewing themselves in this way. Participants from Tewksbury and Lees' (2006) research similarly believed that they would never be able to escape the 'sex offender' label imposed on them by society. They felt they would never be accepted back in to the community, no matter how pro-socially they tried to live their lives. Instead of controlling future sex crimes, public shaming and stigmatisation only socially isolates and excludes the ex-offenders involved making it difficult for them to reintegrate successfully back into communities (Tewksbury & Lees, 2006). Even with the support of the volunteers and their involvement in the prison-model CoSA, fear is evident within the participants as they start to anticipate how members of the community may react to them once they are released.

Extract 21

I: How do you feel about kind of having to disclose everything to new people you meet?

P: It would depend on the situation and depending on how well I know them and how well I trusted them because not everybody you could turn round after you've met them once or twice and say 'oh by the way I'm a convicted sex offender' because some people's reaction would be wallop. They wouldn't actually listen because there's two sides to every story, all they see is the offence.

This extract highlights how the participants are aware that many of the people they will come in to contact with may not be able to see past their previous sexual offence. This requires the participants to negotiate the 'sex offender' label, only disclosing their previous offending behaviour to those they can trust. Indeed, fear of being judged, or worse, rejected, has been reported as an important underlying factor to influence the disclosure and admittance of previous offences (Blagden et al., 2011). This feeling of being judged by people within society was apparent within all participants of this study, as the following extracts indicate.

Extract 22

I: So what are your hopes going forward?

P: Get back to normal, whatever that was, is

I: I was just about to say what's normal?

P: There is no normal once you've been inside really, you're forever under conditions, even after probation finishes you're still under conditions, you're not free really.

Extract 23

I: Ok and how are you feeling just in yourself coming up to release then?

P: Makes no difference, cause I know I'm going out there's no SOPO, no licence no nothing but at the end of the day it's like you've got to keep proving yourself.

I: What do you mean?

P: Like now there's someat telling me I've got to keep proving myself to everybody else and I don't wanna be like that, I just wanna be myself.

These two extracts highlight the participants' fear that they will never be truly free of their past. They believe they will have to continually prove themselves to be worthy of a new 'pro-social' label thus suggesting that they are aware of how difficult it may be to distance themselves from the current one; a 'sex offender'. Within the literature, an internalisation of this social prejudice and stigmatisation towards ex-offenders is thought to predict both reconviction and re-imprisonment, even after controlling for the social problems they would face on re-entry in to the community (LeBel et al., 2008).

A principal component analysis (PCA) of the repertory grids offers further insight in to the underlying participants' experience during their time on the prison part of the CoSA. A PCA provides a graphical output of an individual's construal system, which shows the internal relationship between the people important in the participant's world (elements represented as points) and the way they understand and construe them (constructs represented as lines from the origin) (Jankowicz, 2004).

Axis Range: -1.89 to 1.89

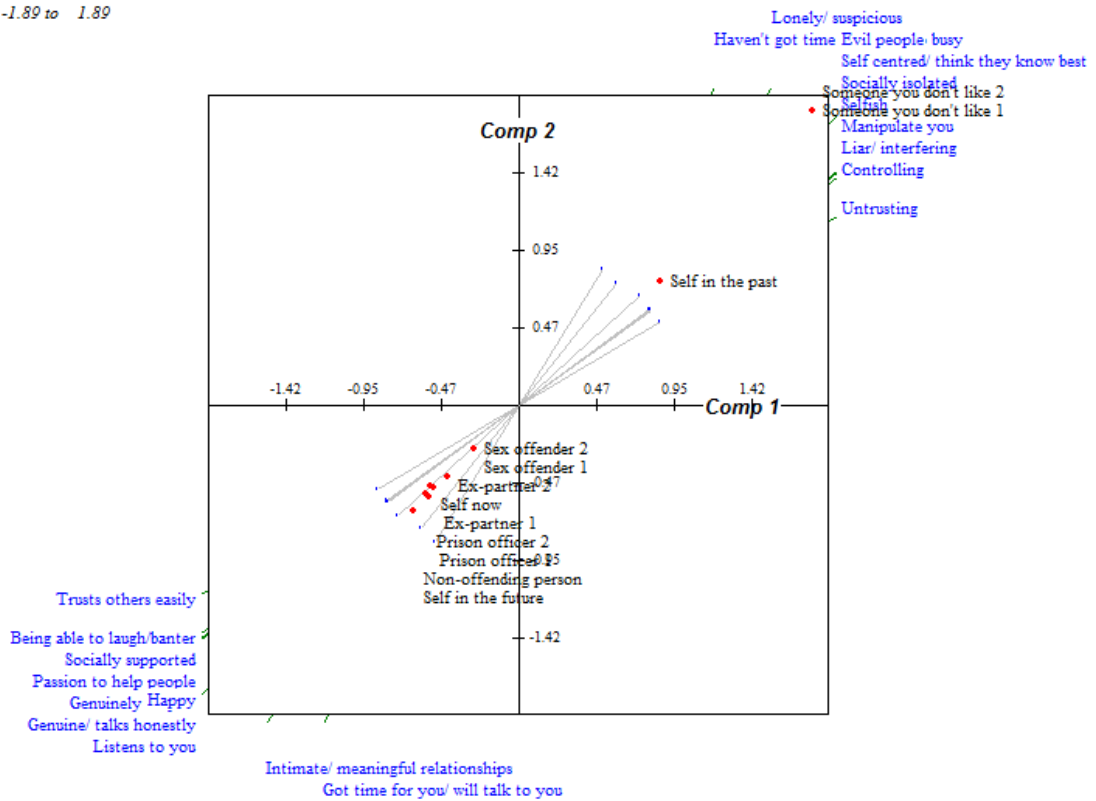


Figure 6. Principal Component Analysis : Participant 7

In figure 6, like most of the participants' graphs, the element 'self in the past' is diametrically opposed to the other 'self' elements and construed on the negative poles of his constructs. This demonstrates how much they construe themselves now to have changed from how they were in the past. Self now and self in the future are also close together on the graph showing they construe themselves to be moving towards where they would like to be in the future, again something which the participants discuss in their narratives. However, the eigenvalues for the Varimax rotated components of the graph suggest there is more going on under the surface, which they may not be so openly talking about.

A percentage in variance for the two components on the PCA of 80% or above can indicate tight construing within the participant (Winter, 1992). With the support of the CoSA and the positive themes derived from the narratives it may be presumed that the participants' levels of anxiety would decrease. For most of the participants however, it stays the same or increases slightly. For example, for the participant in figure 6, by this point in their prison-model CoSA journey the Eigenvalues for Varimax rotated components show that PC 1 and 2 accounts for 97.74% of the variability in the repertory grid; a slight increase from before they met the volunteers (93.7%). The PCA output in figure 6 also includes two tight groupings of polarised constructs, which fall within only two of the quadrants, which again suggests tight construing. This, according to Kelly (1955), is a result of anxiety, involving the awareness that the events an individual is confronted with lie

mostly outside the range of their construct system. For all of the participants, the reality of their future as a pro-social member of the community is unknown, with them having little previous experience to underpin these new constructs. In addition, this narrowing of the perceptual field enables individuals to not attend to any uncomfortable information (Kelly, 1955). Although the participants are positive about release and construe it as a fresh start, they still have strong underlying feelings of anxiety as it approaches, which enables an almost defensive position to be taken. Release from prison may not be everything they hope it can be and this narrowing of the perceptual field is preparing them for this.

The themes in this study highlight the steps most of the participants have made whilst in prison towards a new, offence free life; working on their offending behaviour, understanding their risk factors and putting plans in place for the fresh start on release. This is however, for all of the participants', the first time they have been released in this frame of mind, thus they are entering the unknown. In line with Kelly's definition above, it is unsurprising that the prospect of life as a pro-social, non-offender, along with the awareness of the stigma that faces them outside the prison walls, is creating feelings of anxiety and underlying defensiveness. There are some significant hurdles for the participants to overcome still, i.e. settling in to a new area and establishing pro-social networks outside of the CoSA, indicating that there is some distance for them to travel before they are established as pro-social members of the community.

This leads to the question; does the additional support provided by the volunteers, through the prison CoSA sessions, help prevent the negative feelings of being released with the 'sex offender' label from being internalised?

Discussion

This study has illuminated the participants' expectations of release and how this developed during their involvement in the prison sessions of CoSA. This has been achieved using a unique mixed-methodology combining qualitative interviews and repertory grids, enabling the analysis to go beyond the verbalisations of the participants. The findings will now be discussed with regard to the desistance of crime, in particular, considering the phases of Göbbels, Ward and Willis' (2012) ITDSO.

Those convicted of sexual offences are reported to experience more social isolation whilst still in prison, when compared to individuals convicted of all other offence types (Van den Berg et al., 2017). In addition, loneliness and isolation caused by problematic or unsuccessful reintegration can exacerbate the risk of reoffending for those convicted of sexual offences (Clarke et al., 2015; Fox, 2015). One of the main findings of this evaluation is that participants realised they would no longer be alone on release from prison, resulting in a positive increase in well-being. This is particularly important as those who have a positive support system in their lives demonstrate

significantly lower sexual recidivism rates than those with negative or no support (Levenson & Hern, 2007). Offering support to the Core Members, whilst they are still in prison, enables current social isolation to decrease and for a positive support network to be in place during the transitional period from prison to the community.

In addition to the presence of support, there was evidence of a sense of change within the participants. They recognised they were accountable for their own thoughts and behaviour and had begun to develop a new pro-social identity. This can be linked to the second phase of the Integrated Theory of Desistance from Sex Offending (ITDSO) developed by Göbbels, Ward and Willis (2012). The outcome of the second (rehabilitation) phase of the ITDSO is a reconstruction of the self, which involves reinforcing plausible pro-social narratives of desistance. As, King (2013a) argues, it is relationships like those between the volunteers and the Core Member of a CoSA, which provide support whilst at the same time nurturing pro-social narratives, which encourage the desistance process. Fox (2015a) argued, from her research on CoSA, that volunteers, through their inclusion of the Core Member, could encourage a more enduring pro-social identity and help maintain the optimism for this positive sense of self. Not only, therefore, can a CoSA provide support for someone convicted of a sexual offence, but it can also encourage hope and motivation to change (Maguire & Raynor, 2006; McNeill, 2009). This can be seen particularly through the encouragement for participants to practice for release thus reinforcing their motivation to establish a new pro-social identity on release from prison.

The third phase of Göbbels, Ward and Willis' model of desistance, re-entry, can be seen as a process beginning well before release and continuing after offenders have re-joined society. In this phase the recognition and acceptance of this new non-offender identity, by people in their social environment i.e. the volunteers, serves to reinforce the commitment to change and weakens further the deviant, offender identity. The lack of support offenders receive generally during this transitional period from prison to community can make the process difficult and uncertain (Elliott & Zajac, 2015). This period can be a considerably more vulnerable time for those with intellectual disabilities or who are elderly due to additional difficulties in establishing a social network (Cummins & Lau, 2003; Crawley & Sparks, 2006). One limitation of the community CoSA is that they are unable to offer support during this phase, due to the CoSAs not starting until the offender has been back in the community, for a period of up to several weeks (Höing et al., 2015). As stated above, starting a CoSA whilst the Core Member is still in prison, enables the relationships to be established so that support is in place once this third phase of desistance is reached.

At this point in the research project one could conclude that the findings indicate that prison-model of CoSA assists the participants in the desistance process. The third superordinate

theme, however highlights deeper, conflicting anxieties experienced by the participants as they approach release from prison. Despite the support of the CoSA and the changes being made towards a new pro-social life, underlying anxieties remained, or even increased slightly, the closer they became to leaving prison. An underlying cause of this appeared to be a fear of the stigmatisation that awaits them on release, with many feeling that they would never be truly free of the 'sex offender' label. The social stigma towards those who commit sexual offences may lead to the social isolation of these types of offender (Hannem, 2011), something which is beneficial to neither the individual or the community, due to its links with reoffending (Clarke et al., 2015). Alongside this, the internalisation of the social prejudice towards ex-offenders has been reported as predicting both reconviction and re-imprisonment (LeBel et al., 2008). This highlights how the underlying anxieties of the Core Members could prove detrimental if not addressed.

Further research is therefore required, at a further time-point in the community, once the reintegration to society has begun. This will enable the whole process, of starting a prison-model CoSA, to be considered, including whether the reinforcement of the new pro-social self, by the volunteers, over release and in to the community, is enough for the participants to reach the final phase of the ITDSO, whereby they are fully reintegrated in to the community and desistance from their previous criminal lifestyle is achieved. In turn, the larger questions of how the additional prison sessions of CoSA impact on the Core Members' ability to overcome the barriers to reintegration, society place on those who have committed sexual offences, can be explored.

This will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter, whereby the participants were approached for a third time once they had been released in to the community but were still taking part in the CoSA.

Chapter 6: Core Member prison-model CoSA community study - Is it enough?

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of data collected from the Core Members of the prison-model CoSA at a third time-point. This chapter focuses on Core Members once they have been released from prison, in to the community, but are still taking part in the prison-model CoSA.

Desistance research seeks to understand the processes involved that lead individuals towards becoming a productive member of society and a new life away from crime (Willis et al., 2010). For example, Sampson and Laub (2005) argue that structurally-induced turning points, such as marriage or stable employment underpin the process of desistance. This approach has been criticised, however, due to the fact that it ignores human agency and reduces the individual to a merely passive role (Porporino, 2013).

Maguire and Raynor (2006) identify internal transitions such as increased agency as vital in promoting desistance. Vaughan (2007) agrees, stating that cognitive transformations take place whereby a more conventional, pro-social self is envisioned and developed. Harris (2014) identified this cognitive transformation as a continuum; beginning with a recognition of the harm they had caused before progressing towards a new identity being developed. The involvement in a sex offender treatment programme has been described within the literature as the turning point for many individuals, whereby this cognitive transformation begins (Farmer et al., 2011; Harris, 2014). However, to take advantage of the external opportunities around them, also termed 'hooks for change', individuals need to be ready to change (Giordano et al, 2002). Indeed, a greater sense of agency and belief in self-efficacy has been reported in those who have demonstrated successful desistance from sexual offending, when compared to potentially active offenders (Farmer et al., 2011). It is acknowledged within the literature, however, that structural factors, such as persistent accommodation problems or social prejudice, can influence and undermine these narratives of change (Maguire & Raynor, 2006). Supporting a motivation to change though can encourage hope to be maintained, despite these structural problems, as is outlined in the Integrated Theory of Desistance from Sexual Offending (ITDSO) model (Göbbels et al., 2012).

In the previous chapters, the ITDSO model was introduced with regard to the role of the prison-model of CoSA in encouraging and supporting Core Members to progress through the relevant phases to reach desistance. The importance of research that focuses upon the transitional phase, whereby the individual shifts from criminality to successful desistance, has been advocated within the literature (Serin & Lloyd, 2009). A consideration of the findings from this third time-point will take place to explore the extent the Core Members were able to enter the final phase of the ITDSO. In this final phase, ex-offenders are considered by themselves and others to be a fully

integrated, pro-social member of the community. Leading from this, the aim of this study is to explore the Core Members' experiences of being involved with a prison-model CoSA once they have been released from prison and are living in the community.

Method

Participants

All of the participants who had been involved in study 1 (see chapter 3) were re-approached once they had been in the community for a few months, even if they had not taken part in study 2 (see chapter 5 for reasons why this was the case). The participants who were willing to take part in the third study have been highlighted in bold in table 7.

In addition, a Core Member who had initially refused to take part in the research when first approached expressed to both the volunteers and CoSA coordinator that they would like to now become involved. After discussions with the supervisors of the research project it was decided that the Core Member could be included as a participant, which can be seen in the table as participant 10.

Table 7. Participant information for Study 3

Participant Number	Number of community sessions at the point of data collection	Participant Age	Intellectual Disability	Health issues	Risk level (RM2000)
1	N/A – CoSA ended	60	Yes - mild	Yes - physical	Medium
2	44	62	No	Yes - physical	Medium
3	12	61	Yes - mild	Yes - physical	Very high
4	N/A – CoSA ended	45	Borderline	No	Medium
5	15	59	No	Yes - mental	Medium
6	8	78	No	Yes - physical and mental	Medium
7	N/A - Still in prison	73	No	No	Very high
8	8	65	Yes – mild	No	High
9	13	52	No	No	Very high
10	44	61	No	No	Medium

Out of the 10 possible participants, 3 were unable to take part (n=7). Participants 1 and 3's CoSA were no longer active at the point of data collection in the community¹. Another participant from Study 1 and 2 (participant 7) was serving an IPP sentence in prison and was still awaiting a parole date at the point data collection was drawn to a close.

Procedure

As in the previous two studies, an interview and repertory grid were carried out with each consenting Core Member. For study 3 the data was collected in the same location where the Core Members had their CoSA meetings, to help ensure the participants were comfortable in their surroundings.

Data collection was, as in the previous studies, split over two sessions and was carried out at varying points during the community part of the CoSA (see table 7 for exact number of community sessions prior to data collection). Each data collection session lasted on average 1.5 hours and followed exactly the same procedure as in the following two studies.

Semi-structured interviews

A third interview was carried out with the participants with the only difference being that some of the questions on the interview schedule had been changed to the past tense (see appendix 8). For example, 'What were the good or bad things about being in a Circle when you moved from prison to the community?' The rest of the questions still focused on their current thoughts and feelings and their future aspirations i.e. 'Who do you have to support you now you are in the community?' and 'What are you looking forward to in the future now?'

Due to some of the participants having intellectual disabilities (ID), the interview schedule was again written in suitable language with a Flesch readability score (Farr, Jenkins & Paterson, 1951) of 2.9. This meant the questions posed could be understood by an individual with the reading ability of a 7-year old and therefore suitable to be used with those who had borderline to mild ID.

Repertory grids

The repertory grids were administered following the same procedure as the previous two studies. The same elements that the participants had chosen for the first study and also used in the second, were again used in the third. This enabled the exploration, particularly, in to how the participants construed themselves, compared to those around them, and how this had changed since being involved with the prison-model CoSA.

1. Further information is not given here regarding the reasons the CoSA were no longer active due to the possibility that the participants may be identified from this.

Ethics

Although the participants had signed consent forms to partake in all three of the studies in the research project, it was essential, due to ethical practice being a dynamic, ongoing process that the topic of consent and confidentiality was returned to prior to collecting any data in the community (Smith et al., 2009; Winder & Blagden, 2008). Participants were verbally reminded what they had previously and were still consenting to and the cases where confidentiality would be broken (see chapter 3 for more detail).

As with all of the studies in this thesis, ethical approval was obtained prior to data collection commencing from the Nottingham Trent University Business, Law and Social Sciences college research ethics committee and the National Offender Management System (NOMS) ethics board. In addition, the research adhered to the British Psychological Society's (BPS) guidelines regarding the ethical considerations of collecting data for research purposes (all of which are covered in more detail in the methodology chapter).

Upon completion of the study, a final debrief sheet was given to the participants containing relevant support agencies, should they need them, and the researcher's university contact details if they had any further questions following the session.

Analysis

This study, as with the previous two studies, used two methods of analysis. The interviews were analysed using IPA which is concerned with a detailed examination of the individuals' subjective experience (Brocki & Wearden, 2006); in this case their experience of being involved in a prison-model CoSA. The repertory grid data was inputted in to Idiogrid, a suitable statistical computer programme, in order to examine the content and structure (Grice, 2002).

The methodological approach for all the empirical chapters, including this one, has been made explicit in chapter 3. The following analysis incorporates both interview and repertory grid data, presented together, in order to illuminate and explore the superordinate and subordinate themes derived as outlined in table 8.

Table 8. Superordinate and subordinate themes for Study 3

Superordinate Theme	Subordinate Theme
Barriers to successful reintegration	'Prison without the bars' Stigmatisation
'Like a scared rabbit'	Immediate support Someone to offload to Taking steps to socialise
Staying on track	Encouraging pro-social behaviour 'What have you been up to?'
Learning points	A journey's end Co-ordinators role and volunteer commitment Oversold or expecting too much?

Results

Analysis of the interview and repertory grid data, identified four superordinate themes, as presented in Table 8. The subordinate themes were identified by some of the participants involved, however all of the superordinate themes were relevant to all of the participants. These themes will now be unpacked in detail in order to provide a rich understanding of the participants' most important thoughts and feelings during the community part of their prison-model CoSA.

Superordinate theme: Barriers to successful reintegration

As outlined previously those who commit sexual offences face considerable barriers to successful reintegration when released from prison. These include a persistent sense of vulnerability, increased levels of stress, difficulties in finding employment and housing and problems maintaining social and familial relationships (Tewksbury & Connor, 2012; Tewksbury & Mustaine, 2009). For the Core Members interviewed in this research, three main issues were reported; problems finding suitable housing, health concerns and perceived stigmatisation. All of these resulted in feelings of social isolation, which will now be considered in detail in the following themes.

'Prison without the bars'

With regard to housing, all of the Core Members interviewed reported problems securing suitable (i.e. for mobility issues) and permanent (i.e. not an approved premises) housing on release from prison. This, combined with the extensive health issues they were experiencing, left the participants feeling like they were as restricted as they were in prison.

Extract 1

'cause it's out of my hands, there are other guys in the hostel that have gone now because they've managed to get private accommodation and I can't do that, I'm totally reliant on other people for what's gonna happen.'

Extract 2

P: (Probation) not letting me look for accommodation when I've already proved I can hold tenancy for two years, I think it's just not justified stopping me doing that....

I: How long have you got left there?

P: I don't know, obviously I'm in their hands now. I can't look for places.

I: Is it the same area, they're going to keep you in ****?

P: I really don't know, no body's interviewed me from **** or **** or you know, the only thing he's said is I can start looking for places after about 6 months in either **** or ****

Here the extracts highlight the level of frustration the participants are experiencing regarding the search for appropriate accommodation, thereby creating feelings of restriction. A stable and secure base would provide the participants with security and ownership over their new life. Instead they are still in a state of change and reliant on other people. This threatens to strip away the sense of agency they had developed in the lead up to their release from prison, which was identified in the previous study. This is also significant due to researchers arguing that factors such as low-quality accommodation are specifically related to reoffending (Willis & Grace, 2008). Indeed, Northcutt Bohmert, Duwe and Hipple (2016), documented, from their study on CoSA in the US, that Core Members' struggled to overcome the barriers to finding housing deemed suitable by the courts, which in some cases resulted in the Core Member returning to prison.

Extract 3

'It was fairly strict, they actually say it's prison without bars, every time you left the house to go outside, not just out in the garden but out, you had to sign in and out. You had to be in for 11 every night'

Extract 3 highlights more evidence of this issue, with the participants stating that residing in approved premises on release in to the community is comparable to still being in prison. Again, this

threatens the sense of agency and hope the participants had reported and provides evidence for their underlying anxieties surrounding never being viewed as a worthy member of society.

Combined with their housing concerns, nearly all of the participants reported having health problems, both physical and mental, such as heart problems, memory issues, effects of previous strokes, mobility problems and depression.

Extract 4

P: I've got health issues now that I didn't have before. I've got COPD, borderline diabetes type 2 and mobility with my sciatica I've been struggling with that at the moment as well, so I've got some mobility issues and err other than that, everything else is much the same, my mental health is the same, still got the same issues but I've been medicated for that, I'm on medication for everything really, high blood pressure, cholesterol you know all sorts of things.

I: And how stable do you feel with health issues?

P: Not very stable, it's like coming here today I had to wait to the last minute before I was sure I could make it cause of my back...I'm not very stable so I'm still having all the symptoms and hallucinations and voices and stuff just not as intense and not as frequent so the medication is doing its job a little bit there.

This extract identifies how for some participants, as well as extreme worry, their unstable health issues were creating additional problems. Their health concerns were at the forefront of many of the participants' minds resulting in them spending much of their CoSA sessions discussing them. This resonates with the literature on elderly offenders, for example, Fazel, Hope, O'Donnell, Piper and Jacoby (2001) reported that both mental and physical issues were a prominent concern for prisoners in England and Wales aged 60 and over with 83% considering themselves to have a long-standing illness or disability. Considering all but one of the participants in this study were documented as being elderly (55+), this provides evidence in support of these individuals being prioritised for a prison-model CoSA due to the additional issues they have to deal with.

Extract 5

P: Err cause I've got erm hardening of the arteries in my legs and they kind of help me through that and then when I kind of, well I didn't make enough points for some reason.

I: Is that to do with disability?

P: yeah but we won't touch that subject because it's a sore subject, I went back on to job seekers and I was 3 weeks without any money and I was getting a bit rattled so they (volunteers) helped keep me calm.

The volunteers are limited in how much practical support they can offer the participants with regard to their health and housing issues. However, as this extract highlights they do provide a safe space for them to offload how they are feeling, which will be unpacked in more detail later on in the chapter. In addition, rather than their sense of agency increasing even further since their release from prison, some of the participants appeared to identify an underlying feeling of helplessness.

Extract 6

'My problem is that I got home last week from the taxi (after the circle meeting) and I've never been out the house since cause I can't, I live in a bungalow, great, no problems but I can't even get out my drive because I've got a rotator, both rotator cuffs but this one is shattered and I can't push (his wheelchair) up hills so my thing is that I'm locked at home all the time.'

This extract highlights how the participants' mobility and housing issues can impact on their daily lives. For some of the participants this resulted in a social isolation whereby the CoSA sessions are the only time they left the house each week. As is reported within the literature, social isolation such as this, works against those convicted of sexual offences reintegrating successfully back in to the community (Tewksbury & Mustaine, 2009). In addition, this isolation and loneliness have been identified within the literature as risk factors for sexual reoffending (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005; Marshall, 2010). It can be argued that, in addition to providing a space for Core Members to discuss their problems, the CoSA is going some way to prevent complete isolation from society, as without the weekly CoSA sessions the participant may not have interacted with outside civilisation at all. It is important, however, that the participants bridge to other social groups outside their CoSA before the end to replace the support they currently receive from the volunteers (McCartan & Kemshall, 2017).

Stigmatisation

Another issue concerning the participants, on their release from prison, was their continuous anxiety and worry of other community members' opinions of them.

Extract 7

‘Because of the nature of my crime, I’m very nervous about meeting new people, going out on my own anywhere and when I’m on the tram they’ve got some of those disabled seats, so I’m sitting side wards and you know people behind me, I’m very nervous of it, even on the bus I sit on the sideways seats, I’m always looking out.’

This extract is identifying a perceived threat of physical violence some of the participants experience when out in the community, which creates feelings of nervousness. The participants’ anxiety expands further than physical violence however, with a fear that at any moment their true identity may be discovered. Leary and Atherton (1986) explained how social anxiety is created when people are attempting to make a particular impression on others but believe they may fail, resulting in negative outcomes. For the participants here, they are trying to present themselves as a pro-social member of the community but are fearful that if people learn of their previous offending behaviour this will not be believed. This resonates with previous research by Jahnke et al., (2015) who highlighted the fear experienced by their participants, with regard to their deviant sexual interests being discovered by the general public. Their fears, along with the Core Members’ in this study, are not unfounded, due to the media’s representation of those who commit sexual offences as sexual predators who should be hated and loathed and who are unable to change (Laws & Ward, 2011; McAlinden, 2006). Although acts of violence towards those convicted of sexual offences are relatively uncommon (Tewksbury & Lees, 2006), the Core Members still have to live with the fear and anxiety surrounding this.

Extract 8

‘I suppose I’m under, I feel under pressure, I feel that I’m an outsider I suppose in how I feel...I don’t feel that I’m relaxed, I can’t relax, I don’t know how...I feel I’ve lost my place like in the community’

Extract 8 highlights how some of the participants, who have returned to the area they lived previously, construe themselves as an outsider in their old community with the ‘sex offender’ identity overruling any previous identities. The participants feel that, should the community discover their past offending behaviour, as in the extract, they will be an ‘outcast’ from society. Unfortunately, as has been highlighted throughout this thesis, this is not uncommon for those who have committed sexual offences. For example, Mingus and Burchfield (2012) reported from their research with those who commit sexual offences that the ‘sex offender’ label is the most highly stigmatised label in modern societies such as the UK. They argued that the ‘sex offender’ status

becomes the master status above all other identities the person may have, such as a father or, in the case of the participant in extract 8, a respected member of the local community. In addition, restrictive interventions are used in the UK with these types of ex-offender such as, the accommodation requirements and exclusion from certain areas and places (Bows & Westmarland, 2016). When combined with the concerns the general public express, regarding individuals previously convicted of sexual offences living within close proximity to them (Brown et al., 2008), it is unsurprising the participants feel they are an outsider in the community.

The effect of living in a community where stigmatisation towards those who have committed sexual offences exists is illuminated further in the repertory grid data (see table 9), particularly when compared to the findings from the previous two studies, as will now be discussed.

Table 9. Principal component analysis variances and constructs important to self-definition

Participant No.	Data collection time-point	% total variance by PC1 and PC 2 (rotated)	Constructs important to self-definition
2	Time-point 3	83.13%	Stubborn & determined / Go with the flow & indecisive (-0.83) Easy to talk to / Ignorant (-0.81) Helpful / 'Takes' all the time & selfish (-0.86) Celibate / Womanising (-0.94) Relaxed & doesn't get stressed / Tense & wound up all the time (-0.74) If they say they'll do it, they do it / Won't see anything through (-0.95) Be straight with you / Lies (-0.90) Socially supported / Socially isolated (-0.81) Intimate & meaningful relationships / One night stands & meaningless relationships (-0.91)
	Time-point 2	No data	No data
	Time-point 1	92.65%	Deceitful/ Honest (-0.94) Someone you can't trust/ Trusted (-0.84) Selfish/ Sharing & caring person (-0.94) Wants you to fail/ Best interests at heart (-0.93) Lets you down/ Supportive & always there to help (-0.91) Not listening to others & thinks you know best/ Willing to take advice (-0.89) Untrusting/ Trusts others easily (-0.93) Socially isolated/ Socially supported (-0.92)

5	Time-point 3	94.58%	<p>Not easy to get on with/ Caring & understanding (0.80)</p> <p>Acts like they don't understand/ Supportive (0.77)</p> <p>Doesn't take an interest/ Positive & understanding (0.78)</p> <p>Thinks about themselves/ Willing to listen (0.81)</p> <p>Makes people feel worse & unsupportive/ Makes people feel at ease (0.74)</p> <p>Bully/ Non-judgemental (0.77)</p> <p>Untrusting/ Trusts others easily (0.62)</p> <p>Lonely/ Intimate & meaningful relationships (0.85)</p>
	Time-point 2	No data	No data
	Time-point 1	88.09%	<p>Loner & prefers own company/ Outgoing & bubbly (0.87)</p> <p>Locks information away/ Shares information about themselves (0.94),</p> <p>Unapproachable/ There for you to talk to (0.70),</p> <p>Not able to deal with life's problems/ Calm & can deal with problems (0.86)</p> <p>Non-confrontational & buries their head in the sand/ Speak their mind & confident to suffer the consequences (0.87)</p> <p>Untrusting/ Trusts others easily (0.82)</p> <p>Socially isolated/ Socially supported (0.79)</p> <p>Lonely with no relationships/ Intimate & meaningful relationships (0.82)</p>
8	Time-point 3	81.07%	<p>Selfish & doesn't care about others/ Thinking of others before yourself (-0.73)</p> <p>Lets people do what they want/ Wants to make a difference & keep people on track (-0.90)</p> <p>Cold & aloof/ Warm & caring (-0.86)</p> <p>Authorative/ Empathic & Non-judgemental (-0.82)</p> <p>Unthinking & irresponsible/ Sensible & decent (-0.60)</p> <p>In relationships that don't work/ Intimate & meaningful relationships (0.90)</p>
	Time-point 2	No data	No data
	Time-point 3	75.60%	<p>Neglecting & not showing love or listening/ Caring & Kind (-0.72)</p> <p>Wary & reserved/ Non-judgemental (-0.67)</p> <p>Pre-judging & assuming/ Someone who is fair (-0.67)</p> <p>Self-centred/ Supportive & does things for people (-0.67)</p>

9	Time-point 3	95.13%	Living on edge & for the day / Planning for the future (0.36) Socially isolated / Socially supported (0.37) Untrusting/ Trusts others easily (-0.36)
	Time-point 2	89.16%	Unsettled / Doesn't get in to trouble (0.63) Socially isolated / Socially supported (0.71) A loner / Intimate & meaningful relationships (0.66)
	Time-point 1	92.42%	A loner / Intimate & meaningful relationships (0.38) Work shy & lazy/ Hardworking (-0.31), Moping & complaining a lot/ A sense of humour (-0.37)

As can be seen from table 9 the eigenvalues for Varimax rotated components of the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) show that for three out of the four participants who completed a repertory grid the percentage for the PC 1 and 2 variability is higher by the final time-point than in the previous two studies. This indicates that these participants are experiencing tighter construing now they are in the community. The narrowing of the perceptual field, as the percentages highlight, are, according to Kelly (1955), a result of anxiety. For this participant, the results therefore indicate that they are more anxious now they are in the community compared to when they were in prison. Participant 2 is the only participant whose analysis of the repertory grid indicates they are less anxious now than before they started the prison-model CoSA.

Also within table 9 are the constructs that correlate the highest with the participants' 'self now' element. A positive or negative correlation refers to either the emergent or implicit pole of the repertory grid, with the relating construct highlighted in bold. For the participants who appear to be experiencing underlying anxiety, an analysis of the constructs important to their self-definition demonstrates how they construe themselves as someone who is socially isolated, lonely and incapable of pro-social successful relationships. For participants 5 and 9 specifically, this is an on-going theme through the time-points with social isolation and loneliness both correlating positively with the 'self-now' in the previous studies. A positive note, however, is that the correlation for participant 9 in time-point 3 is almost half (0.37) of what it was just before they were released from prison (0.71). This therefore indicates, that although the participant is still living in a state of anxiety and construes themselves as someone who is socially isolated, this is much less central to their definition of self, compared to when they were inside prison. This may therefore indicate that a cognitive transformation is taking place.

The findings in this study suggest that those who are member on a CoSA still face the barriers to reintegration typically experienced by those who commit sexual offences (Tewksbury,

2012). This is particularly concerning due to research carried out by King (2013c), which acknowledges the limitations the structural barriers may present for individuals aspiring to achieve desistance. King (2013c) believes if 'would-be desisters' encounter structural barriers, such as those outlined in this study, then these individuals may revert back to more routine 'criminal' behaviour. However, although an analysis of the repertory grid data highlights underlying anxieties for many of the participants, identity shifts are indicated in others. If the community can reinforce and encourage these pro-social changes, through initiatives like CoSA, a self-fulfilling prophecy may occur (Fox, 2015a). In addition, the issues illuminated under this superordinate theme by the participants, may have presented much larger hurdles to reintegration had they not experienced some of the benefits of being a Core Member on a prison-model CoSA, as will now be explored.

Superordinate theme: 'Like a scared rabbit'

As was outlined in the previous study, the participants experienced an underlying anxiety regarding their release in to the community. For some, the reality of release was not as positive as they had hoped it would be, as has been highlighted in the themes above. Having the support of the prison-based CoSA immediately on release from prison therefore went some way to ease the transition from prison to community, which one participant defined as feeling like a 'scared rabbit in the headlights'.

Immediate support

The prison-model of CoSA enabled the Core Members involved to be supported through the transitional period of release, whereby they moved from prison in to the community. The Core Members appreciated the support they received immediately on release greatly, particularly those who are re-settling in an area that was new to them.

Extract 9

P: Erm a good base, I think when you come out you need a base and if you're away, like me away from family and I think that's one of the important things, it has it's been a good consistent base to get me kind of kick started.

I: How did it make you feel having those volunteers off the train?

P: It was good because we'd already met inside **** (prison) I think we met for 6 months inside before so it was good to have a couple of familiar faces'

For the participant in this extract, the volunteers were able to meet the Core Member on his first day of release from prison and go with him to the hostel. Due to the relationships already formed in the prison sessions, as have been described in earlier chapters, the participant felt comforted by 'familiar faces' in a situation that could easily have created anxiety.

Extract 10

'with the group yeah I found them very supportive, they was always there straight away swapping phone numbers and stuff like that and then they explained to me who was going to be on duty that weekend you know if anything happened I could get in touch with them and they're still doing that now.'

This extract highlights how the volunteers meet the Core Members immediately on release with no gap in their weekly sessions. Importantly they explained how someone would be on call all weekend if support was needed, which, for some, was their first weekend in the community after many years in prison. Providing this reassurance enabled the Core Members to feel supported during this transitional period. This is vital due to there being an increased risk to individuals recently released from prison. For example, a fifth (21%) of suicides in the first year are reported to take place during the first 28 days (Pratt et al., 2006). In addition, the early stages of release are a particularly sensitive period in terms of desistance from reoffending (Aresti et al., 2010). As Fox (2015a) acknowledges, on release from prison, the motivation to desist is likely to be high for Core Members, meaning immediate support and encouragement of this by the volunteers can capitalise on this enthusiasm. Indeed, as Tewksbury and Connor (2012) concluded from their research, if positive, stable and pro-social relationships are provided to those convicted of sexual offences, both while in prison awaiting release and upon re-entering society, as in the case of a prison-model CoSA, a sense of belonging can be created and law-abiding conduct promoted.

Someone to offload to

In addition to providing immediate support on release from prison, the participants highlighted the importance of having someone there to talk to about every day, sometimes mundane issues.

Extract 11

'I've found it to be, it's useful, it's a nice platform for offloading, if you've got stuff that you want to get rid of you know. Erm so I find that, I find that useful.'

Extract 12

‘it’s still important, I never thought there was anything like that about and you might say I don’t need people but I feel I do need people even just to talk to, which helps.’

Both these extracts highlight the importance of having someone there to listen to them. This finding has re-occurred throughout all 3 points of data collection, indicating that it is an important part of their experience of being involved in a prison-model CoSA. Braithwaite (2006) has stated that respectful listening is a component critical to the restorative process. This inclusion of the participants can encourage change within their self and public identity from an ‘offender or monster’ who has caused harm, to a resourceful member of the community who is worthy of support (Bazemore & Maruna, 2009). Indeed, successful desisters have reported a greater feeling of belonging compared to the active offenders who presented a disconnectedness from social supports and feelings of estrangement (Farmer et al., 2011). Similarly, Weaver and McNeill (2015) argued that the social relations most influential in supporting desistance are those categorised by a sense of inclusion. Through listening to the Core Members and providing a sense of belonging, volunteers may therefore be able to encourage desistance and reinforce a new pro-social identity.

Extract 13

‘I’ve looked forward to the meetings I must admit, erm they’re very relaxed, we can talk about anything and be open and I think it’s just like friendly chat, you know you can offload if you’ve got any worries, anything going on that you need help with, you know that you can approach them’

This extract again highlights how much the participants value having the opportunity to ‘offload’ to the volunteer. Whilst the benefits of this to the Core Members appear obvious, what resonates from extracts is the potential for the volunteers to feel overwhelmed and possibly even burnt out through the continued ‘soaking up’ of the Core Members’ issues (See Höing, Bogaerts & Vogelvang, 2014 for more detail on this). Although the volunteer experiences of the prison-model CoSA are explored in more detail in the following chapter, it should be highlighted here the importance of the supervision provided to CoSA volunteers from the project coordinator. It may be that the volunteers feel they are able to process the information being off-loaded on to them. However, part of the coordinators role is to monitor this and provide additional support should the volunteers require it. In addition to this, McCartan (2016) has also recommended further consideration of appropriate outlets for the volunteers’ work with CoSA.

Returning to the participants in this study, another re-occurring part of this theme is the importance of having 'normal' people to talk to, who are not viewed by the Core Members as professionals.

Extract 14

'with people that have committed a sex offence and that, when you go out there really you're gonna be isolated to some degree because there's going to be things that you can't do which you would like to do and in some places they're gonna be on some cases I should say, there's going to be restrictions on your licence, some people won't be able to go to the park and things like that and you don't know how it's going to affect you until you do. You might think 'oh when I go so and so I can cut through that park' or whatever but you can't do that and that will make you frustrated so it's good to have somebody who's not probation, who's not official as such, so you can talk through your frustrations.'

What is particularly significant in this extract is how having 'normal' people to discuss these issues with and share their frustrations with creates a feeling of inclusion within the participants. This resonates with previous research on community CoSA, whereby 'normal', 'non-offence' related conversations were a central and important component of the weekly meetings for the Core Members involved (McCartan, 2016). Indeed, it is argued within the literature that this sense of inclusion and 'we-ness' encourages individuals to achieve their pro-social aspirations (Weaver and McNeill, 2015). It may therefore be that, although those who commit sex offences will still face barriers to reintegration on release from prison, as highlighted in the first superordinate theme, being a Core Member on a CoSA means they do not have to face these issues alone. The inclusion and support of 'normal', pro-social individuals may be enough to overcome the challenges they endure.

Taking steps to socialise

Within the data there was evidence of the participants attempting, with the support of the volunteers, to open themselves up to the possibility of socialising with new pro-social individuals. Having already built relationships with the volunteers, with positive effect, this had given some of them the confidence to begin pushing themselves outside their comfort zone with regard to socialising.

Extract 15

‘meeting new people on the group (CoSA) as I have done it’s slowly bringing me out of that sort of stage so I’m venturing out a bit more and not so much trusting people but just getting out and about.’

This extract highlights how being part of a CoSA has encouraged some participants to ‘venture out’ in the community more. Although they admit the trust of others has not increased, they are striving not to isolate themselves. Offering support in this way, to help the Core Members develop new social bonds with the wider community, is reported to help counteract any feelings of disconnectedness that may be felt through perceived stigmatisation from society (McNeill, 2009).

Extract 16

‘circles helped as well but just realising that I needed to be able to talk more or to be more open with people cause I used to kind of like there was a brick wall round me and when anybody got too close I would just, whatever I needed to send them away I’d do it.’

In addition to the above, this extract highlights how, for some participants, being part of a CoSA is encouraging them to open up emotionally to other people. This may be the first time in their life the participants have made these changes towards a pro-social identity. They are able to use the CoSA as a testing ground, enabling them to practice developing their social skills before they are alone in the community. In providing this it is hoped that Core Members are able to use these skills to bridge to other social groups outside of the volunteers. This resonates with research on UK and Dutch CoSA, whereby, Core Members developed their openness to communication within the CoSA, which lead to a positive ripple effect in the quality of their relationships outside the CoSA (Höing et al., 2013).

An analysis of the PCA’s from the participants repertory grids illuminates further the steps they are taking to socialise with others. A PCA provides a graphical output of an individual’s construal system, which shows the internal relationship between the people important in the participant’s world (elements represented as points) and the way they understand and construe them (constructs represented as lines from the origin) (Jankowicz, 2004). The PCA output in figures 8 and 9 demonstrates the positive effects being involved in a prison-model CoSA has had on the way the participants construe themselves and those around them.

Axis Range: -2.02 to 2.02

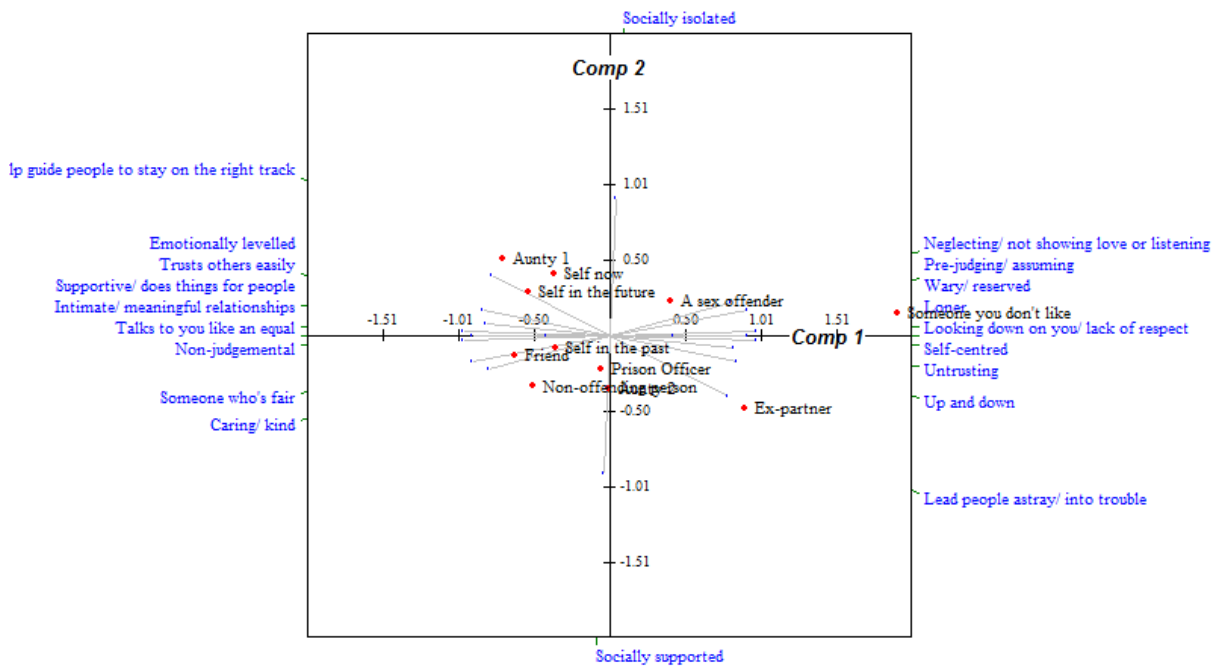


Figure 7. PCA output for pre prison-model CoSA: Participant 8

Axis Range: -1.67 to 1.67

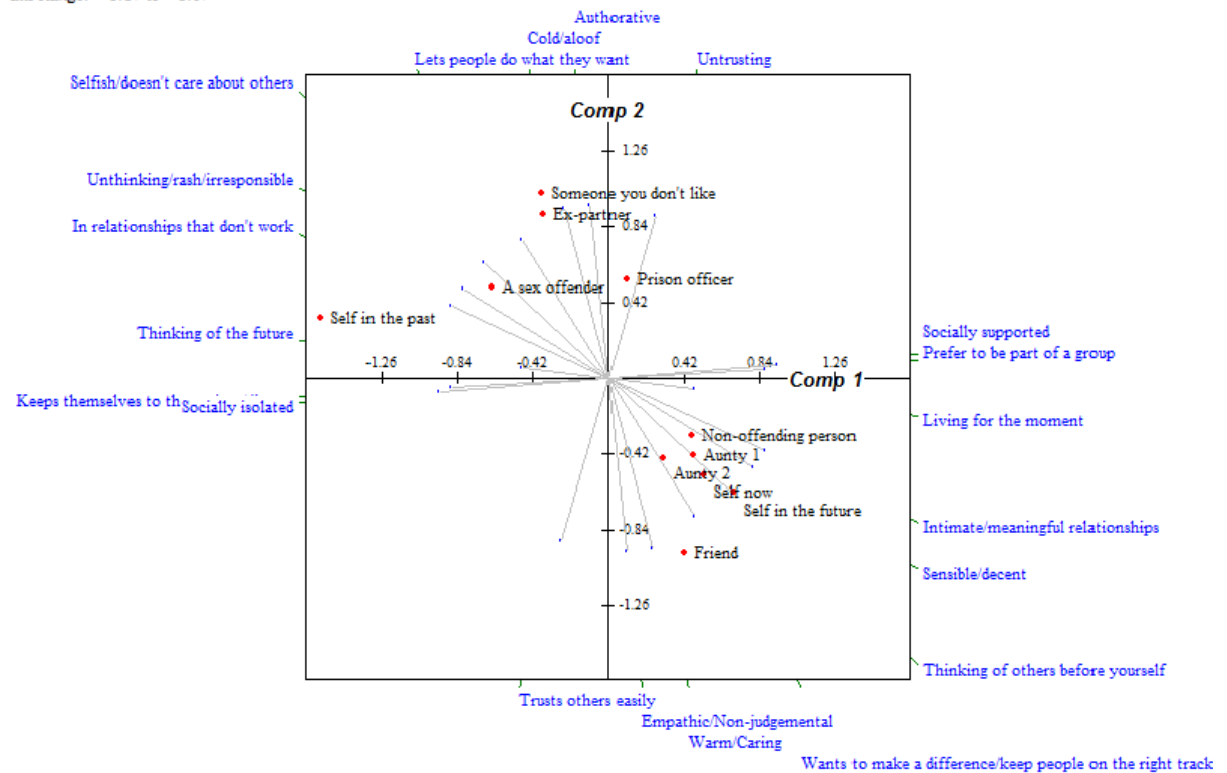


Figure 8. PCA output for community sessions of prison-model CoSA: Participant 8

Figures 7 and 8 represent the PCA output for a participant before they started the prison-model CoSA and once they were in the community, retrospectively. The lines or vectors from the origin represent the constructs the participant used to describe how they construed themselves and those

around them (Jankowicz, 2004). These are more 'fanned' in the second graph, typifying a spoke-like PCA output, compared to the first where they are more polarised. This indicates that the participant's construct system is now more elaborated with the constructs being more meaningful (Fransella et al., 2004). In particular, the elements 'self now' and 'self in the future' in figure 8 are in line with the 'thinking of others before yourself', 'sensible & decent' and 'intimate & meaningful relationships' constructs. Figure 7 highlights how the participant did not construe themselves in this way prior to starting the prison-model CoSA, thus demonstrating the cognitive changes they have made. They now think of others before themselves, construe themselves to be sensible and decent and someone who is at least capable of having intimate and meaningful relationships. Further evidence for the changes in how the participant construes themselves now and in the future, is indicated though the positioning of the elements (represented as dots) on figure 7 compared to figure 8. Not only are the two elements close together, they are also surrounded by other pro-social elements. Those elements associated with their past, however, are in different quadrants, thus suggesting that they now construe themselves as a pro-social member of the community. According to Paternoster and Bushway (2009), desistance requires a fundamental and intentional shift in the way a person views themselves and their world around them. The repertory grid findings for some of the participants provide evidence for this, suggesting that an identity shift and cognitive transformation has taken place. Indeed, Harris (2014) highlighted this identity shift as one of the stages, those who had successfully desisted from sexual offending, progressed through.

In summary, although the participants discuss and highlight the benefits they have experienced as part of being involved in a prison-model CoSA, one cannot conclude at this stage how likely the positives are going to continue to develop. For example, the participants discuss their aspirations to have made friends outside of the CoSA by the time it ends, however it is unclear at this stage how easy this will be for them. As King (2013c) explains, the routines and habits of those aspiring to desist may involve less conventional social networks thus making the establishment of pro-social friends more difficult. What is clear, however, is that the added prison sessions, have enabled the participants to grow in confidence more quickly once in the community, with regard to improving their social skills and how they construe themselves as individuals.

In addition to providing support, CoSA has a dual role to hold the Core Members accountable, as has been well-documented throughout this thesis. The role the community sessions of the prison-model CoSA has, in encouraging the participants to be accountable for their own thoughts and behaviour, will now be unpacked in the following superordinate theme.

Superordinate theme: Staying on track

Underlying this third superordinate theme is the participants' understanding of their risk factors and the harm they have caused through their offences (see chapters 4 and 5 for themes on this). Once they have been released into the community the volunteers encourage them to focus on their new pro-social lifestyle, thus helping to reinforce their crime-free identity. The two main ways this was achieved were by being there when 'wobbles' or problems occurred and by regularly asking the participants where they had been and with whom.

Encouraging pro-social behaviour

Nearly all of the participants stated that having the volunteers to talk to helped them work through problems and respond to them in a risk-free way.

Extract 17

'So I've stayed off the drink and I'm positive now I'm going to stay off it, although there has been times when I felt like, like when I got letters from City homes saying 'no you can't have a place, we're not going to house you' and I've got phone numbers and yeah I can phone them up anytime and have a chat.'

Here this extract highlights how the participants were aware of the support they have from the volunteers should potential risky situations arise whereby they are tempted to slip back in to old, risky habits. This is particularly significant due to active problem solving, such as that demonstrated by the participants in this study, defined within the literature as a protective factor against reoffending (de Vries Robbé, Mann, Maruna & Thornton, 2015).

From their research in to community CoSA, Höing, Vogelvang and Bogaerts (2015) reported similar transitions towards more problem-solving behaviour in only a few Core Members at the 6-month time-point, with the changes being more prominent by the time they had spent 12 months in a CoSA. The participants in this study have reported similar behaviour at a much sooner time-point, suggesting that all the preparation time spent in the prison sessions of the prison-model CoSA have resulted in a positive effect.

Extract 18

'We were talking about it in general the other day and we were saying we'd put the chaplain in the situation about me past and now, then I'd probably pick a time when we go, it wouldn't be say a morning service cause there's more likely to be more family

related to an evening service. You probably still get the odd family go to the evening service but evening services are more adults but I wouldn't say families with children or whatever.'

Extract 19

'There's not a lot you can't get through even if it's something you can't singularly (get though), you can get together with someone (from the circle).'

What is notable from the two extracts above is how the Core Members turn to the volunteers to discuss potential problems. For example, the participant in extract 18 would like to attend a church service but realises with their restrictions they probably could not attend an evening service when there would be children there. After talking with the CoSA they decided to speak to the chaplain about their situation and see if they could attend a morning service when it was more likely to be adults only.

Through situations like this, the volunteers are able to model for the Core Members what pro-social, noncriminal life is like; if you have a problem, you discuss it with those important to you and come up with pro-social solutions. Indeed, Fox (2015a) argues that modelling and talking through challenges in this way can increase the Core Members' sense of control in making decisions over their own life. This increased sense of agency is, in turn, argued to be a starting point from which desistance can follow (Paternoster & Bushway, 2009).

The repertory grid data provides additional support for the identity change the participants appear to have made, moving away from the old criminal self and towards this new pro-social self. The self-identity plots in figure 9 and 10 show the changes this participant has made since before they started the prison-model CoSA.

Indifferent Area Limits = 0.80; 1.20.

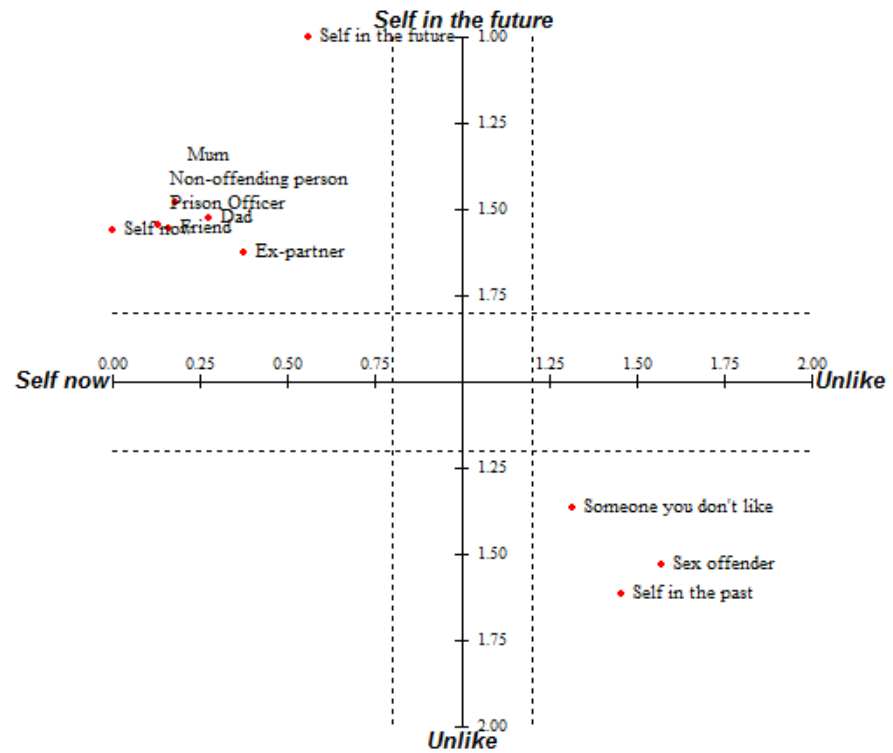


Figure 9. Self-identity plot for pre prison-model CoSA: Participant 2

Indifferent Area Limits = 0.80; 1.20.

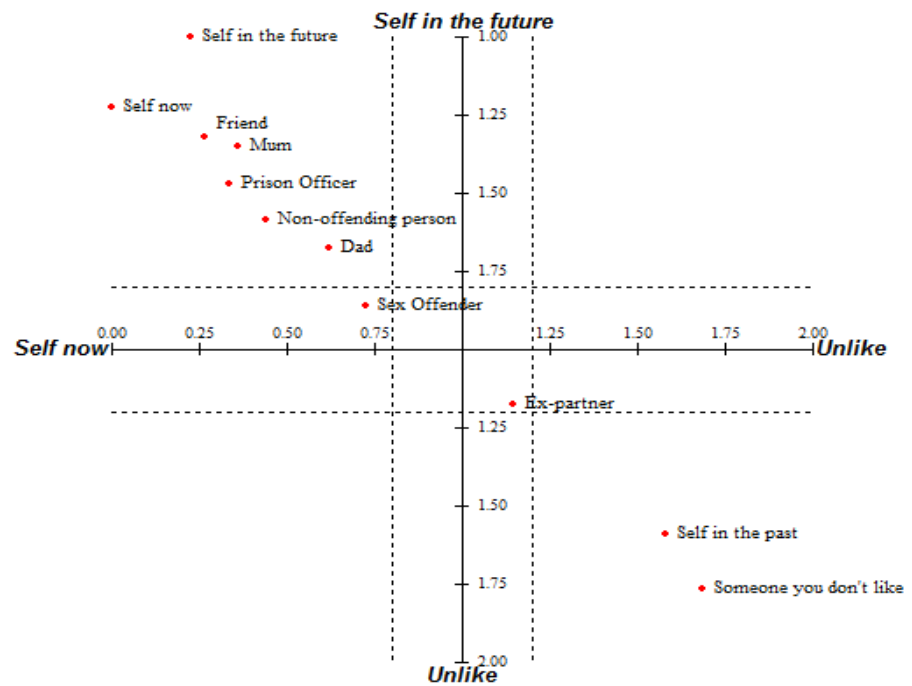


Figure 10. Self-identity plot for community sessions of prison-model CoSA: Participant 2

Compared to before they started the prison-model CoSA (figure 9), figure 10 demonstrates the progression the participant has made towards their 'self in the future'. Although they have always construed themselves as opposite to their 'self in the past' they construe themselves now to be much closer to the person they would like to be in the future. It is argued within the literature that this distancing of past identities and commitment towards a new pro-social identity, as highlighted here, is part of the cognitive transformation present in the process of desistance (Paternoster & Bushway, 2009). What is also interesting to note is the change in position of their 'ex-partner' between the two plots. Whilst the 'ex-partner' was not involved directly in the participant's offending behaviour, they were part of their womanising and drug taking lifestyle, which the participant now identifies as risk factors related to their sexual offences. The second plot (figure 10) demonstrates how the 'ex-partner' is now construed to be further away to the person they are today, with the position close to the origin. This indicates that little thought has been given to the ex-partner suggesting that the participant is separating himself cognitively from his previous offending lifestyle.

Although the self-identity plots alone do not attribute this positive change to the involvement of the prison-model CoSA, they do provide further evidence of the participants recognising the significant others associated with behaviour that is risky to them. In addition, it appears the participants are making changes towards the pro-social people they would like to be in the future. This is supported by the volunteers through the modelling of appropriate problem-solving behaviour and through effectively holding them accountable, as will now be explored further.

'What have you been up to?'

As has been highlighted previously in the thesis, the volunteers of CoSA are sometimes viewed by stakeholders as an extra set of 'eyes and ears' (Fox, 2015b; Thomas et al., 2014). However, the findings here, and that of other CoSA research (McCartan, 2016), show how the Core Members view the volunteers as individuals to both support them and help them 'stay on track'.

Extract 20

'they ask me questions about what's happened in the fortnight prior to meeting them and we discuss them, we discuss anything like I'm discussing with you, we'll just talk about you know things.'

Extract 21

‘Well there’s usually questions, what have you done today or what are your plans for the week and this that and the other, have you seen ****’

In particular, the participants reported that having people ask them what they had had been doing throughout the week, where they had been and who they had seen, as the above extracts highlight, helped hold them accountable.

Extract 22

‘Yeah I think especially a couple of them would say well ‘I don’t think you should be pursuing that line (if he stated he had done something they didn’t approve of).’

Extract 23

‘Well knowing that there’s somebody out there that just takes the time out to ask these questions, cause if you’re say I’d come out of prison before all this was available, there’d be nobody, I’d be stuck on me own I’d be ‘let’s go and have a fricking pint’ and then you know with me one’s too many and 20’s not enough and I’d just carry on drinking and I’d end up dead or I’d end up committing further offences and stuff like that, so it’s not a road I want to go down so just to know that there’s somebody that can take 5 minutes ‘you ok, how’s it going?’ and take time out of their day to come along and meet me wherever and just have a chat about things.’

Indeed, some have suggested that more work is required in order to effectively achieve the accountability aspect of CoSA (McCartan, 2016). These two extracts, however, suggest that although the participants may not use the term ‘accountability’, the volunteers are encouraging the participants to not only be accountable for their behaviour but also prevent them from slipping back in to old habits. As extract 22 specifically highlights, the fact the volunteers would disapprove of certain behaviour appears to be enough to prevent carrying it out. Weaver and McNeil (2015) have also previously stated this explaining how when ex-offenders develop a sense of inclusion through the formation of pro-social relationships, pro-social behaviour is aspired to out of a desire to maintain these new relationships. For example, the participants know that at best they would be

challenged on their behaviour if it was potentially risky and at worst they would lose the support of the volunteers.

This, however leads to the question of what happens after the volunteers are no longer there, particularly if a pro-social network has not been established outside of the CoSA, as has been discussed in the previous themes. This is an issue that will now be explored further in the following superordinate theme.

Superordinate theme: Learning points

The following superordinate theme outlines a number of key concerns that emerged within the Core Member data. Not all of the themes discussed were viewed as problematic by the participants i.e. the coordinator being viewed as the first port of call. However, with regard to improving the functionality of the prison-model CoSA project, they provide learning points to benefit from. For this reason, the repertory grid data that represents how the participants construe themselves and those around them will not be focused upon in this superordinate theme, instead exploring the interview data only.

A journey's end

Although the participants were taking steps to reintegrate themselves back in to the community, as explained previously, no one involved in the study had been able to establish any pro-social relationships outside of the CoSA. Whilst it is positive that the participants had the volunteers as pro-social, non-professionals to talk to (see previous themes), they had been unable to establish any firm friendships outside of this despite stating their aspirations to do so.

Extract 24

I: How have you been in terms of socialising outside of the circle?

P: Erm well I don't really because erm if I'm making, forming a friendship it's on me licence conditions that I have to inform them of my offences.

This extract highlights how for some participants the fact they would have to disclose their previous offence to someone prevents them from forming any friendships outside of the volunteers. As can be expected in research of this nature, some of the themes naturally overlap one another and this links with the participants' worry of the general public's perception of 'sex offenders'. Indeed, research into the perceptions of those who commit sexual offences have concluded that the public's attitude is generally negative and punitive towards this group of offenders, with many

believing they are still at risk of reoffending even after psychological treatment (Levenson et al., 2007). This reluctance to socialise outside of the CoSA, in which they are viewed as a valued member of the community, could therefore be viewed as a self-preservation mechanism that the participants have developed. Based on Goffman's (1959) presentation of the self, maintaining social distance between themselves and others enables them to preserve the impression that they are pro-social members of the community with nothing to hide. This prevents them having to face the judgment and negativity they are fearful of (as was discussed earlier in the chapter), should they have to disclose their previous offending behaviour. This may not, however, be a useful or beneficial mechanism for the Core Members to have.

Extract 25

I: Why does it upset you do you think when you split up? (when he leaves the volunteers after a circle session)

P: I don't know, probably cause I miss, I miss the chitter, missed them really, I don't know, cause you get into a team

Extract 26

'I mean I'm quite lucky cause I've got circles, I've got me CPA, I'm got my key worker at the hostel erm **** and you know I've also got erm the mental health team 24 hour team as well so I've got plenty of support but I still don't feel ready to be, I'm still frightened to be on my own.'

Extract 27

'My worst fear, not my worst fear but something I'm not looking forward to is the end...when the 18 months is up, it's not a fear that I can't cope with anything, it's I don't like saying goodbye (visibly upset) you get close to people and then, you know. I just don't like goodbyes that's it, that's what I'm not looking forward to.'

These extracts illuminate the fear and sadness the participants are experiencing already regarding the CoSA coming to an end. This emphasises the inclusive nature of the CoSA and positive work the volunteers are carrying out; the participants feel truly accepted by these individuals. With regard to the prison-model CoSA specifically, the volunteers have been on a significant journey with the Core Members, starting in the prison and continuing with them into the community. The meetings gradually reduce in frequency as the CoSA comes to a close so the Core Members do not experience the same abrupt change in circumstances as they do when they are released from prison. Despite

this, the emotionality in the extracts indicates that the participants view the end of the CoSA as a form of loss. As McCartan and Kemshall (2017) acknowledge, if the Core Members have not been able to bridge to other social groups by this point, problems could arise due to the links between social isolation, loneliness and the risk of reoffending (Mingus & Burchfield, 2012; Tewksbury & Lees, 2006; Wilson et al., 2009).

This highlights the importance of any CoSA in encouraging the Core Member to socialise within the local community, thus strengthening their social ties with pro-social individuals outside of the CoSA. For example, the Core Member may express a desire to begin a new hobby, which the volunteers could start with them, at least for the first few sessions until they had developed enough confidence to attend alone. Indeed, Paternoster and Bushway (2009) acknowledge the importance of a network realignment with pro-social others in order for successful desistance to occur. However, it is also important to highlight that the volunteers are not responsible for the Core Members or the choices they make. If the Core Members choose not to socialise outside of the CoSA, despite encouragement and suggestions from the volunteers, that is their prerogative not to do so.

Co-ordinators role and volunteer commitment

Although the participants valued the support offered by the volunteers, they seemed to view the coordinators as better placed to give more instrumental support. Northcutt Bohmert, Duwe and Hipple (2016) define this type of support as involving behaviour such as finding housing, searching for jobs, sourcing transportation etc.

Extract 28

‘A couple of weeks ago I got a letter through saying ‘you’re not having a council house’, it says ‘you’ve a right to a review, we’ve got to have a letter in writing within 3 weeks from the date of this letter’ which me and **** (coordinator) sat here last **** morning and wrote it out and sent it off.’

Extract 29

P: I know they’re on about CAP for trying to sort out me debts and that.

I: Who’s that sorry?

P: ***** (coordinator) and ***** (a volunteer off another circle & works in the prison so still a professional), Christians Against Poverty.

Extract 30

'I was going to say it would be handy say every 6-8 weeks ***** (coordinator) actually having a one to one session with each of us (CMs) cause it was very handy just to have a one to one session... because you can discuss a bit more with just the one on one.'

As has been evidenced both in this study, and in the previous studies, the participants value the support offered by the volunteers greatly, particularly having 'normal', non-professional individuals to talk to. However, as the above extracts highlight, the participants construe the CoSA coordinator as the individual capable of offering more instrumental support. The participant in extract 30 specifically believes that they can discuss more when one to one with the coordinator, which could indicate a breakdown in communication between themselves and the volunteers. Alternatively, this is possibly due to the coordinators being viewed as a professional and therefore able to make the relevant changes to 'get things done'. For small CoSA projects this may not necessarily be a problem. However, as the prison-model CoSA project expands and the number of active CoSA increases, the coordinators resources will become much more limited, thus requiring the volunteers to take on this type of support much more within their role.

Extract 31

'I think we all seem to get on, I think the worst part is they don't always come together, like this week it was just ***** (volunteer) and ***** (coordinator) the week before ***** was missing, I've not seen ***** for about 4 sessions now, ***** was away last week, last session so there's only been, there's not been that many occasions when all 4 of them have been there to be honest, it's either two or three usually.'

Due to the length of the prison-model CoSAs, volunteers are asked to commit to 2 years volunteering when they apply to the SLF. However, as many of the participants explained and as extract 31 highlights, the volunteers rarely all attend every meeting. This again may indicate a breakdown in, or weaker relationship between the Core Members and the absent volunteers. As Weaver (2012) argued when considering the positive impact pro-social relations can have on desistance, the quality of the relationships and connections are important to focus on. It is therefore

not enough for the volunteers to be merely present on an intermittent basis; they need to invest time to form a social and supportive bond with the Core Member. Understandably, personal commitments sometimes require sessions to be missed, however it is important to also consider the impact the level of volunteers' commitment can have on the Core Members' expectations. In addition, if the coordinator is also viewed by the volunteers as the one capable of making the decisions and creating more structural changes this may affect their view of their own role within the CoSA i.e. not as important. In situations such as this, it is vital to reinforce the need for both instrumental *and* expressive support as will now be discussed further in the final theme.

Oversold or expecting too much?

Continuing the theme of expressive and instrumental support (Northcutt Bohmert et al., 2016), some of the participants stated that they were disappointed by what the CoSA could offer them now they were out in the community.

Extract 32

'yeah it would be nice to meet out, you know, I mean I imagined beforehand, before I came out, there'd be some sort of socialising anyway, such as bingo, like with a member of the group but I'm not sure if that's something I just got in to my head, bowling or something.'

The extract here links with the first section of this superordinate theme. If the volunteers were willing and able to take part in appropriate activities with the Core Members, this could increase their confidence enough for them to socialise alone. In turn, this may enable bridging to other social groups and prevent the end of the CoSA being viewed as such a loss.

Extract 33

P: it's not really what I expected because when I was interviewed in prison for the circles, I was told that I think it was **** (coordinator) that said, I can't remember now but somebody said we'll support you for 18 months in the community, erm we'll help you with moving, with finding a place we'll help you with trying to find furniture, locate furniture and stuff that you need and then once I'd come out and after I don't know how many meetings it was it become apparent that isn't the case they don't do that, it's only a support group and that's it. So I was a little bit cheated off because I was told one thing and then I found out it was something else and really they don't get involved in anything to do with the housing, I mean they talk to

them about it but they don't get involved in anyway, which is a bit of a shame really because with that extra support it might move things on a little bit quicker you know but anyway it is what it is.

I: Did you voice these kind of disappointments?

P: not really, I've not had the opportunity to, I just come along and sit here and you know just enjoy the meeting really.

Extract 34

P: As for support, I'm sorry about my voice, me support I kind of say 'now what do you do?' kind of thing and they never really, I suppose I'm not getting the answers I expect to get.

I: Ok what do you expect to get?

P: I can't understand they can't come to my house, I know **** (coordinator) came to my home but I couldn't understand why they couldn't have a meeting at my house and also is that, I've forgot now, I've got a terrible memory I've forgot what I was going to say. I just felt that would they pick me up and bring me down but they can't do that.

The extracts here highlight how the participants feel they were led to believe that the CoSA could offer more instrumental support once in the community than is possible. They expected the volunteers to support them in a practical sense more than what occurred in reality. The participant in extract 33 in particular talks about CoSA being 'only a support group', perhaps not valuing the benefit of more friendship support, defined in the literature as expressive support (Northcutt Bohmert et al., 2016). This resonates with previous CoSA research, whereby the Core Members' belief of the support the volunteers could offer was amplified (Thomas et al., 2014). However, it is vital to highlight here that, with regard to CoSA success, friendship or expressive support is critical and more important than instrumental support (Northcutt Bohmert et al., 2016), which can be gained from the officials in the Core Members' lives such as probation and housing staff. Expressive support, on the other hand, is harder for the Core Members to access without the support of the CoSA, as has been evidenced throughout this thesis. It is therefore possible, that this is an area that needs reiterating to potential Core Members, in a clear and understandable manner, when they express initial interest.

CoSA research has been criticised for only focusing on and reporting the positive aspects of the projects they evaluate (Elliott, 2014). Therefore, the purpose of this last superordinate theme is not to criticise the work of the CoSA providers, coordinators or volunteers, or over-shadow the positive work they have achieved in the prison-model CoSA project. Instead, the aim has been to give a voice to the Core Members involved, which will enable learning to be taken from their experience.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to explore the Core Members' experiences of being involved with a prison-model CoSA once they had been released from prison and were living in the community. This has been achieved using a unique mixed-methodology combining qualitative interviews and repertory grids.

The barriers to successful reintegration, faced by those who have been convicted of sexual offences, have been widely documented within the literature (i.e. Brown et al., 2007; Tewksbury, 2012). The findings of this study highlight how the additional support of the volunteers through the prison-model CoSA does not prevent these barriers from becoming problematic for the participants. Problems with their health, establishing suitable housing and the perceived stigmatisation from members of the general public were identified as the most prominent to the participants. These issues threatened to strip away the sense of agency the participants appeared to have developed by this point and are particularly concerning due to links made within the literature between similar issues and offence-related behaviour. For example, Northcutt Bohmert, Duwe & Hipple (2016, p. 15) reported from their research, that despite the support of a CoSA, finding suitable housing was an 'insurmountable structural barrier for some' Core Members resulting in them being re-called to prison for violation of their supervision requirements. In addition, hostility and social prejudice towards those who commit sexual offences can create segregation and isolation (Willis et al., 2010), which has been identified throughout this thesis as a risk factor for reoffending (Marshall, 2010).

The solution to the treatment and stigmatisation of those who have been convicted of sexual offences, on their release from prison, is a societal problem beyond the scope of this research. All models of CoSA, are going some way to challenge this view, however research from Richards and McCartan (2017) demonstrates that there is much further to go. Their study considered the public's reaction to Australia's first CoSA project. Although some individuals appeared to understand and support the purpose of the project, the majority opposed it, viewing CoSA as wasting money on individuals who could not be rehabilitated and would therefore be better spent on the victims. Despite this, with regard to the barriers to successful reintegration, it

is possible that without the support of the volunteers in the prison- model CoSA these issues would have presented much larger hurdles to the participants. For example, although they are reported as problematic by the participants, they are so far still continuing to work towards a successful pro-social life in the community involving desistance from sexual offending. The impact these barriers would have had on individuals, without a prison-model CoSA is impossible to determine based on the research discussed in this thesis alone and therefore provides an argument for the use of a control or comparison group in future research.

With regard to the previous study, the participants were just entering the third stage of the ITDSO model (Göbbels et al., 2012); re-entry, a process which according to the authors begins well before the point of release in to the community. The findings from the data collected in this study, indicates that the participants appeared to be within this phase of the desistance model. As Serin and Lloyd (2009) argue, desistance is rarely instantaneous, with time needed instead for individuals to gradually commit themselves to their new pro-social lifestyles. Göbbels, Ward and Willis (2012) agree, stating that the maintenance of commitment to change is essential for individuals who have committed sexual offences to successfully complete the re-entry phase. Within this phase of the ITDSO the ex-offenders' change in identity has to be recognised and reflected back to them, thus demonstrating the acceptance of the wider community (Göbbels et al., 2012). The second and third superordinate themes outlined, highlight how, despite the challenges imposed by society, the prison-model CoSA both supports and encourages change towards the participants' new pro-social identity. This cognitive transformation suggests that the participants are progressing towards desistance. Unfortunately, the stigmatisation from society felt by those who commit sexual offences, including those in this study, can serve to undermine even the most significant changes in identity, by feeding in to a negative self-fulfilling prophecy (Göbbels et al., 2012).

Empathic and sustained support, however, can encourage and motivate individuals to overcome the threats to their new identity (McNeill, 2006). The findings from this study provides support for this, demonstrating how the support and empathic listening can encourage the Core Members to improve their social skills and increase their confidence in using them. In addition, the relationships, which have already been built between all involved, prior to release (see previous chapters), means the volunteers can encourage the Core Members' pro-social behaviour and also hold them accountable. Indeed, developing a sense that one has personal or social resources to manage obstacles and concerns is viewed as one of the internal cognitive process vital for realising desistance in the long term (Porporino, 2013).

The final phase of the ITDSO is termed 'normalcy/reintegration'. An individual is considered to have reached this phase if they are able to maintain their commitment to change, despite all the

barriers outlined in this chapter, thus defining themselves as a pro-social member of society (Göbbels et al., 2012). The differing lengths of time used within the literature regarding the point whereby desistance can be considered as truly reached, needs to be acknowledged. For example, some studies have stated that up to 20 years is needed for offenders with extensive criminal histories to be considered 'redeemed' (Bushway, Nieuwbeerta & Blokland, 2011).

From the findings at this stage in the participants' journey one cannot conclude whether or not the participants will reach the final stage of the ITDSO model. It would therefore be useful to re-visit the participants after their time with CoSA has come to an end. This would enable exploration in to whether the internal transitions and cognitive transformations the participants have made, are strong enough to withstand the structural challenges to reintegration, particularly once the volunteers are no longer there to support them. In addition, as McCartan and Kemshall (2017) have highlighted, further research is now required to consider whether CoSA enables Core Members to bridge to other social groups once the CoSA has ended. From their research, they reported that only two Core Members had been able to form new friendships outside of the CoSA. Seven Core Members reported feeling partially integrated, but when this was explored further this was limited to relationships formed within the CoSA. Again, this highlights a need to explore the Core Members' experience after the CoSA has ended and the support of the volunteers is no longer available.

The lack of a comparison group used in the study means conclusions are unable to be formed at this stage regarding structural barriers and reintegration. For example, the extent the structural barriers to reintegration would affect individuals who had been convicted of a sexual offence, but released from prison without the support of a prison-model CoSA, cannot be determined. The argument for the use of a comparison group, compared to a control group, has been outlined in detail when discussing the previous research in to CoSA effectiveness (see chapter 2) and will therefore not be covered here. Future research should, however, consider this in order to explore the findings reported from this study more thoroughly. A short proposal of recommendation for further research is outlined in more detail in chapter 8.

Finally, the fourth superordinate theme outlined several learning points for the prison-model CoSA, which had been derived from the Core Members' interview data. This surrounded the participants' emotion regarding the end of the CoSA, the disappointment regarding the lack of instrumental support and the volunteers' levels of commitment. In addition, the role of the coordinator appeared to be prioritised by the participants. These themes led to a set of recommendations being developed for future practice, which are outlined and discussed in more detail in chapter 8.

In conclusion, steps have been made by the participants towards achieving their goal of desistance. The findings highlight how the prison-model of CoSA, although not without considerations for improvement, both support and encourage Core Members in reaching this over the transitional period of release from prison. Further research evaluating the process of change in prison-model Core Members is now needed over longer periods in order to determine whether desistance is reached. In addition, it is important to explore the volunteers' perceptions and experiences of being involved within a prison-based model of CoSA to add further depth to this new knowledge base. The fourth study in this thesis therefore, explores the interview data collected from volunteers involved in the prison-model CoSA.

Chapter 7: Volunteer prison-model CoSA study – Benefits and learning points

Introduction

Volunteerism has been defined as ‘an intentional and active process whereby individuals seek out opportunities to assist their community’ (Lowe, Willis & Gibson, 2017, p.5). Although many different definitions are used within the literature, most, it is argued, involve the contributions of time without obligation and for none or little money (Bussell & Forbes, 2002). Within the Criminal Justice System in the UK, volunteers both complement and significantly increase the scope of the work of paid professionals (Eduard, 2015). Indeed, the defining feature of any CoSA project is arguably its reliance on volunteers as the ‘service providers’ (Armstrong et al., 2008). Recruited from the local community, volunteers in the UK CoSA come from a variety of backgrounds including students, academics and ex-professionals who have previously worked in the field (Bates et al., 2012; Duwe, 2012). Saunders and Wilson (2003) argue that it is essential for CoSA volunteers to share a strong belief in the principles of restorative justice, enabling them to separate the offender from the offence. In addition, they believe a desire to be part of initiatives that aim to protect communities from further sexual crime is required. Acting as representatives of the community, the volunteers offer emotional and practical support to Core Members, whilst holding them accountable to their commitment to live an offence-free life (Bates et al., 2012).

The main motivations for community members to volunteer for CoSA have been reported as; professional interests regarding current or future employment, child protection or a safer community focus, religious beliefs and issues related to personal issues such as experience as a survivor of sexual abuse (McCartan et al., 2014). Although these are all valid motivations, it is essential that the last issue be explored during the interview stage to ensure that it would be safe and ethical for them, and the Core Member, to volunteer on CoSA. Thomas, Thompson & Karsdedt (2014) explored the motivations of 20 participants who had volunteered on CoSA. Similarly, career prospects or personal interests were reported as motivations for initially volunteering. Interestingly however, after a period of volunteering motivations shifted for the majority, becoming more altruistic in nature. In addition, volunteers were described as having a realistic assessment of what change they could make to the Core Members behaviour; recognising that although they could not control their behaviour they could encourage change through pro-social modelling and providing a supportive environment.

Whilst it is important to consider the benefits and risks for the individuals volunteering on a CoSA generally, this has been explored elsewhere (i.e. Höing et al., 2014; Höing et al., 2015) and has been discussed previously within chapter 2 of this thesis. The purpose of this study, therefore,

was to consider the experience of the volunteers in relation to the new prison-based model of CoSA specifically, including both the positives and challenges of their involvement.

Method

Participants

To be selected as a volunteer on a prison-model CoSA individuals have to undergo an interview and complete security vetting checks, to ensure that they are able to adhere to safeguarding issues regarding working within a prison setting and with ex-offenders. In addition, if successful they are required to attend a 3-day training course, covering all of the key areas necessary to volunteer on a CoSA, as well as some additional areas specific to the prison-model. These included working in a prison environment and working with individuals diagnosed as having ID.

From the 1st January 2015 to the 01st March 2016 all volunteers were asked by the prison-model CoSA project coordinator, if they consented to being contacted by researchers to take part in the evaluation project. It was necessary for this consent to be given before the researcher of this study could contact potential participants, so as not to influence the decision-making process. Once this consent had been gained the volunteers were contacted via email and asked to reply with their availability to take part in data collection.

A total of 31 participants were approached to take part in the research, with 10 consenting. This provided a 32% response rate, slightly less than other CoSA research involving volunteers (i.e. Höing et al., 2015 reported a 37% response rate). Table 10 highlights the demographical information for each volunteer participant. Over half of the participants were students studying in a relevant field, a finding consistent across CoSA projects (Armstrong & Wills, 2014; McCartan et al., 2014). In addition, the skew towards more female than male volunteers was slightly less (60%) than has been reported within national data on CoSA volunteers within the UK (74%) (McCartan et al., 2014) or indeed volunteering in general (Bussell & Forbes, 2002). The more even distribution of gender within this study can be viewed as a reflection of the SLF prioritising a gender mix within each CoSA.

Table 10. Participant information for Study 4

Participant number	Age at interview	Sex	Occupation
1	62	Male	Retired (ex-probation officer)
2	26	Male	MSc student at NTU
3	24	Female	Mental health support worker
4	23	Female	Undergraduate student at NTU
5	28	Female	Undergraduate student at NTU
6	52	Male	Mentor in a school
7	33	Male	Undergraduate student at NTU/ works in a mental health medium secure setting
8	20	Female	Undergraduate student at NTU
9	67	Female	Retired (ex-probation officer and pastor)
10	27	Female	Undergraduate student at NTU / works as a support worker for Nacro

Procedure

Upon signing the consent form (see appendix 5) the volunteer participants were given the opportunity to ask any questions before starting the interview process. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each consenting volunteer participant, in order to add depth to the data already collected from the Core Members. The interviews were carried out at either the university, in a room suitable for data collection, or at the participants' home, providing they were able to speak in private without being overheard.

The interviews were slightly shorter than those carried out with the Core Members, lasting around 1 hour each. Open-ended, neutral questions were constructed for each of the separate issues to be discussed (see appendix 9). For example, 'what did you hope to gain from volunteering on this initiative? What are the positives for you of being involved in a prison-based Circle? To what extent do you believe Circles hold Core Members accountable for their thoughts and behaviours?' This enabled the researcher to be an engaged, flexible and an attentive listener, using prompts where necessary to explore areas of interest (Smith & Osborn, 2003).

Upon completion of the interview, the participants were given a debrief sheet (see appendix 6) and the opportunity to ask any questions they may have had about the research.

Ethics

Although offenders or ex-offenders were not recruited as participants in this study, the volunteers were still involved in a project that involved attending CoSA sessions in the prison, as well as the community. As with all of the studies in this thesis therefore, ethical approval was still obtained prior to data collection commencing from the National Offender Management System (NOMS) ethics board, as well as Nottingham Trent University Business, Law and Social Sciences college research ethics committee. In addition, the research adhered to the British Psychological Society's (BPS) guidelines regarding the ethical considerations of collecting data for research purposes (all of which are covered in more detail in the methodology chapter).

Analysis

The method of analysis used within this study was IPA. Within this, the experience of the participants is considered and an interpretative account of the meanings behind what the participant is saying offered (Larkin et al., 2006). IPA is concerned with a detailed examination of the individuals' subjective experience (Brocki & Wearden, 2006); in this case the volunteers' experience of being involved in a prison-model CoSA. Although different experiences are being explored, with participants from a different role (i.e. volunteers and not Core Member) the topic is the same as the previous studies. It is therefore understandable that some of the findings are similar and overlap with the themes reported in the previous studies. The superordinate and subordinate themes derived from the interviews with the volunteers are set out in table 11 and will be unpacked further in the following analysis.

Table 11. Superordinate and subordinate themes for Study 4

Superordinate Themes	Subordinate Themes
Benefits of the prison-model	Building relationships Preparing for risky situations Through the gate support
Ambiguous practice	Volunteer commitment Chaotic practice Doing risk management 'Real' job starts on release
The importance of volunteers	Perceived genuineness Changing perceptions A variety of experiences

Results

Three superordinate themes were derived from the interview data: benefits of the prison-model, ambiguous practice and the importance of volunteers. Each superordinate theme has between three and four subordinate themes within it (see table 11). These will now be explored in detail to add depth to the previous findings from the data collected with the Core Members.

Superordinate theme: Benefits of the prison-model

Several benefits of the CoSA prison-model specifically emerged from the interview data with the volunteers; building relationships, preparation and through the gate support. All of these were, in fact, also benefits discussed by the Core Members in the previous chapters.

Building relationships

The volunteers explained how the prison sessions specifically enabled relationships to be built between themselves and the Core Member. The sessions gave the dynamics of the CoSA chance to settle before the transitional period of release began.

Extract 1

'I think it's a lot more useful in sort of establishing your sort of group dynamic and getting to know you and obviously feeling comfortable with each other because he's got to feel comfortable to bring up any concerns with us and helping him through the process of obviously being released.'

Extract 2

'I was really, really pleased (with the prison sessions) because it gave him a chance to get know us, us a chance to not just get to know him but to see and make our own judgements as to how we thought he was going to get on when he got out.'

As the extracts here demonstrate, along with the Core Members becoming more comfortable in discussing their concerns, the volunteers could begin to understand the Core Members' character and how it would be best to work with them on release from prison. It is possible that community CoSA alone is perfectly adequate for many potential Core Members, however individuals who are elderly or have intellectual disabilities are more vulnerable over the transitional period of release (Cummins & Lau, 2003; Crawley & Sparks, 2006). For example, individuals with ID are reported to have a lack of social networks and resultant lack of feelings of connectedness, both of which are

identified as being required for successful community integration (Cummins & Lau, 2003; Knox & Hickson, 2001). In addition, many elderly offenders find the lead up to release a particularly anxious time, often not knowing where they are to re-settle or how they will be supported on release due to non-existent support networks in the community (Crawley & Sparks, 2006). The extra sessions in the prison therefore enable additional time to allow a relationship to be established between the volunteers and Core Member by the time they reach the point of release back in to the community. This relationship between the volunteers and Core Member, may then be able to fill the void described thus encouraging successful reintegration.

Extract 3

'I think erm initially when you start the group I think it takes a few sessions to all settle erm cause like initially like I was quite quiet and the other person was probably quite loud but I think now the balance is achieved a bit more and we feel more comfortable and yeah.'

Extract 4

'I think the main use is building up the relationships erm getting just to know one another, not just with the Core Member but with the volunteers and how we work and things and how the system works erm and learning really becoming comfortable with that before having to, before the Core Member actually is out and having to face the difficulties of living again because actually to be facing the difficulties of living again at the same time as you're getting to know this new group, which is what the community based ones obviously are having to do, I would think you know it's got to be better having built up those relationships in the prison first.'

In addition, as these extracts highlight, it's not just the relationships between volunteers and Core Members that had time to develop, the dynamics between the volunteers themselves also had a chance to settle. The prison sessions, therefore enable any clashes in personalities to be overcome and working relationships to be established, enabling all involved to feel ready to face the potential difficulties that lie ahead as a team. The additional time to build social relations in this way appears to create a sense of 'we-ness' with the CoSA, that was also highlighted in the data collected from the Core Members. As the previous studies identified, this sense of belonging and solidarity

developed can assist and support the Core Member in realising their pro-social aspirations the most thus encouraging desistance (Weaver & McNeill, 2015).

Preparing for risky situations

In relation to offence related behaviour specifically, the prison sessions were used by the volunteers to help prepare the Core Members for possible risky situations on release and to discuss management strategies in relation to their restrictions. For some Core Members, this involved acting out role-plays for the potential risky situations, for example if they came across an injured child in the street and there was no one else around.

Extract 5

‘well we’re doing some stuff tomorrow with him about situations he might find himself in, the classic ‘what if I come across a child who’s injured and what will I, and I’m on my own, what will I do?’ so he’s coming out with those things and obviously that is good that he is talking about some of the situations, you know knowing that there is going to be that issue about avoiding contact with children and it’s good that he is talking to us about some of the things he’s, you know like avoiding parks, which ‘suppose I’ve got to go through it’ so I think there’s the beginnings of him showing that he will be prepared to do that.’

Extract 6

‘so we sort of took from that well could we perhaps incorporate some role-play in to the workshops, just like little things like going to the supermarket or if someone were to ask you how you’d answer, answer it.’

Here the extracts highlight how the prison sessions were used by the volunteers to help prepare the Core Member for the possible risky situations they may face on release. Individuals with intellectual disabilities experience a range of cognitive difficulties, which can affect the way they process information. For example, concentration on and comprehension of what is being said to individuals with ID is likely to be limited (Craig & Hutchinson, 2005). The volunteer training for the prison-model of CoSA involves specific guidance for how to work most effectively with these individuals. For example, breaking information down in to small chunks, reducing the speed of what is being said and the use of role-plays to help individuals understand complex concepts. This theme derived from the volunteer data is also reflected within the Core Member studies (see chapter 5

specifically), thus indicating that the guidance appears to have been taken on board by the volunteers and is being used effectively in the CoSA sessions.

As part of this preparation, discussions were also taking place regarding where the Core Members will be restricted from frequenting on release e.g. parks, near schools etc.

Extract 7

‘obviously the later (prison) sessions were really useful in terms of us discussing potential licence conditions that obviously we’d need to know, boundaries as well, he’s not allowed within certain areas, which is obviously really important for us, because he has got family living around that area but not directly in that area.’

This extract, again, illuminates how discussing the Core Members’ licence conditions during the prison sessions enabled the volunteers to ensure the Core Members were clear and understood areas they would be restricted from on release. The most commonly used restrictive interventions used in the UK with these types of offender are prohibited contact with people deemed at risk (i.e. children of a certain age), accommodation/residence requirements (i.e. not living within a certain distance of a school) and exclusion from certain areas and places (Bows & Westmarland, 2016). It has been argued however, that the increase of the use of these restrictions and preventative orders in the UK, with those who have been convicted of sexual offences, have resulted in an increase in the barriers to their successful reintegration (Brown et al., 2007). When this is combined with the additional difficulties discussed in relation to being ID or elderly, the benefits of this additional preparation time becomes even more apparent.

Willis and Grace (2008) have highlighted how poor planning regarding the transition from prison to community, for those convicted of sexual offences, can increase the likelihood of reoffending. The additional sessions in the prison enable the volunteers to help the Core Members prepare and plan for their release thus countering this likelihood. In addition, the prison sessions allow the volunteers to encourage the Core Members to accept and take responsibility for their own behaviour on release. This is a notion which is novel to some of the Core Members as is outlined in the previous studies. In addition, this preparation is enabling the volunteers to reinforce non-offence related behaviour in the Core Members. This is evidence of the accountability role being actioned, although the volunteers do not necessarily recognise it as this, as will be unpacked in the follow superordinate theme.

Through the gate support

The final benefit of the prison-model of CoSA identified by the volunteers, was the ability for them to support the Core Members through the transitional period of release, whereby they move from prison back into the community.

Extract 8

‘we’re gonna do it one step at a time and in the end we’ll get there, lets focus on this step right now’ and we did and it’s made the transition a lot easier for him, I think he worries a lot less now than maybe if he didn’t have us.’

This extract highlights how the volunteers recognise the importance of supporting the Core Members through the transitional period of release. Release from prison can be a difficult period for any type of ex-offender. This is concerning due to the early stages of release being a particularly sensitive period in terms of achieving this desistance (Aresti et al., 2010). Furthermore, when considering the well-being of offenders recently released from prison, Fox (2015) acknowledges how individuals can quickly become overwhelmed, particularly if they have served a long sentence in prison. This, along with the barriers to reintegration those convicted of sexual offences face, as outlined throughout this thesis, may lead to individuals withdrawing from the society they have only just re-joined. For example, Mingus and Burchfield (2012), reported a statistically significant effect between a person’s belief that they will be devalued and/or discriminated against and their tendency to withdraw from society. As the Core Members also identified in their interviews however, having the volunteers’ support during release from prison has a positive impact on their well-being (see chapter 5).

Extract 9

‘I think it was a relief for him because of his erm first experience when he was released, it was horrific and it shouldn’t have happened but it did, we actually discussed this in the last meeting with him that even though it was a horrific thing the fact that it’s such a success now (his release this time with the support of the CoSA) speaks volumes erm and I think when he knew that he was gonna have that support rather than being left like he was, I think he was so relieved that he didn’t have to go through with that again.’

What is interesting about the extract here is that, as well as recognising the relief felt by the Core Member due to not having to go through the release from prison alone again, they construe the

CoSA as a success. This belief by volunteers that as individuals they are able to contribute directly to a safer society through supporting the Core Members, has been reported to increase their self-esteem (Höing et al., 2014). Although, this research focused on community CoSA, it is reasonable to presume that increase in personal growth will be prevalent also within prison-based CoSA, volunteers particularly when taking in to account the additional benefits they described above.

Extract 10

‘he seemed genuinely pleased to see us, you know I think there was familiar faces, so although I think we’d only met him 4 or 5 times in prison it was a link which I think he warmed to.’

When those who have been convicted of sexual offences are released from prison it is often to an unknown area, due to licence restrictions preventing them from returning to their previous community. As extract 10 highlights, it can be comforting therefore, for Core Members to have the volunteers with whom they are familiar. Core Members on community models of CoSA do not meet their volunteers until they have been released from prison, with the sessions not beginning sometimes for several weeks (Höing et al., 2015). This, therefore, misses a huge part of the desistance process which the volunteers on prison-model CoSA can assist through. For example, as Göbbels, Ward and Willis (2012) state, successful desistance involves individuals progressing through the phase of re-entry, which can be construed as a process, beginning before release and continuing after they have re-joined society. The lack of support ex-offenders receive during this transitional period from prison to community can make this phase difficult and uncertain (Elliott & Zajac, 2015). Göbbels, Ward and Willis (2012) recommend, therefore, the use of artificial mentoring from individuals, such as the volunteers discussed in this study. Mentors such as these can provide social modelling to the ex-offenders but also sustained and empathetic support to promote and encourage the motivation to maintain desistance.

Although several benefits specific to the prison-model CoSA have emerged within the volunteer data, there was also a superordinate theme evident regarding ambiguous practice surrounding the model. This will now be unpacked further.

Superordinate theme: Ambiguous practice

CoSA research in general has been criticised for only focusing on the positive aspects of the initiative (Elliott, 2014). It is therefore important to include all findings from the data collected from the volunteers involved in the prison-model CoSA. A superordinate theme to emerge from the data was

ambiguous practice, whereby volunteers appeared uncertain about the correct manner in which a CoSA should be operated. The volunteers described a lack of commitment from other fellow volunteers, a lack of planning and debrief sessions and confusion surrounding the accountability aspect of their role. These will now be discussed in detail.

Volunteer commitment

Due to the reliance of CoSA projects on volunteers, one of the biggest challenges faced is recruiting volunteers who are available, motivated and committed to their role (Wilson et al., 2007). During the recruitment process to be a volunteer on a prison-based CoSA, a commitment of two years is requested. Many of the volunteers explained however, that their CoSA was not running with the full number of volunteers, due to some individuals regularly not turning up to sessions.

Extract 11

‘the circle itself is quite disjointed erm there’s one member who attends every single one... I’m there almost all the time as well, it’s just me and them, we know everything, we know how the circle works, we know **** (the Core Member) very well and the other two are kind of there, not there, a lot of times, it’s just me and the other or three of us, there’s only been one time when there’s been all four of us.’

Extract 12

‘There is an issue at the moment with one of them erm just not turning up, due to like work commitments erm and at first it was ok but I think now that it’s an on-going thing not only for the circle but obviously for the Core Member, the consistency isn’t there.’

Here the extracts indicate that from some volunteers there is a lack of commitment. Whilst there may be occasions whereby a missed session is unavoidable, the need for commitment from the volunteers needs to be reinforced. This was an issue also raised by some of the Core Members during their interviews (see chapter 6) and as extract 6 demonstrates, can create a sense of inconsistency. A similar finding was reported in Scotland, whereby the number of volunteers willing to take part in CoSA was a problem with some CoSA dropping to two volunteers due to holidays or sick leave (Armstrong & Wills, 2014). In addition to the negative impression it can have on the Core

Members, a lack of volunteers' commitment can also create additional work and pressure on the volunteers who do attend the CoSA sessions. For example, Höing, Vogelvang and Bogaerts (2014) highlighted how too much volunteering has been associated with both burnout and exhaustion. Whilst these results were derived from a review of the literature on volunteering with ex-offenders convicted of all crimes, the findings are also important to consider for CoSA projects.

Extract 13

'Erm it has been really good actually, initially there was just three of us, so there's an older male and a girl my age erm and so we all got on you know, it's a bit awkward at first when you just first them but I couldn't help but think perhaps we did need another person there now and now we have an older woman who's with us as well and I just think that balances out the group a lot more in terms of the age ranges and the life experience and because you all bring something different to the group, I don't know I just felt like there was something missing... Erm so now the group dynamic's great and yeah so with four people it's definitely better, there's more people to bounce off.'

The guidelines for the number of volunteers used for each CoSA is between three and six (Höing et al., 2013). It is understandable that some sessions may take place with fewer volunteers, i.e. due to holidays or illness. Extract 13, however highlights the benefits of a CoSA that has four volunteers who all attend regularly; the group feels balanced, with good dynamics. It has previously been suggested that levels of connectedness can be increased within the volunteers through the organisation of volunteer support groups and social events (Höing et al., 2015). These are concepts therefore, currently being developed and introduced by the SLF for the volunteers on the prison-model CoSA. Other ways volunteers may feel more connected, which may in turn increase commitment, is through the informal planning and debrief sessions that should be taking place before and after every CoSA meeting (Höing et al., 2015). This best practice is not always followed however, as will now be explored.

Lack of 'procedure'

The general protocol for all CoSA is that the meetings with the Core Members are preceded by a planning session which just the volunteers attend and are followed by a debrief session, again just for the volunteers. Although the sessions are guided by the Core Members, this enables an agenda of discussion topics to be outlined. For example, if there were any issues in the previous meeting

that the volunteers wished to follow up on. In addition, the debrief sessions enable any issues or concerns the volunteers may have from the meeting to be discussed. Many of the participants in the study however, stated that the planning and debrief sessions were not taking place.

Extract 14

‘erm we talk in the car erm just kind of about, we spend more on getting people up to date because they don’t read the minutes or the minutes haven’t been put up. I mean this week we spent the car ride, it was just me and **** (volunteer) we spent the car ride discussing what had happened in the last meeting because I had to miss it and the people who were there didn’t put any minutes up, so no idea what happened in the last meeting, they’re telling me what happened in the last meeting and we kind of make a plan there in the car that doesn’t stick.’

As this extract highlights, the lack of a planning session prior to meeting the Core Member is linked to the previous theme of volunteers not committing to attending the meetings. In addition, it suggests that volunteers may not be engaged with their role as a volunteer. The time that could be spent planning the forthcoming session therefore, has to be used updating colleagues about previous sessions.

Extract 15

‘I wouldn’t call it an official debrief, we do discuss what’s happened but it’s quite short and nothing like the half hour that is structured in as it were...we haven’t been really having that half an hour in the prison erm cause of course when the Core Member turns up, he turns up and by the time, the other thing is by the time we’ve got through the prison gates, you know you haven’t got your half hour left anyway.’

This extract identifies the practicalities of having the time for a full planning session when holding the meetings in the prison. Whilst it is difficult to ask individuals to volunteer more of their time to allow for a full planning and debrief session, not having them at all is concerning due to the potential risks to the volunteers themselves. For example, volunteers may be subjected to potentially traumatising material or manipulative behaviour from the Core Members during the CoSA sessions (Höing et al., 2015). Indeed, professionals have reported concerns of Core Members manipulating naïve volunteers through grooming behaviour (Fox, 2015b). Although volunteers are offered professional supervision from CoSA coordinators, debrief sessions after each CoSA meeting would enable any concerns from any of the volunteers to be aired and discussed immediately.

Extract 16

'They've been really good, I mean there's not anything that's been bought up that anyone sort of needs a debrief about erm but just sort of collecting everything, making sure that everyone's on the same page, making sure that everyone is sort of understanding the same things is just really important obviously once you've had a long session of just talking just to clarify the points, especially if there's any action points that we need to sort of relay to anybody else or we need to find out, we generally find it quite easy between us to sort of split up the workload and one person will find this thing out, one person will find that thing out and then it sort of helps you handle the workload then when we come back the next week, we can obviously have our sort of little brief at the beginning and discuss where we've got with that or if someone knows something else about it and then it's quite useful to then relay that to the Core Member.'

The meetings that were structured in the correct way, involving the planning and debrief sessions, appeared to work better and run more smoothly. Extract 16 highlights how both the planning and debrief sessions are useful and enable the sessions with the Core Members to operate more professionally. From the findings, it appears there are differing levels of 'buying in' within the volunteers, with some only engaging in the process on a superficial, reactive level rather than on the deeper, proactive level extract 16 describes. Indeed, previous CoSA projects have been criticised by professionals, due to a lack of structure and formality (Wilson et al., 2007). It is possible therefore, that the correct procedures of how the prison- model CoSA should be run, needs to be reinforced not just at the beginning of the CoSA but continually throughout.

Doing risk management

CoSA has a dual aspect involving both support and accountability (Cesaroni, 2002). The volunteers appeared confident in their role supporting the Core Members, however felt much more confused and unsure about their accountability role.

Extract 17

Erm knowing more of the risk factors that we're looking for erm I know it's been, it was discussed in the training but I probably would have liked a refresher on that

before we went back in to the community you know ‘what are we looking for, what are we supposed to be keeping an eye out for in case this happens?’

Many of the volunteers reported a lack of clarity regarding the cognitive distortions and comments relating to risk factors they should be challenging and to what extent. This was particularly the case due to the length of time between the training and the community sessions. As extract 17 highlights more guidance could have been given regarding the Core Members’ risk factors after the prison sessions had ended and before the CoSA moved in to the community. It is important to note here however, that since the data was collected a colour coded risk and contact escalation protocol has been introduced for each prison-model CoSA. In line with the monitor principle underpinning all CoSA (Saunders & Wilson, 2003), these are tailored specifically to each Core Member indicating the relevant risk factors and the required action should the situation present itself. This document should hopefully reduce some of the anxieties the volunteers disclosed regarding the accountability aspect of their role, however further research is required to confirm this.

Extract 18

‘I don’t know if you know he hasn’t done any formal group work or treatment so he is saying things like for an example, a couple of weeks ago he said ‘the thing I don’t understand is why she waited 16 years or whatever before she reported it’ now when I was in my other job that would have been an invitation in to a conversation about why does he think that might be and trying to get him to understand a bit about things and their perspective with a view move towards accountability and understanding’.

Here the extract highlights the participants’ confusion in how much they can challenge the Core Member as a volunteer whose role it is to also support them. In this extract, the participants is aware due to their previous experience that some of the comments made may be risky but is unclear as to the extent they can challenge these as a volunteer. This resonates with the CoSA literature whereby the requirement to be supportive but also to acknowledge and work in relation to the Core Members’ risk factors to ensure accountability, is recognised as a difficult balance to strike (Armstrong et al., 2008; McCartan, 2016). However, although not specific to CoSA, Farmer, McAlinden and Maruna (2015) reported how ex-offenders who had proceeded to successfully desist from crime reported the most appreciation for probation officers who expressed concern but were also firm and realistic. This suggests that the Core Members may not only respect but also

appreciate the dual role of the volunteers, a finding that is unpacked in the previous study (see chapter 6).

Extract 19

'I don't know I think part of me feels a bit nervous about that aspect because it's like you know when you're trying to turn over a new leaf, I think I'm just conscious of you know perhaps he doesn't want to talk about or he doesn't want to go over it so 'ok we won't go there, we won't discuss it' but actually certain things like that do need to be discussed and I think it's all part of a learning curve for me as a person and a volunteer to be more assertive on those matters but it is on the forefront of my mind and I know it needs to be done so I'm not going to overlook it entirely but I just need to get more confident about, I dunno what I can and can't speak about with him, perhaps sometimes I'm a bit too conscious of you know, not of not hurting someone's feelings but do you know what I mean, overstepping the mark of what we should talk about but perhaps really he's fine about talking about certain things.'

The final point to make in regard to this subordinate theme is the confusion the volunteers felt in how to best bring up the topic of risk factors with Core Members who do not volunteer the information themselves. Again, this relates to the issue of effectively balancing the support and accountability role. Whilst it is important for volunteers to hold Core Members accountable for their current behaviour, the use of encouraging individuals desisting from sexual offending to take responsibility for past behaviour has been questioned (Maruna & Mann, 2006). Instead Farmer, McAlinden and Maruna (2016) argue that the focus should be on maintaining and working towards a positive future self. Based on these arguments it is possible that the new risk and contact escalation protocol that has been introduced for each prison-model CoSA, since collecting the current data, may be sufficient in providing knowledge of the risk factors relevant to each Core Member. Even when Core Members choose not to discuss past behaviour or factors related to their risk of reoffending volunteers will still feel confident in recognising any potential risky situations in their current behaviour.

'Real' job starts on release

Linking to the above theme is that fact that the volunteers believe that their 'real job' begins at the point of release. This possibly goes some way to explain why the volunteers expressed anxiety surrounding the accountability role specifically.

Extract 20

‘So erm yeah, so I guess, yeah, I guess the point I was trying to make is that with some things sometimes it felt like ok we reached point where we can’t discuss some things any further to help him.’

Extract 21

‘it’s very easy to talk to him when he’s in prison, that’s the easy bit, it’s when he gets out, back out in the community and he’s scared and alone that our job really starts you know.’

These extracts highlight how the participants felt they could only provide emotional support during the prison sessions and were limited as to how much practical support they could offer. They deemed the practical support to be more productive therefore resulting in the belief that their ‘job’ would begin properly on release. Northcutt Bohmert, Duwe and Hipple (2016) reported however, that although both types of support are important it is the expressive support, characterised by emotional support, friendship and respectful listening, that was critical to CoSA success. Although the volunteers feel they are yet to ‘begin’ their job during the prison sessions, they are providing invaluable support to the Core Members that, as is highlighted in the previous studies, eases their transition from prison to community.

Extract 22

‘I think you feel a bit helpless in the prison because you’re not really doing stuff as such, like talking to them so they feel better in that sense erm yeah I think actually it’s that apprehension, ok we’ve got all this stuff we need to do but you can’t just get in and get it sorted so I think that’s how it will, it will feel like we’re actually beginning when we’re outside of the prison cause we can help sort out the accommodation and do this that and the other and go with him to these places so I think yeah it will feel more organic when we’re outside.’

The last extract in particular, illuminates a feeling within the participants of being almost helpless to support the Core Member until they are released from prison. Feelings of anxiety appear to be underlying within this extract also. It is important for CoSA co-ordinators to recognise these feelings within volunteers and reinforce the benefits of the prison sessions that have been outlined above, as well as in the previous chapters. Again, at this stage it is important for co-ordinators to check in

with volunteers and ensure that all procedures for reducing any potential anxiety are followed. Whilst it is paramount that all volunteers involved feel fully prepared for the next stage of the CoSA, it is essential that they are also reminded and assured that they are not responsible for the Core Members' actions and behaviour on release from prison.

Superordinate theme: The importance of volunteers

Throughout the interviews several sub-themes arose regarding the importance of using volunteers within CoSA. These are themes consistent with CoSA projects in general and whilst a theme of this nature derived from volunteer data could be criticised for being overly positive i.e. volunteers speaking about the importance of using volunteers, it is still essential due to the prevalence of this superordinate theme that it is documented and explored.

Perceived genuineness

This theme of perceived genuineness overlaps with the previous studies whereby the Core Members discuss the importance of the volunteers being 'normal' people, who have given up their time for free to support them. When the volunteers themselves were asked to consider why they thought CoSA projects in general were successful, the majority stated that it was the use of 'unpaid' individuals rather than professionals who were paid to work with them.

Extract 23

'it shows a commitment of that person say to give up their time but also just you do it because you want to do it, basically and not only is that noticed within the group of volunteers but the Core Member picks up on that as well but I think they are very grateful of that as well and I think it adds an element of erm obviously there's mutual respect anyway but I think even more so it doesn't feel forced you know if you were paid to be there, not that it should influence it because everyone has to have a job and you have to get paid but I think it's more erm I don't know, I think for them they know you're there because you want to support them and I think that's the biggest thing that they need to know, you're there because you want to be so in that sense I think it just helps the relationship actually.'

Extract 24

'we are just average normal people and I think when you've got someone who is being paid there is an ulterior motive to why they wanna do it. Erm and I think if you're willing to give up your time in your busy schedule erm then that says a lot

and I think for the core member to acknowledge that and appreciate it, I think they feel like you want to be there because you want to, you're not getting paid for it.'

In these two extracts, the volunteers are explaining how the Core Members interpret their willingness to give up their time as an indication of genuineness; they are there supporting the Core Members because they want to. Linking with the first superordinate theme this enables trust to be built within the CoSA. As Wilson, McWhinnie, Picheca, Prinzo and Cortoni (2007) argue the relationships between volunteers and Core Members are based upon friendship and trust, making them different to that of a 'professional'. This is vitally important to the success of CoSA due to, as they state, reintegration being unachievable with a 'them- and-us' attitude.

Extract 25

'I think it works better having someone give up their time from the community that Core Member's going to go in to, it perhaps makes them feel erm a little bit more like the community actually wants them, whereas I think if it was an employee or someone paid directly from circles I don't think it would have that kind of impact because obviously that's their job that's what they're there to do, whereas a volunteer that's something that they want to do and I think that has been recognised by our Core Member quite a lot, that he recognises that we are giving up our time to obviously try and support him and help him and I think he is really appreciative of that fact that it is just people from the community.'

What is interesting about this extract is that the volunteer construes themselves as a representation of the community. The fact that they are a community member volunteering their time for free means the Core Member feels like the community is welcoming to them. Whilst this is certainly the case for some of the volunteers and possibly even the friends and family of the volunteers as will be explored more in the following sub-theme, this is not the case of society as a whole. Indeed, it makes sense to recruit volunteers for CoSA who have a positive attitude towards the rehabilitation of those convicted of sexual offences (Kerr, Tully & Völlm, 2017). Clinks (2006) however, has highlighted how the recruitment pool for CJS volunteers generally is limited due to the negative attitudes of the public towards offenders i.e. there are few members of the community willing to volunteer their time to work with ex-offenders. Richards and McCartan (2017) reported similar negative views when conducting research into the public perceptions of CoSA. This, therefore,

raises the question as to how representative CoSA volunteers are of the local community the Core Members will be attempting to reintegrate in to.

Changing perceptions

The volunteers interviewed reported how they felt able to share to friends and family that there were volunteering to help reintegrate an individual previously convicted of a sexual offence. Interestingly, this appeared to be an important theme to the volunteers with every individual discussing it in one form or another.

Extract 26

‘it’s more men, like older men, like fathers they’re a bit more like really, really like ‘why are you doing it, why are you doing it?’ sort of thing erm but you know you just explain that’s what you’re interested in, it’s not you know, it’s kind of a way of preventing more victims and then they’re kind of a bit more understanding of it. I think in the training they did deal with that quite well I have to say, cause they said you might get asked, well they said you will get asked, people will make comments, it’s just trying to explain why you’re doing it and hopefully they’ll understand.’

This extract highlights how the volunteers felt able to discuss their role in the prison-model CoSA to individuals who were against the reintegration of this type of offender or who did not believe they are capable of rehabilitation. Through this discussion the volunteers explained how such individuals were slowly beginning to see a different perspective. Due to the volunteers being ‘unpaid’ they were again perceived to have no hidden agenda, this time by other members of the community. What is interesting is their perception, highlighted in the extract, that older men in particular hold the most negative views towards working with those who have been convicted of sexual offences. Some studies have reported similar results to this (i.e. Ferguson & Ireland, 2006). However, from a review of the literature in relation to the public’s attitude towards those who commit sexual offences, Willis, Levenson and Ward (2010) concluded that in most cases there was no difference between male and female perceptions.

Extract 27

‘I think they’re surprised to learn what we do and just I think really sort of how normal it is, you know you’re just with another person and you just discuss certain things, so in that sense it’s not the really bad stereotype I think perhaps they’ve

heard of before. Erm and I think then a lot of them see it in more of a, in a positive light but I still think and they're saying that they just still wouldn't perhaps be able to separate the person from the offence or they wouldn't be able to work in that environment still. But they don't view it as negatively I think.'

Here the extract is again demonstrating how, although it is a slow process, sharing the fact that they volunteer on CoSA is encouraging individuals with negative opinions to soften their perception. Previous CoSA literature has reported mixed findings with regard to this however. For example, McCartan (2016) reported from his research on CoSA that volunteers were split on whether they would tell others of their work as a CoSA volunteer. The main reason given for volunteers choosing not to share their role was due to the public's attitude towards those who commit sexual offences. Indeed, the extent the public believe CoSA to be a worthwhile initiative will depend upon how entrenched their attitudes are in relation to the effectiveness of exclusion and the ineffectiveness of rehabilitation (Armstrong et al., 2008).

Extract 28

'I'm gonna meet with **** (coordinator) about doing a presentation at our church, you know erm I'm in the process of talking to other people I know personally, saying 'listen, this is what I'm doing' I not tell them the ins and out, cause these people I've known for over twenty years so you know, like you say I do some voluntary work in **** prison, you know similar kind of thing, part of the church with a woman called ***** there from the chaplain and this woman came along and I said 'oh listen' I was telling her about Circles and she goes 'what, I used to do similar things like before' so she contacted **** (coordinator) and the next thing she bought a team of 5-6 people on board.'

Here the extract demonstrates the potential benefits of the volunteers themselves providing education to the general public. Although, arguably, this was to a faith community who are reported within the literature as forming a large part of the volunteers working on CoSA (Wilson et al., 2007). Kerr, Tully and Völlm (2017) highlighted how CoSA volunteers held significantly more positive attitudes than the general public towards those who commit sexual offences and their rehabilitation. Due to this there is an emerging belief within the literature that the volunteers may

be the ones best placed to provide community education regarding CoSA and the work the projects achieve (Richards & McCartan, 2017).

A variety of experiences

Using a group of four volunteers, rather than on a one to one basis, enables the Core Member to feel supported from individuals with a variety of different experiences and be held accountable from a variety of different perspectives.

Extract 29

'I think it is good erm to get the mix of experience and life experience (from older volunteers), which you can't expect in a young person but erm what the young people bring is, it's not just an openness and a freshness, it's actually a modern way of dealing with these things.'

This extract highlights the benefit of having a variety of volunteers of different ages within each CoSA. Alongside age, each CoSA should ideally involve a balance of gender and experience in its volunteers, thus providing a true representation of the community. Although this is not always possible, it does appear from the data that the volunteers believe the Core Members in the prison-model to be supported by a range of individuals.

Extract 30

'there's sort of different ages and that and different personalities and yeah I think the group matches together, the volunteers go together well, yet also in terms of what we can, so together as erm, together yeah as a team, we work well together sort of among ourselves but with the core member as well, I think erm with us having different experiences and what not, that's also quite good for him so we can offer different things for that.'

This extract demonstrates how the use of a variety of volunteers ensures that the dynamics of the CoSA work well together. Little research has been carried out on the break-down of individual CoSA. It is possible therefore that the correct mix of personalities and experiences is vital to the success of a CoSA. More research is required though to explore this concept. In addition, the volunteers in this study highlighted how the differing experiences of all involved enabled the CoSA to provide more extensive support and accountability to the Core Member than if just one volunteer was used.

Extract 31

Well for myself, you know, is that, you can be in a place by yourself, got no job. I mean I can remember years ago, being unemployed when I was in my 20s, I was unemployed for 5 years, had no food, had no money and you sit there day after day after day and suddenly you start getting depressed, thinking 'where am I going' and suddenly you look around thinking 'I'm not going anywhere' so those little triggers I pick up on other people, I ended up at the age of 20 I went in to depression cause I couldn't get no job so you end up like that, sitting there just being depressed, going more and more within yourself, you know so the question I put to him is that 'ok what's your week been' now if he's not been out in the past two, three days you think 'ok then, what have you done in those three days at home?' you know 'what have you done?'

This extract highlights how this particular participant's previous experience of being unemployed and suffering with depression helped them to not only support the Core Member but also hold them accountable. From their own experience, the volunteer is aware of the thoughts and feelings the Core Member may be suffering when sat at home for several days alone. From this therefore, they are able to legitimately question the Core Member from a place of experience. When working as a professional it is not the normal practice to disclose details such as the participant has in extract 31. Due to the focus of CoSA being a social rather than professional relationship however, the volunteers are able to have conversations with the Core Member from a more relatable position. Caution must still be expressed, however, to enable boundaries to be maintained between the Core Members and volunteers and to ensure such situations are not being manipulated by the Core Member to gain further personal information from the volunteers.

Despite the perceived benefits of using members of the local community in CoSA, there is a concern that using volunteers to work with individuals who have been convicted of sexual offences could attract those with the undesirable motives. Examples of such motives could be those who are particularly vulnerable and seeking counsel i.e. have been a victim of sexual abuse recently or those who intend on using their position to pursue vigilante action (Armstrong et al., 2008). In addition, some researchers have made a call for CoSA projects to recruit volunteers more representative of the community they will be released back in to. For example, individuals with less specialist knowledge of offending behaviour (Kerr et al., 2017). Both of these concerns highlight the importance of thorough vetting and effective training to ensure the Core Members receives the best possible CoSA the resources can offer.

Discussion

The benefits and negatives of volunteering with CoSA in general have been discussed elsewhere within the literature (see Höing et al., 2014 for a review of the literature). The purpose of this study therefore was to consider the volunteers experience in relation to the benefits and challenges specific to the prison-based model of CoSA.

There were several benefits to emerge from the volunteer data specific to the prison-model of CoSA, all of which were evident also within the Core Member data. The first superordinate theme demonstrated how the additional prison sessions of the prison-model CoSA enabled relationships to be built between the Core Members and volunteers and between the volunteers themselves. This is particularly significant due to the recognition that experiencing positive pro-social relations encourages desistance from further crime (Weaver & McNeill, 2015). With regard to accountability, the prison sessions allowed time for the volunteers to prepare the Core Members for their release. This was in relation to the restrictions the Core Members would have imposed on them and possible risky situations they may face. In terms of support, having already established pro social relationships during the prison sessions, the prison-model enabled the volunteers to support the Core members through the transitional period of release. This in turn may encourage and increase the Core Members' ability to maintain their commitment to change during the difficulties of re-entering society as someone convicted of a sexual offence (see chapter 6). Indeed, it is argued within the literature that providing pro social, supportive relationships to individuals during the lead up to and release from prison is essential for successful reintegration to place (Duwe, 2012; Maguire & Raynor, 2006). As highlighted earlier, unlike community models, the prison-model of CoSA enables Core Members to receive support through all phases of the desistance process, including the re-entry phase, as discussed throughout this thesis (Göbbels et al., 2012). All of the benefits reported by the volunteers also emerged in Core Member data. This therefore adds more weight to the argument that the prison-based CoSA are better placed to offer assisted desistance than community models when using the ITDSO as a conceptual framework.

In addition to the benefits, the challenges specific to the prison-model of CoSA, faced by the volunteers were also considered. The superordinate theme of ambiguous practice highlighted several challenges the prison-model CoSA presented to the volunteers. These challenges have raised several questions and illuminated a need for further research as will now be discussed.

Although the initial recruitment of volunteers has been highlighted as problematic due to CoSA involving working with individuals convicted of sexual offences (Wilson et al., 2007a), it is not clear whether this extends to explain the lack of volunteer commitment reported within this study. For example, do volunteers believe they will be capable of working with such individuals but find

the reality different upon starting their role? Alternatively, is a lack of enforcement on attendance impacting on the level of 'buying in' and engagement the volunteers have of their role? Indeed, recommendations have been made previously for further exploration into the experiences of individuals who begin to volunteer on a CoSA but decide to withdraw, along with volunteers who are regularly absent from the sessions (Armstrong et al., 2008; Thomas et al., 2014). This research would also benefit the prison-based model, providing more context to this apparent lack of commitment in some of the volunteers.

A lack of procedure, with regard to the planning and debrief sessions was also highlighted within the data. This was concerning due to the benefits reported by the volunteers when these sessions were taking place; the volunteers were better prepared resulting in the CoSA sessions running more effectively. In addition, McCartan (2016) has highlighted how volunteers are unable to discuss specific details of their work with significant others due to confidentiality concerns. The debrief sessions therefore are essential to provide informal support for the volunteers and highlight any formal supervision that may be required from the coordinator. The implementation of the correct structure at the start of a CoSA (i.e. planning session, CoSA session, debrief session, writing of the minutes), along with the strict reinforcement of it throughout is one suggestion to overcome this issue.

The volunteers' concerns highlighted in this study, surrounding the accountability role of the volunteers, are not limited to the prison-based model of CoSA. For example, McCartan (2016) has stated that due to UK CoSA projects being tied to the Criminal Justice System, clear definitions of 'support' and 'accountability' need to be considered from both the Core Members and Volunteers perspective. This may help to ease the tension, which has been reported to exist between the two concepts of support and accountability in CoSA (Wilson, in press). To support the volunteers on the prison-model CoSA specifically, the SLF have introduced a risk and contact escalation document for each Core Member. These have been designed to assist the volunteers in their accountability role and are tailor-made to each CoSA.

Interestingly, despite the concerns of the volunteers it was evident, from the data derived from the Core Members, that they were aware of the accountability aspect of CoSA and felt the volunteers were carrying this out effectively. This was simply through asking the Core Members where they had been that week and who they had spent time with, thus indicating that in-depth discussions of the Core Members' offences may not be necessary to ensure accountability. In addition, McCartan (2015; 2016) has stated that alongside considering how we can best help volunteers to understand and carry out their accountability role better, CoSA projects also need to be mindful that they are volunteers and not risk management agency staff. Indeed, there have been

reports of professionals viewing the volunteers on any model of CoSA as additional ‘eyes and ears’ of the criminal justice system (Thomas et al., 2013, p.7; Fox 2015b). CoSA have also been criticised in the literature for attempting, through the use of volunteers, to provide statutory supervision ‘on the cheap’ (Armstrong et al., 2008). Both of these statements however, are strongly contested by CoSA organisations (Thomas et al., 2014). Within the UK, CoSA projects support risk management and contribute to safeguarding and public protection through the accountability aspect (McCartan, 2016). It is vital to note however, that they do not duplicate or seek to replace statutory supervision of those convicted of sexual offences released from prison. Instead, they aim to complement and work in addition to the supervision that already exists for these individuals in the community (McCartan et al., 2014). Returning to the prison-based model of CoSA specifically, further research is now required to consider whether the risk and contact escalation documents introduced by the SLF are enough to reduce the volunteers’ anxieties regarding their accountability role and improve their confidence in carrying out the required actions i.e. challenging the Core Member, feeding relevant information back to the coordinator.

The last theme within the context of ambiguous practice involved a belief that the ‘real job’ of a volunteer involved more instrumental and practical support, which could not be started until the Core Member was released from prison. This was also a theme derived from the Core Member data, whereby they felt they had been promised more in regard to this (see chapter 6 specifically). The importance of expressive and emotional support needs to therefore be reinforced to volunteers, which will help to also set realistic expectations for the Core Members. In addition, the research outlined in this thesis can be used within the volunteer training to highlight the specific benefits of the prison sessions from both the Core Members’ and volunteers’ perspective.

The final superordinate theme included subordinate themes that demonstrated the importance of using volunteers within CoSA. The use of volunteers has been described as the strength of CoSA, allowing Core Members to feel part of the community by having contact with ‘real people’ other than just professionals (Armstrong & Wills, 2014a). The importance of using volunteers has been highlighted many times by Core Members who believe the success of CoSA can be attributed to members of the community who want to spend time with them and support them rather than professionals being paid to do so (Hanvey et al., 2011). Indeed, this was a belief expressed by the volunteers themselves in this study, who construed the success of CoSA as attributable to their genuine commitment to help the Core Members, which was demonstrated through being unpaid.

It is possible that this perceived genuineness, derived from the volunteers’ lack of payment for the work they carry out, is also underlying the theme of changing perceptions derived from the

data. All of the volunteers interviewed discussed some experience of changing the perceptions of those close to them, even if it was from a negative attitude towards those convicted of sexual offences, to a more measured perception. This ripple effect would possibly not be identified if CoSA involved paid professionals. For reasons such as this, Richards and McCartan, (2017) have recommended that the volunteers themselves could become involved in public communication and education to try and raise the positivity surrounding CoSA.

The final subordinate theme demonstrated how providing CoSA to individuals convicted of sexual offences, provides them with a group of people, from differing background and experiences who can support and hold them accountable through the transitional period of release. Although the volunteers on the prison-model CoSA appeared balanced in terms of age, gender and experience it can still be questioned as to how representative of the community they truly are. For example, Richards and McCartan (2017) reported negative, opposing and resistant views when conducting research in to the public's perceptions of CoSA. In particular, was the belief that the perpetrators of sexual crimes did not deserve the resources of CoSA and should be better spent towards supporting the victims. Underpinning this was the belief that those who commit sexual offences against children cannot be rehabilitated. In contrast Kerr, Tully and Völlm (2017) highlighted from their research how those who volunteer on CoSA hold significantly more positive attitudes towards those who commit sexual offences and their possible rehabilitation when compared to a general UK public sample. This demonstrates how using such volunteers can enable them to engage the Core Members more effectively, due to their genuine and empathic style. However, it also raises questions about their ability to effectively change the public's pessimistic attitudes and perhaps more importantly whether they should be asked to.

It is important to note here that the research analysed in this study, as well as the other studies in the thesis, was carried out during the early implementation stage of the SLF prison-model CoSA project when best practices were still being developed. This may have therefore influenced the quality of the CoSA and therefore some of the findings of this project. In addition, although the sample size is adequate for a qualitative IPA study (Reid et al., 2005), the response rate for the study was slightly lower than other research involving CoSA volunteers. Possible reasons for this include the interviews being perceived as time-consuming and non-beneficial to the volunteers. As a consideration for further research involving volunteers, Cupitt (2010) has recommended investing more resources in explaining the benefits of the research and emphasising that the purpose is not to monitor their ability as a volunteer.

In conclusion, the findings from this study have provided support for the prison-model CoSA by highlighting the benefits also identified by the Core Members in previous studies. In addition,

the importance of using volunteers within the model, as opposed to paid professionals, has been illuminated. With regard to the challenges identified by the volunteers, in relation to the prison-model of CoSA, several recommendations have been discussed which are also outlined in the following chapter.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

This thesis has sought to qualitatively explore the experiences of the Core Members and volunteers as they engaged in a prison-based model of CoSA. In addition, a mixed method approach was used to gain an insight into the construing and sense-making of the Core Members, particularly with reference to self and others, on their prison-model CoSA journey.

Chapters four to seven of the thesis consisted of the empirical studies of this research. The first three empirical studies (chapters 4, 5 & 6) were concerned with the Core Members' journey throughout their prison-based CoSA. Chapter four, detailed the Core Members experiences and how they construed their future prior to beginning a prison-model CoSA. Chapter five focused on the same Core Members' experiences of the prison sessions of their CoSA and how this has affected their view of release. Chapter six focused on a third time-point, considering the Core Members' experiences and perspectives once they had been released in to the community but were still part of CoSA. The fourth study (chapter 7) explored the volunteers' experiences and perspectives of their involvement in the prison-model CoSA, aiming to add depth to the knowledge base of this new initiative.

The aim of this chapter is to offer a synthesis of findings from each of the studies of this thesis; highlighting the original contributions to knowledge that have been made and offering recommendations for future practice and research. It will offer a critical appraisal of the research carried out by outlining the limitations of research conducted. The chapter concludes with the researcher's reflective account of the research journey.

Thesis contribution

The purpose of this thesis has been to provide an understanding of the first prison-model of CoSA in the UK. In doing this, the research in this thesis has made several original contributions to the existing knowledge. The initial aims of the research will now be restated before outlining the contributions in more detail.

Research aims

- To provide an in-depth understanding of the experiences of the Core Members (individuals convicted of a sexual crime) as they engage with the prison-based model of CoSA.
- To understand the views and perspectives of the volunteers involved in the prison-based model of CoSA, thus contributing to the knowledge base on this new initiative.

- To gain an insight into the construing and sense-making of the Core Members on their prison-based CoSA journey, particularly with reference to self and others.

Encompassed within these research aims were the following research questions:

- What are the personal experiences of the Core Members involved in a prison-based model of CoSA?
- In what way do the Core Members view their release from prison and subsequent reintegration?
- How do these views develop throughout their journey on the prison-based model of CoSA?
- What impact does the prison-based model of CoSA have on the Core Members' desistance processes?
- What are the perspectives of the volunteers who are involved in a prison-based CoSA?

The prison-model CoSA: A 'turning point' towards desistance

Studies one, two and three achieved the first and third research aims through exploring the Core Members' journey on a prison-model CoSA and focusing on how they construed their self and those around them. Data were collected at three time-points beginning just before they started the CoSA and continuing with them through the transitional period of release. The research in this thesis was the first to consider a CoSA of this type, with no other prison-model CoSA projects established or related literature published at the time data was collected. In addition, although the triangulation of interview and repertory grid data is growing in popularity (Blagden et al., 2014), this was the first time this particular approach to analysis had been used with any model of CoSA.

The data collected from the Core Members prior to them starting a prison-model CoSA was an exploratory study. It was designed to consider the Core Members' expectations for release including how they construed themselves compared to those around them. Interestingly, the data was collected for this first study during what appeared to be a 'turning point' for the Core Members. This was with regard to how they construed themselves, their previous offending behaviour and related risk factors. Relating back to the literature, this indicated that a cognitive transformation may have been taking place with early desistance narratives evident (Harris, 2014; King, 2013b). A growing sense of agency over their future as a pro-social member of the community was also identified in the data collected from this 'turning point', a factor deemed necessary for desistance to be successful (LeBel et al., 2008). The final point to acknowledge, highlighted by the Core

Members during this 'turning point', was a realisation that they needed to accept the help around them to successfully desist from future reoffending. Indeed, having a social network more conventional than one self, as is the case in prison-model CoSA, can encourage successful self-change (Paternoster & Bushway, 2009).

From this, one interpretation was that this point in the participants' journey signified the first stages of the desistance process. The first phase of Göbbels, Ward and Willis' (2012) Integrated Theory of Desistance from Sex Offending (ITDSO) involves the presence of a turning point such as that outlined above. They state, however, that this 'turning point' can only be capitalised upon if a person is open to change, as was highlighted in the findings. It was therefore postulated, that the support offered from the volunteers, in the prison sessions of the CoSA, may be able to encourage Core Members to capitalise on this 'turning point'. This could be through reinforcing any initial identity change and desistance narratives the Core Members may express. Further research was required to explore this in more depth however, particularly due to the shadow of release that the Core Members believed was looming over them. Incorporated within this anxiety about release, was a fear that they would always be labelled a 'sex offender'. Again, this warranted further research to explore the prison-model's ability to support the participants through the daunting transition of release and consider its role in the desistance process further. The Core Members were therefore re-visited at two further time-points, in the form of studies two and three.

The focus of the second study involved an in-depth exploration of the Core Members' experiences of the prison sessions of the prison-model CoSA. In addition, how they construed themselves including their imminent release from prison was considered. The identity change and cognitive transformation emerging within the first study had developed further by the second time-point. A reconstruction of the self appeared evident within the Core Members, which is said to represent the second phase of the Integrated Theory of Desistance from Sex Offending (ITDSO) developed by Göbbels, Ward and Willis (2012). The outcome of the second (rehabilitation) phase of the ITDSO is a reconstruction of the self, which involves reinforcing plausible pro-social narratives of desistance. The CoSA, through the prison sessions, was identified as nurturing pro-social narratives, encouraging the new pro-social identity and helping to maintain the hope and motivation to change; all of which are deemed necessary in the desistance process (Fox, 2015a; King, 2013a; Maguire & Raynor, 2006; McNeill, 2009).

The third phase of Göbbels, Ward and Willis' model of desistance, re-entry is defined as a process beginning before release from prison and continuing after offenders have re-joined society. During this phase the recognition and acceptance of this new non-offender identity, by people in their social environment i.e. the volunteers, serves to reinforce the commitment to change and

weakens further the deviant, offender identity. From the findings, it appeared evident that starting a CoSA whilst the Core Member is still in prison enables relationships such as these to become established so that support is in place once this third phase of desistance is reached.

At this point in the research project, it could have been suggested that prison-model of CoSA assists the Core Members in the journey towards desistance. However, the fear that they would never be free of the 'sex offender' label was still evident when how they construed their future self was considered. Despite the support of the CoSA and the changes being made towards a new pro-social life, underlying anxieties remained, or even increased slightly, the closer they came to leaving prison. An underlying cause of this appeared to be a fear of the stigmatisation that they believed awaited them on release. Indeed, the social stigma towards those who commit sexual offences may lead to the social isolation of these types of offender (Hannem, 2011), something which is beneficial to neither the individual nor the community, due to its links with reoffending (Clarke et al., 2015). Alongside this, the internalisation of the social prejudice towards ex-offenders has been reported as predicting both reconviction and re-imprisonment (LeBel et al., 2008). This highlights how the underlying anxieties of the Core Members could prove detrimental if not addressed. The Core Members were therefore approached at a third-time-point, once the confrontation with the real world had taken place.

The third study explored the Core Members' experiences of being involved with a prison-model CoSA once they had been released from prison and were living in the community. During the previous study it was proposed that the participants were just entering the third stage of the ITDSO model (Göbbels et al., 2012); re-entry, a process which, according to the authors, begins well before the point of release and continues into the community. The findings from the data collected in the third study indicated that by this time-point the participants appeared to be within this phase of the desistance model. As Serin and Lloyd (2009) argue, desistance is rarely instantaneous, with time needed instead for individuals to gradually commit themselves to their new pro-social lifestyles. Göbbels, Ward and Willis (2012) agree, stating that the maintenance of commitment to change is essential for individuals who have committed sexual offences to successfully complete the re-entry phase. The findings indicated that this appeared to be taking place and was being encouraged by the volunteers.

Within the re-entry phase of the ITDSO the ex-offenders' change in identity must be recognised and reflected back to them, thus demonstrating acceptance of the wider community (Göbbels et al., 2012). Indeed, empathic and sustained support can encourage and motivate individuals to overcome the threats to their new identity (McNeill, 2006), which was highlighted in the findings from this study. The cognitive transformation, identified in the Core Members,

therefore, suggests that they were progressing towards desistance. In addition, the relationships, which had already been built between those involved in the prison-model CoSA prior to release, means the volunteers could encourage the Core Members' pro-social behaviour once in the community as well as also hold them accountable.

Despite these positive findings, the Core Members still experienced barriers to successful reintegration, with issues regarding their health, establishing suitable housing and the perceived stigmatisation from members of the general public identified as the most problematic. These issues threatened to strip away the sense of agency the Core Members appeared to have developed by this point. As Göbbels et al., (2012) argued, issues such as these can serve to undermine even the most significant changes in identity by feeding into a negative self-fulfilling prophecy. It is possible, however, that without the support of the volunteers in the prison-model CoSA, these issues would have presented much larger hurdles to the participants. For example, although they were reported as problematic by the participants, they were still continuing to work towards a successful pro-social life in the community involving a desistance from sexual offending.

The final phase of the ITDSO is termed 'normalcy/reintegration'. An individual is considered to have reached this phase if they are able to maintain their commitment to change, despite all the barriers, thus defining themselves as a pro-social member of society (Göbbels et al., 2012). From the findings, one cannot conclude at this stage in the Core Members' journey whether or not the participants will reach the final stage of the ITDSO model. It would therefore be useful to re-visit the participants after their time with CoSA has come to an end, as is discussed in detail later in this chapter.

As has been well documented throughout this thesis, pro-social relationships, particularly during the transitional period of release are believed to be required, in order to encourage desistance further (Duwe, 2012; Maguire & Raynor, 2006). The analysis of the fourth study, therefore, considered the extent to which the volunteers involved in the prison-based model of CoSA were able to provide this.

Providing pro-social relationships through the transitional period of release

The final study of this thesis focused on the volunteers' perspectives of the prison-model CoSA and therefore enabled the second research aim, stated above, to be achieved. The findings interestingly reflected what had previously been illuminated in the studies focusing on the Core Members. For example, the volunteers recognised how the prison-model CoSA enabled relationships to be built between the Core Members. This additional time, provided through the prison sessions of the CoSA, enabled a sense of social belonging to be created between the Core Members and volunteers. As Weaver and McNeill (2015) argue, personal change alone is not enough in order to achieve

desistance, instead it should also be recognised and supported by the community. Positive pro-social relationships are believed to orient ex-offenders towards an optimistic and hopeful perspective of the future thus motivating them to live pro-social, crime free lives on release from prison (Visher & O'Connell, 2012). Through inclusion, rather than alienation, therefore, the volunteers were able to encourage a shift in identity in the Core Members, towards desistance. In turn, Weaver and McNeill (2015) believe that this assists an individual to realise their aspirations without becoming dependent.

Having these pro-social relations established prior to release enabled the volunteers to support the Core Members through the transitional period of moving from prison to community. Previous research has also concluded that if positive, stable and pro-social relationships are provided to those convicted of sexual offences, both while in prison awaiting release and upon re-entering society, then a sense of belonging can be created and law-abiding conduct promoted (Tewksbury & Connor, 2012). The volunteers in the prison-model CoSA therefore, may have encouraged the Core Members' ability to maintain their commitment to change during the difficulties of re-entering society as someone convicted of a sexual offence. Indeed, findings such as these add weight to the results derived from the Core Member data, thus strengthening the perceived benefits of the prison-model CoSA. However, the exploration of the volunteers' perspective also identified several concerns and challenges experienced, particularly a confusion surrounding the accountability aspect of their role and a possible lack of volunteer commitment in some CoSA. To take learning from these findings, the issues discussed by the volunteers have been developed in to a set of recommendations for future practice, which are outlined in the following section.

In conclusion, the research in this thesis highlights the progression towards desistance that the Core Members have made during their journey on the prison-model CoSA. The findings highlight how the pro-social relationships, developed during the additional prison sessions provided, enabled the volunteers to both support and encourage the Core Members in this progression over the transitional period of release from prison. This leads to the conclusion that the prison-model of CoSA may be better placed to assist desistance than community models, particularly when using the ITDSO (Göbbels et al., 2012) as a conceptual framework. Further research evaluating the process of change in Core Members on a prison-model CoSA is now required, over longer periods, to determine whether desistance was successfully reached.

Recommendation for future practice

CoSA research has been criticised for only focusing on and reporting the positive aspects of the projects they evaluate (Elliott, 2014). In addition to the positive findings outlined above therefore,

this section aims to take learning from the experience of both the Core Members and the volunteers. A set of recommendations have been provided that will enhance the support offered to Core Members during the transitional period of release from prison. The following recommendations were derived from both the interviews with the Core Members, that took place at three time-points during their prison-model CoSA journey, and the interviews with the volunteers.

By the third time-point, when the Core Members were in the community and still having CoSA sessions, none of the participants had been able to establish any pro-social relationships outside of the volunteers. As McCartan and Kemshall (2017) acknowledge, if the Core Members have not been able to bridge to other social groups by this point, problems could arise due to the links between social isolation, loneliness and the risk of reoffending (Mingus & Burchfield, 2012; Tewksbury & Lees, 2006; Wilson et al., 2009). This highlights the importance of the volunteers encouraging the Core Member to socialise within the local community thus strengthening their social ties with pro-social individuals outside of the CoSA. Indeed, Paternoster and Bushway (2009) acknowledge the importance of a network realignment with pro-social others in order for successful desistance to occur. The first recommendation therefore is;

1. For volunteers to encourage the Core Members to participate in pro-social activities outside of the CoSA, attending initial sessions and meetings with them if required.

Study three also highlighted how the Core Members, at times, felt that more instrumental support could have been offered to them by the volunteers. Linked to this issue, however, was that the Core Members viewed the CoSA coordinator as the person who could offer this type of support and consequently overlooked the volunteers. Northcutt Bohmert, Duwe and Hipple (2016) define this type of support as involving practical behaviour such as finding housing, searching for jobs, sourcing transportation etc. In relation to desistance however, it is empathic and sustained support that can encourage and motivate individuals to overcome the threats to their new identity (McNeill, 2006). This type of expressive support, therefore, provided by the volunteers should not be overlooked. Particularly due to the difficulty those who have committed sexual offences have in establishing relationships with people elsewhere, who could offer this type support (Tewksbury & Copes, 2013). This leads to the following two recommendations:

2. The importance of the expressive support offered by the volunteers should be reinforced to both volunteers and Core Members with realistic expectations set at the beginning of the CoSA.

3. Where instrumental support is required co-ordinators should not be viewed as the first port of call. Instead concerns and issues should be discussed within the CoSA meetings with the volunteers before being reported to coordinators through the minutes or via supervision if extra support is needed.

The third recommendation will also strengthen the relationships between the Core Members and the volunteers. The quality of the relationships is important to focus on, as outlined previously, due to the positive impact pro-social relations can have on desistance (Weaver, 2012). For example, a sense of belonging and solidarity developed between the Core Members and the volunteers can assist and support the Core Member in realising their pro-social aspirations the most, thus encouraging desistance (Weaver & McNeill, 2015). In addition, as highlighted throughout this thesis, relationships involving trust are needed throughout the transitional period of release, to enable individuals to reintegrate effectively in the community (Maguire & Raynor, 2006; McNeill & Weaver, 2010). It is therefore not enough for the volunteers to be merely present, on an intermittent basis; they need to invest time to form a social and supportive bond with the Core Member that will stay with them throughout the transition from prison to community. To maximise the most out of a prison-model CoSA therefore, with regard to assisting the Core Member in reaching desistance, the fourth recommendation is:

4. To reiterate and reinforce the importance of the volunteers' requirement to commit to two years, due to the role it has in the success of the CoSA. Further research could be conducted to explore the reasons for volunteer withdrawal or regular absenteeism, in order to prevent this where possible in the future.

The final recommendation derived from the findings in this thesis is with regard to absence of planning and debrief sessions reported by some of the volunteers. In relation to encouraging desistance, having this time both before and after a CoSA session would enable any pro-social narratives or identity change to be recognised, discussed and then reinforced by all the volunteers. Indeed, the volunteers talked positively about the prison-model CoSAs where these sessions were being used correctly. The final recommendation therefore is that:

5. Planning and debrief sessions should be implemented from the start of the CoSA and reinforced throughout.

It is hoped that all of the recommendations outlined here provide further suggestions for how the volunteers in a prison-model CoSA can reinforce and validate any pro-social identity change further, thus encouraging desistance.

Implications: The prison-model CoSA and desistance

With regard to the future of the prison-model of CoSA, a second prison in the UK has recently rolled out the initiative with their first prison-model CoSAs currently underway (McCartan, 2017). Arguably the true benefits of CoSA in general may not be realised until a positive development is seen with regard to the public perceptions of individuals who have committed sexual offences. However, this move by another prison to establish CoSA with individuals, prior to their release, demonstrates the growth of the prison-based model. In addition, the UK government, are now also recognising the benefit positive social relations can have on the desistance from crime. A review by the Ministry of Justice has recommended that the importance of maintaining family ties for those imprisoned should be included within prison service policy frameworks (Farmer, 2017). For those individuals without supportive, family relationships, such as the participants in this study, they recommend that prisons should be aware of the value of relationships with significant others both in the lead up to their release and as they re-enter the community (Farmer, 2017). To achieve this the review indicates that alternative models should now be considered in terms of 'what works' in rehabilitating offenders (Farmer, 2017, p.55). The findings in this thesis indicate that prison-model of CoSA could be one such model, providing supportive relationships for those who have no existing or potential social support during the transitional phase of release.

As has been highlighted throughout this thesis there appears to be a gap in the social support offered by the community models of CoSA during the transitional period of release from prison to the community. For individuals convicted of sexual offences, this period can be a difficult period leading to vulnerability and loneliness, particularly for those who are also elderly or have ID (Cummins & Lau, 2003; Crawley & Sparks, 2006). It has been well established also throughout this thesis that loneliness and isolation, caused by this problematic or unsuccessful reintegration, can exacerbate the risk of reoffending for those convicted of sexual offences (Clarke et al., 2015; Fox, 2015). The findings within this thesis however, demonstrate how the prison-model of CoSA allow pro-social relationships to be developed and established prior to the Core Members release from prison, enabling support and accountability to take place during the period of transition.

As has been documented regularly within the literature, pro social relationships such as those identified in the prison-model CoSA, provide a sense of belonging, which is reported to encourage the desistance from crime (Weaver & McNeill, 2015). For those close to the release from prison, Visher and O'Connell (2012) reported how the presence of support networks can play a vital role in

how these individuals viewed their chances of success as they re-enter the community. Once released from prison having a law abiding social network, such as that provided by the prison-model CoSA, is documented within the literature as a protective factor against individuals committing further sexual offences in the future (de Vries Robbé et al., 2015). The findings in this thesis suggest therefore, that being involved in a prison-model CoSA may assist individuals, previously convicted of sexual offences, in reaching successful desistance from crime. Indeed, McNeill and Weaver (2010) have called for further research on assisted desistance to determine what practices best support desistance and for whom. The research in this thesis highlights the potential of the prison-model CoSA to assist individuals convicted of sexual offences, who are also either elderly or have ID, during the entire desistance process, particularly when using ITDSO model (Göbbels et al., 2012) as a conceptual framework.

Further research is now required, however, to explore this further and expand upon the findings in this thesis. Two methods by which this may be achieved, therefore, are outlined in more detail in the following section.

Recommendations for future research: Expanding the prison-model research base

From the research outlined in this thesis two areas of further work have been identified. The first one considers the extent Core Members are able to maintain desistance after the prison-model CoSA has ended. The second explores the possible impact hearing about the work CoSA volunteers carry out, may have on attitudes towards those who commit sexual offences. These will now be discussed in turn.

What happens after the CoSA ends? Exploring the Core Members' experience

The research in this thesis followed the Core Members' journey throughout their time on a prison-model CoSA. Although three time-points were included (see chapters 4, 5 & 6), it was beyond the scope of the research to determine whether or not the Core Members were successful in reaching desistance. The period of time recommended as necessary to deem individuals previously convicted of sexual offences as having successfully reached desistance has ranged from three to five years (Farrall, Hough, Maruna & Sparks, 2011). Further research is therefore now required to explore what happens to the Core Members after the support of the CoSA is no longer there. For example, did the prison-model CoSA provide enough support and accountability to enable them to overcome the barriers to successful reintegration (see chapter 6) and assist desistance from crime? Or is the vulnerability and isolation often experienced by those who have previously committed sexual offences (Tewksbury, 2012) just delayed by being a Core Member? Indeed, the findings from this

research highlight how some of the Core Members are emotional regarding the ending of their CoSA. Is it riskier to provide individuals with a support network over the transitional period of release and then take it away therefore, or have they successfully managed to bridge to other social groups outside of the volunteers, thus softening the impact of the CoSA ending?

McCartan and Kemshall (2017) have begun to ask similar questions regarding CoSA projects in general demonstrating the need for further research in this area. One way this could be achieved is through qualitative interviews analysed using IPA, similar to the interviews in this thesis. To implement this research ethically, consent to be contacted after the CoSA had finished would have to be gained from each Core Member whilst they were still in contact with the CoSA. In regard to the Core Members in this research, conducting a further interview at a fourth time-point would enable further consideration of whether they had successfully reached the normalcy/reintegration phase of the ITDSO (Göbbels, Ward & Willis, 2012). In doing this, the extent to which the ex-Core Members define themselves as a non-offending member of society, who is fully reintegrated within the community, could be explored. From this, and depending upon the length of time they had been offence free, whether or not the individuals had reached successful desistance could be determined.

Is there a ripple effect? Examining the attitudes of the volunteers' friends and family

The second area of research to explore further is a theme derived from the volunteers' data. The volunteers indicated that they had been able to challenge the perceptions of those around them, in relation to individuals who commit sexual offences (see chapter 7).

Richards and McCartan (2017) have used social media to examine public views of CoSA with the results indicating that the majority viewed CoSA negatively. In contrast Kerr, Tully and Völlm (2017) reported how CoSA volunteers hold more positive attitudes towards those who commit sexual offences than the general public. It has therefore been suggested that CoSA volunteers may be best placed to educate the general public about the benefits of CoSA (Richards & McCartan, 2017). Indeed, many CoSA volunteers believe that CoSA opens the door to being able to discuss sexual offending as a community issue, separate to the discussion conducted in the media, which some believe perpetuates negative public attitudes (Lowe, Willis & Gibson, 2017)

A quantitative survey, administered to the friends and family of volunteers' before and after the volunteers' involvement in CoSA, could therefore be used to assess any changes in attitudes over time. The Attitudes to Sex Offenders Scale (ATS) (Hogue, 1993) or the Community Attitudes Towards Sex Offenders scale (CATSO) (Church et al., 2008) are possible scales that could be used to examine any ripple effect present, in terms of increased positive attitudes towards those who

commit sexual offences. This would enable the following question to be considered; does hearing about the work a CoSA volunteer carries out, with those who have been convicted of sexual offences, impact on an individual's personal attitudes?

The ethical issue of gaining consent would again have to be carefully considered as part of a research proposal. In addition, the fact that there has been previous research using the volunteers of CoSA projects would need to be considered, in relation to possible feelings of being over-researched. Cupitt (2010) recommends that a solution to this may be investing more resources in explaining the benefits of the research to the volunteers and emphasising that the purpose is not to monitor their ability as a volunteer.

Limitations

Alongside the discussion of the implications of the research in this thesis, and suggestions of possible further work, there are several limitations that need to be discussed. First, it is important to recognise and acknowledge that the research in this thesis was conducted during the early implementation stage of the SLF prison-model CoSA project, when best practices for this type of model were still being developed. For example, some of the individuals accepted as Core Members were assessed as medium risk using the RM2000 risk assessment tool (Thornton et al., 2003). However, since the project has expanded, only men assessed as high or very-high risk using the same risk assessment tool are accepted as Core Members. This is to ensure the resources are directed towards those who are most in need of a prison-model CoSA. However, this could also mean that future results differ from those outlined in this thesis. A continuation of the research, now the project has expanded and can be considered well-established, would help to strengthen the findings in this thesis.

One of the main limitations of the research in this thesis is the trade off at the design level to conduct exploratory research on experience, rather than providing an evaluation in the quantitative sense. The degree of analysis required to ensure a rich and detailed account of the data required in qualitative research (Smith & Osborn, 2003) means that small sample sizes are the norm. A smaller sample size provides an in-depth exploration and understanding of an under-researched area (Blagden et al., 2014). The studies in this thesis are idiographic in nature meaning the sample sizes for each provided rich and meaningful data. This, therefore, limits the ability to generalise the findings to wider populations. Though the findings will hold some representation, it will be partial and incomplete.

Another limitation of the research, due to the use of more qualitative and mixed method research over quantitative research, is that the research is unable to compare the findings from the Core Members who took part in a prison-model CoSA with those who did not. As Maruna (2015)

acknowledges, qualitative research is routinely screened out of systematic reviews or meta-analyses due to the absence of a focus on cause and effect. The use of a comparison study with more quantitative methods would therefore enable the prison-based model of CoSA to begin to develop an 'evidence-based' label (Maruna, 2015, p315). It would be important, however, to consider the debate surrounding the use of RCT methods, with those who have convicted sexual offences and CoSA specifically, when deciding upon the quantitative methods to use (see chapter 2 for more discussion on this topic).

Many individuals with ID struggle with abstract thinking (Craig & Hutchinson, 2005) and this became apparent particularly during the repertory grid data collection sessions. Scores for personality constructs were often either a 1 or a 7 implying that they could only determine whether the person in question had the construct or not, rather than being able to rate it on a sliding scale. Thinking of constructs opposite to those elicited also proved difficult for some of the men, possibly due to them holding a simpler, more dichotomous understanding. In addition, some of the participants, again those with ID, appeared to struggle with the concepts referred to in the repertory grids i.e. the elements 'self in the past', 'self now' and 'self in the future'. Indeed, individuals with ID have been reported to experience difficulty when applying concepts to, or identifying emotions in a temporal domain i.e. past, present or future (Newman & Beail, 2002). The language was therefore adapted during the repertory grid process to aid the participants' understanding i.e. the elements became 'how you used to be', 'how you are now' and 'how you would like to be in the future'. In addition to adapting language, as Arscott, Dagnan and Kroese (1998) state, the use of alternative formats for providing information to those with ID, such as vignettes and pictures, can be useful to aid understanding. Standardised, CoSA-specific pictures or pictures relating to constructs, may have been a useful addition therefore and could be considered for future research with CoSA Core Members with ID.

In relation to the above point, one of the main limitations of using repertory grids, as a method of data collection, is that it can be time consuming in its administration (Winter, 2003) i.e. each repertory grid took between 1 -1.5 hours to administer. Indeed, for some of the repertory grid sessions with participants with ID, particularly those with low IQ, the process appeared to require considerable effort on their part, as well as the researcher's. It was important, therefore, that the researcher was mindful, and aware of, possible fatigue and frustration within the participants when administering the repertory grids. It is acknowledged within the literature that conducting mixed method research can require more of the researcher's resources than using either qualitative or quantitative methods alone (Burke-Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Due to the additional depth

using this type of data collection tool added to the research, however, the additional resources required to administer each repertory grid were deemed justified.

Finally, throughout this thesis care has been taken not to label or stigmatise those convicted of sexual offences further through the language used. Labelling one of the elements in the repertory grids as a 'sex offender', however, is a limitation of the research. Although none of the participants alluded to the case, it could have led to feelings of stigmatisation. In future research involving repertory grids, care needs to be taken not to include any potentially stigmatising labels as elements.

Reflections on the research experience

The impact that carrying out research and collecting data has upon researchers themselves is often overlooked when outlining and discussing the results of a study (Blagden & Pemberton, 2010). Carrying out a PhD is an emotional experience, fluctuating from being rewarding to distressing to isolating. This, as Liebling (1999) acknowledges, can be a valuable source of data thus making it important to reflect upon this research experience. Reflecting upon some of the problems and issues encountered during qualitative research, particularly in the social sciences, has become increasingly common and can provide a real sense for readers of what it is like to carry out research within a working prison (Bosworth et al., 2005; Liebling, 1999). The final section, therefore, will outline the main issues and experiences from my time as a PhD researcher.

Data collection

Prior to commencing the PhD, I worked as a psychology assistant at HMP Whatton for 2.5 years. This involved me conducting interviews with those convicted of sexual offences, including those assessed as having ID, one to one to assess treatment suitability. In addition, I facilitated on a Core SOTP lasting approximately 6 months. Despite having experience of working in a prison setting, I have still grown and developed as a person during the PhD process. My skills as a researcher have evolved and advanced tremendously due to experiences such as the ones I am about to discuss. For example, I have learnt the importance of remaining objective when collecting and analysing data and have developed further my skills of working effectively with individuals with ID.

Working within prison regimes

The strict procedures implemented by the Psychology department at HMP Whatton regarding interviewing prisoners also needed to be followed by myself as a researcher. It was therefore essential that I refreshed myself with the correct process of requesting an interview with a prisoner,

carrying out the interview and recording any necessary details from the interview. Not doing so could result in serious consequences regarding not only the safety of the prisoner themselves but others around them. For example, during an interview one particular participant talked about suicidal feelings and committing suicide if he lost the support of his parents and contact with his children. This was explored with him and he stated that he had no current suicidal feelings or any plans to carry it out. However, due to his low mood the wing staff were informed so as to provide support once he had returned from the interview. An entry in the department observation book was also made so that the rest of the department could be made aware at the weekly meeting. Without refreshing myself of the correct process to follow when dealing with situations like this I could have, unintentionally, left the participant in an emotionally vulnerable situation.

Restraints on data collection

Data collection was a slow process throughout the duration of the research, often taking a long time to organise. This, at times, was frustrating and required perseverance and patience. The length of time it took for me to collect the data was in part due to the infancy of the SLF prison-model CoSA project. Processes such as Core Member selection and CoSA set up were being done for the first time and therefore, understandably, took longer than initially thought. In addition, as Blagden and Pemberton (2010) acknowledge, any research dependant on gate keepers to access participants is often a slow process due to the busy schedules of everyone involved.

Another reason for why the data collection took so long was that the community data for the Core Members who had been released was difficult to arrange. The first problem was contacting the Core Members. Initially I tried to arrange data collection through the volunteers, however this was proving unsuccessful as understandably this was not a required part of their role as a volunteer. I therefore arranged to have a research phone from NTU, which I could call the released Core Members on myself. This way I could arrange times and dates that were suitable for all involved. Another issue with arranging community data collection was finding a suitable location to carry out the research. Initially the location used for the CoSA prison-model formal reviews was also used for the data collection. Either the co-ordinator or I would extend the booking of the rooms after a CoSA session in order for data to be collected. Due to the length of time spent arranging the community data collection and the fact that the Core Member also had their CoSA sessions on the same day, only interviews were collected at this time-point for some of the Core Members.

Once the SLF were allocated offices in the community, data collection became much easier. The Core Members were familiar with the location as their CoSA meetings were held at the same location, thus reducing both potential anxiety and inconvenience. Where possible the data was

collected before or after a CoSA session or if the Core Member lived nearby, and preferred to, a different date and time was arranged. The Core Members interviewed were noticeably calmer and more willing to engage when the community data collection was based at these premises, thus demonstrating the appropriateness of the rooms for this purpose.

Challenge versus collusion: 'walking the line'

Overt or direct challenging of the participant's views is strongly recommended against during research (Blagden & Pemberton, 2010). However, it is equally important when working with those who have broken the law not to collude with or affirm their views. As a researcher working with those convicted of sexual offences, I was therefore in the difficult position of having to allow participants to tell their story fully whilst at the same time ensuring I was not subscribing to any cognitive distortions that some of them may have held. As Blagden and Pemberton (2010) acknowledge, this 'walking the line' or taking the middle ground is a particularly tough and uncomfortable task for researchers, which was further enhanced by my previous clinical experience. When working as an SOTP facilitator, therapeutic challenging of cognitive distortions expressed by the individuals on the programme would be carried out immediately to try and facilitate new ways of thinking. This, however, is not part of the role as a researcher (Blagden & Pemberton, 2010). Whilst it is important not to confirm or acquiesce with offence supportive beliefs or attitudes, to understand fully a participant's experience and how they construe their world they must be allowed to talk freely without interruption.

In extreme cases, where I felt the strength of the cognitive distortions and minimisations were a safeguarding issue, the supervisors of the project were informed along with the clinical lead of the Psychology department at HMP Whatton, who was also a trustee of the SLF and manager of the coordinators of the prison-model CoSA project. They were then able to pass the information on to the relevant individuals as they deemed appropriate.

Independence as a researcher

It is important that any researcher remains objective throughout the whole research process, not just during data collection. This was particularly difficult at times due to me having an affiliation with the SLF charity who established the prison-model CoSA. In addition, two of my supervisors are trustees of the SLF leading to an invested interest in the success of the project. Elliott (2014) warns of situations such as these, due to their potential to lead to an over-emphasis of the successes of CoSA, whilst minimising the challenges. To maintain a relative independence during the research, therefore, regular discussions with my supervisors took place regarding the data that was collected and how it should be reported it back to the SLF. Through these discussions it was decided that only

specific information relating to safeguarding issues would be passed on to the clinical lead of the Psychology department at HMP Whatton, who was also a trustee of the SLF and manager of the coordinators of the prison-model CoSA project, as was outlined previously. At first this decision was challenged when I was asked to discuss, with the project coordinator, any extra support the volunteers had suggested they would benefit from in the interviews. This put me in an uncomfortable position as I had to ensure the participants' confidentiality was not broken and that I did not disclose information unethically.

After this was situation was discussed, however, and I had made my position, and the constraints within it, apparent to everyone involved in the project, it became much easier to remain objective. A distance evolved whereby the confidentiality of my research was respected until such time that a research summary could be provided. In addition, the final drafts of research papers were sent to the clinical lead for HMP Whatton and trustee of SLF prior to submitting them to journals for publication. This gave the SLF the chance to query or ask for further information regarding any of my findings, before they were peer reviewed.

Working with vulnerable individuals

The participants in studies 1-3 could be considered vulnerable individuals due to being either a prisoner or an ex-offender attempting to live in the community, as was explained in the methodology chapter (chapter 3). In addition, these individuals were either elderly or assessed as having ID, both of which can be considered as an additional vulnerability. For these participants, the data collection sessions in the community proved difficult. The participants with ID had often forgotten who the researcher was, the purpose of the research and what had previously been discussed; meaning rapport had to be built from scratch. For the elderly participants, accessing and attending the data collection sessions in the community was difficult due to health problems i.e. unable to walk or climb stairs. Neither of these problems were at a detriment to the research collected, but required additional time and consideration from myself to ensure that all the needs of all the participants were catered for. It was vital that regular debriefing and supervision with other members of the research project took place during these points of increased workload and stress.

With ID individuals, specifically, over disclosure was a problem on two occasions during the research. This was despite the concept of limited confidentiality being explained to all participants at the start of every data collection session. For example, on two occasions during the data collection process information had to be passed to the relevant authorities. On one occasion, due to a statement of intention of harm to another, confidentiality was broken and the relevant

authorities were informed. This was achieved by filling out an intelligence report on the appropriate system at the prison. On a different occasion, another participant started to talk about an issue that had occurred the previous night between himself and the individual he shared his cell with. For this situation, I checked whether the participant had informed anyone of what had happened. Due to him having informed his wing officers prior to the interview, no specific information needed to be passed on. I did, however, inform his wing staff that he had become upset when discussing the matter during the interview. Doing this enabled staff to monitor his mood once returning from the interview. Although the breaking of confidentiality can at times feel uncomfortable for a researcher, in these cases it was necessary to prevent future harm to the participant or others.

The experience of interviewing the 'vulnerable' participants was one of the most challenging and rewarding experiences of the whole project. Indeed, the fieldwork stage was the most enjoyable aspect of this research. Although my previous clinical skills provided a good grounding to begin my PhD, in that I always tried to remember that those convicted of sexual offences are a vulnerable group and always aimed to separate the offence from the individual, my skills as a researcher were honed and developed throughout the process. For example, as Fransella (2005) acknowledges, to administer repertory grids effectively researchers need to enhance skills of creativity to devise methods for eliciting constructs and elements in challenging situations. I am grateful and feel privileged that participants shared their stories with me, a process which I am aware would have at times been hard for them.

Conferences

Over the time it has taken to carry out the research and write up this thesis, I have presented at several conferences from which I have received feedback, both positive and constructive. The main points from this feedback are now summarised.

At some of the more general conferences where I have presented i.e. PsyPAG, many colleagues had not heard of CoSA in any context. Most stated that they thought it to be an excellent idea, however a few expressed concerns regarding the use of volunteers in an initiative like CoSA. This was due to the offence type the Core Members had committed that possibly involved manipulation, control and grooming. This resonates with some of the literature, which has also questioned whether restorative practices, like CoSA, can successfully work with offenders who offend sexually against children due to the elements such as those described. In addition, Cossins (2008) has questioned whether those involved will be trained to identify and challenge any attempts by the Core Member at manipulating situations and deflecting responsibility. Similarly, Armstrong, Chistyakova, Mackenzie and Malloch (2008) interviewed probation officers who

expressed concerns regarding the limited abilities of volunteers to manage boundaries with highly complex and manipulative individuals. Whilst valid concerns, the professional recruitment and training of volunteers, including the use of a CoSA coordinator to supervise and support them, ensures the volunteers are adequately equipped with a level of competence that enables them to deal effectively with those who have committed serious sexual offences. In addition, following the monitor principle of CoSA, any information deemed risky in terms of future offending is passed on to professionals working for the relevant risk management agencies (i.e. police, probation).

In October 2015, I also attended the Assessment of the Treatment of Sexual Abusers (ATSA) 34th annual research and treatment conference. The ATSA conference is an extremely prestigious event and being accepted to present was an honour. Two emerging themes were presented at the conference: benefits of the prison-model and ambiguous practice. The theme of ambiguous practice attracted particular interest with requests for the SLF to share the tools that the charity had put in place to try and manage some of these issues i.e. the contact and risk escalation policy. Alongside this, the theme of ambiguous practice was present in all of the other presentations on CoSA during the conference. This highlighted that the issues identified within the SLF project are present within all CoSA projects and are therefore something that must be discussed, so that solutions can be sought (McCartan, 2015).

Most recently, the European criminology conference (2017) staged a meeting regarding the progress towards establishing an International CoSA foundation or association. The aim of this foundation would be to create a formal, long-term and legally constituted body to support and promote CoSA of all types, enabling diversity to exist between projects whilst simultaneously assuring quality standards. An International CoSA foundation would also involve a research sub-group whereby research could be disseminated in a direct and streamlined approach to other academics and practitioners in the field. With regard to desistance specifically, the discussion surrounding this research sub-group focused upon the feasibility and viability of conducting longitudinal research with CoSA Core Members. In addition, the papers delivered at the conference on CoSA, focused upon considering the Core Members after the CoSA has ended. McCartan and Kemshall (2017) highlighted the requirement for further research surrounding CoSA's ability to encourage Core Members' bridging and bonding to other pro-social groups in society. This links with the research in this thesis directly with regard to the progression the Core Members appear to have made towards desistance during the CoSA, and the need for future research to explore their ability to maintain this desistance, after the support of the volunteers is no longer there.

Summary

In summary, the PhD process has made me aware of the complex issues of carrying out research in a prison setting and conducting research with those convicted of sexual offences. In addition, I am now acutely aware of the difficulties these individuals face when trying to reintegrate back in the community and the impact the attitudes of society can have on their desistance journey. Conducting the research outlined in the thesis was a great learning experience for me personally and is something I now wish to continue and develop on in the future through further research.

Concluding remarks

The UK government's recognition of the importance of positive social relationships, during the transitional period of release from prison, enables the findings outlined in this thesis to be considered a timely contribution, to the knowledge base and policy frameworks regarding those who have been convicted and imprisoned for sexual offences. The findings demonstrate how a prison-model of CoSA is able to provide a pro-social network for those who would otherwise experience a difficult transition from prison to community. The findings suggest that the prison-model of CoSA may be best placed in assisting desistance from crime, when using the ITDSO (Göbbels et al., 2012) as a conceptual framework. This is due to the Core Member establishing pro social relations with the prison-model CoSA volunteers, prior to their release from prison, thus providing support and accountability throughout the entire desistance process. Further research is now required however, to expand upon these findings and explore further the extent to which, Core Members on a prison-model of CoSA are able to achieve successful desistance once the support of the CoSA ceases to be there.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Information sheet for Core Members



Information sheet

Please could you take the time to read the following information carefully.

What is the research about?

You have been asked if you would like to take part in some research. The research is looking at what it is like for people taking part in the Circles of Support in prison. For example, what you think the good bits and bad bits will be of being a Core Member in a Circle.

It is up to you if you want to take part in the research. If you take part in the research you will not receive anything extra and if you do not want to take part, you will not lose anything.

Taking part in the research **will not** affect your chances of getting other treatment at HMP Whatton. Taking part in the research **will not** affect any parole or sentence planning decisions.

Taking part in the research **will** give you a chance to talk about how you feel about taking part in a Circle that started in the prison and carried on after release.

The main person who is carrying out the research is Rosie Kitson-Boyce. Rosie and her supervisors, who will also be involved in the research, are from Nottingham Trent University and do not work for the Prison Service. The director of studies for the research is Dr Nicholas Blagden.

Please contact Rosie through the Psychology department if you have any questions about the research.

What would you be asked to do?

If you take part in the study you will be asked to complete a number of interviews at three different time-points:

- (1) two interviews before you start a Circle
- (2) two interviews just before you are released from prison
- (3) two interviews when you are released but still taking part in the circle

Some of the interviews will involve exercises, such as a card sorting exercise. This will be explained to you by Rosie if you decide to take part.

The interviews will take place in an interview room at HMP Whatton. On release they will take place before or after your circle session or at the university. They will last about 1-2 hours each. If more time is needed we will arrange this with you.

You can stop the interviews at any time to have a break or if you don't want to do it anymore.

We would also like to ask your permission to keep your details and data so that we are able to contact you in the future for possible further research. You will always be able to tell us that you no longer wish to be involved, and we will tell you how to do this below.

What happens if I do not want to take part anymore?

You can stop the interviews **at any time**. If you change your mind and do not want to take part anymore, you have 1 month (4 weeks) after the interview to let me know.

You will not get into any trouble if you do this and you do not have to tell anyone why you have changed your mind.

If you have a complaint about the research or how it has made you feel, you can contact Rosie, or another member of the research team, through the Psychology department

What happens to the information you give to me?

All of the data you give in the interview will be recorded using a Dictaphone. This information will then be typed up on the computer.

Information about you will be kept on a locked computer or in a locked drawer, which only the research team will have access to. This will be at either the prison or at the University. Nothing will leave the prison with your name on, or with anything else on that could show who you are.

The research team is made up of a number of researchers from Nottingham Trent University, the Circles project and some staff within the psychology department. They will all deal with your information confidentially, that is, they will not tell anyone what your name is.

What you say in the interviews will be kept private unless:

- You tell me that you want to harm yourself
- You tell me that someone else is at risk of being harmed
- You tell me information about an offence which you have not been convicted for (like the name of a victim and when the offence happened)
- You tell me information about plans to escape prison or break prison rules

If you mention any of these things to me, I will have to pass the information on to prison security, the wing staff or the police.

I will write report(s) and presentation(s) at the end of this study and some of the information we collect will be included in these. We will never mention you by name in these.

Every effort will be made to ensure you cannot be identified within any reports and / or presentations.

What do I do now?

If you want to take part in the research please tick the date that would be best for you on the sheet enclosed. You can then return this in the envelope I have given you **to Rosie Kitson-Boyce in the Psychology Department**. A meeting will be then made to talk about the information in this letter. You can also ask any questions at this time.

You will then be asked to sign a consent form to say you are happy to take part in the research and for it to be recorded using a dictaphone. Rosie will go through this with you in the meeting.

Appendix 2: Consent form for Core Members



Consent form

Participant Number:.....

It has been explained to you that we are looking at what it is like taking part in a Circle of Support while in prison.

The findings will help us understand what it is like being a Core Member in a Circle whilst in prison.

Please tick below where you agree to consent (please tick ✓):

- I have read the information sheet and understood what I am being asked to do
- I agree to my data being collected through interviews and understand what will be done with this research
- I agree to being contacted in the future by the research team for possible further research – such as the interviews before release and the community interviews.
- I agree for my data to be kept and stored by the research team until the research has finished
- I understand how I can stop taking part in the research or make a complaint about the research
- I have been given the chance to ask questions and feel that these have been answered fully
- I understand what information you will keep confidential and what information you will need to pass on

Thank you for helping us with this important research.

I have read the above information and ticked the boxes where I consent (agree) to take part in the research:

Signed.....

Date.....

Witnessed by.....

Signed.....

Date.....

I agree for all of the interviews to be recorded using a Dictaphone

Signed.....

Date.....

Witnessed by.....

Signed.....

Date.....

If you would like to speak to one of the research team, perhaps because you have a question about this, please contact Rosie Kitson-Boyce through the Psychology department.

Thank you for time,

**Rosie Kitson-Boyce, Post-graduate researcher at Nottingham Trent University
Dr Nicholas Blagden, Director of Studies and lecturer at Nottingham Trent University.**

Appendix 3: Debrief sheet for Core Members



Information sheet – after the research

Participant Number:.....

Thank you

Thank you for taking part in this study. This will help us understand better what it is like taking part in a Circle while still in prison.

Taking part in this will not have any effect on your access to other treatment or services at the prison or in the community. It will not have any effect on parole and/or sentencing decisions.

If you change your mind

If you change your mind and do not want me to use the information you have given to me, you have until to tell us. If you do this, you will not get into trouble and all the information we have collected about you will be deleted. Please let us know by contacting Rosie Kitson-Boyce through the Psychology department and telling her your name and that you want to remove your data. You do not need to give a reason.

Extra support – whilst you are in prison

If you felt that some of the interviews were quite personal and / or if you feel upset in any way you should contact a member of your wing staff or use one of these services;

- **Support volunteers** – look on your wing and find out who they are

- **Listeners** – you can ask wing staff if you need to speak to a listener
- **Counselling psychology service** – put an application in and speak to one of the team

Extra support – once you are in the community

If you feel upset in anyway after the interviews in the community you can talk to your volunteers on the circle or you can contact one of these services:

- **Samaritans:** support anyone in distress, around the clock and about any subject. Helpline: 08457 90 90 90 wwww.samaritans.org
- **NAPAC:** (National Association of People Abuse in Childhood) supports adults who have been abused in any way as children. Helpline: 0800 085 3330 www.napac.org.uk
- **Stop it now:** confidential advice about sexual thoughts or attraction to children or teenagers
Helpline - 0808 1000 900 www.stopitnow.org.uk

Thank you for your help,

Rosie Kitson-Boyce, Post-graduate researcher at Nottingham Trent University
Dr Nicholas Blagden, Director of Studies and lecturer at Nottingham Trent University.

Appendix 4: Information sheet for volunteers



Information sheet

Please could you take the time to read the following information carefully.

What is the research about?

You have been asked if you would like to take part in some research. The research is looking at what it is like for people taking part in the Circles of Support and Accountability in a prison-based setting. For example, what your experience has been like as a volunteer in a prison-based Circle.

The decision to take part in the research is up to you. If you take part in the research you will not receive anything extra and if you do not want to take part, you will not lose anything.

The main person who is carrying out the research is Rosie Kitson-Boyce. Rosie and her supervisors, who will also be involved in the research, are from Nottingham Trent University and do not work for the Prison Service. The director of studies for the research is Dr Nicholas Blagden.

Please contact Rosie on the email address below if you have any questions about the research.

What would you be asked to do?

If you take part in the study you will be asked to complete an interview during your time volunteering on a Circle in the prison.

The interview will take place in a private room at HMP Whatton or at the University. They will last about 1-2 hours each. If more time is needed we will arrange this with you.

You can stop the interviews at any time to have a break or if you don't want to do it anymore.

We would also like to ask your permission to keep your details and data so that we are able to contact you in the future for possible further research. You will always be able to tell us that you no longer wish to be involved, and we will tell you how to do this below.

What happens if I do not want to take part anymore?

You can stop the interviews at any time. If you change your mind and do not want to take part anymore, you have 1 month (4 weeks) after the assessment to let me know.

You do not need to give an explanation as to why you have changed your mind.

If you have a complaint about the research or how it has made you feel, you can contact Rosie on the email address below.

What happens to the information you give to me?

All of the data you give in the interview will be recorded using a Dictaphone. This information will then be transcribed on the computer.

Information about you will be kept on a locked computer or in a locked drawer, which only the research team will have access to. This will be at either the prison or at the University. Nothing will leave the prison with your name on, or with anything else on that could show who you are.

The research team is made up of a number of researchers from Nottingham Trent University, the Circles project and some staff within the psychology department. They will all deal with your information confidentially.

What you say in the interviews will be kept private unless:

- You tell me that you want to harm yourself
- You tell me that someone else is at risk of being harmed
- You tell me information about an offence which you have carried out and have not been convicted for

If you mention any of these things to me, I will have to pass the information on to prison security and the police.

I will write report(s) and presentation(s) at the end of this study and some of the information we collect will be included in these. We will never mention you by name in these.

Every effort will be made to ensure you cannot be identified within any reports and / or presentations.

What do I do now?

If you want to take part in the research please contact Rosie on the email address below. A meeting will be then made to talk about the information in this letter. You can also ask any questions at this time.

You will then be asked to sign a consent form to say you are happy to take part in the research and for it to be recorded using a dictaphone. The consent form will be explained to you in the meeting.

For questions, complaints or to take part in the research please contact:

Rosie Kitson-Boyce, Post-graduate researcher at Nottingham Trent University

rosie.kitson-boyce2004@my.ntu.ac.uk

Dr Nicholas Blagden, Director of studies and lecturer at Nottingham Trent University

Nicholas.blagden2@ntu.ac.uk

Appendix 5: Consent form for volunteers



Consent form

Participant Number:.....

It has been explained to you that we are looking at what it is like being involved in a Circle of Support and Accountability.

The findings will help us understand specifically what it is like being a volunteer in a prison-based Circle.

Please tick below where you agree to consent (please tick ✓):

- I have read the information sheet and understood what I am being asked to do
- I agree to my data being collected through interviews and understand what will be done with this research
- I agree to being contacted in the future by the research team for possible further research
- I agree for my data to be kept and stored by the research team until the research has finished
- I understand how I can stop taking part in the research or make a complaint about the research
- I have been given the chance to ask questions and feel that these have been answered fully
- I understand what information you will keep confidential and what information you will need to pass on

Thank you for helping us with this important research.

I have read the above information and ticked the relevant boxes where I consent (agree) to take part in the research:

Signed.....

Date.....

Witnessed by.....

Signed.....

Date.....

I agree for all of the interviews to be recorded using a Dictaphone

Signed.....

Date.....

Witnessed by.....

Signed.....

Date.....

If you have a question about the research or any of points discussed above please contact:

Rosie Kitson-Boyce, Post-graduate researcher at Nottingham Trent University

Rosie.kitson-boyce2004@my.ntu.ac.uk

Thank you for your time,

Rosie Kitson-Boyce, Post-graduate researcher at Nottingham Trent University

Dr Nicholas Blagden, Director of Studies and lecturer at Nottingham Trent University.

Appendix 6: Debrief sheet for volunteers



Information sheet – after the research

Participant Number:.....

Thank you

Thank you for taking part in this study. This will help us understand better what it is like taking part in a prison-based Circle as a volunteer.

If you change your mind

If you change your mind and do not want me to use the information you have given to me, you have until to tell us. If you do this, you will not get into trouble and all the information we have collected about you will be deleted. Please let us know by contacting Rosie Kitson-Boyce on the email address below and telling her your name and that you want to remove your data. You do not need to give a reason.

Extra support

If you felt that some of the interviews were quite personal and / or if you feel upset in any way you can contact one of the services below;

Samaritans support anyone in distress, around the clock and about any subject. Helpline: 08457 90 90 90 wwww.samaritans.org

Get Connected confidential helpline and on-line support for young people on any subject.
Helpline: 0808 808 4994 www.getconnected.org

NAPAC (National Association of People Abuse in Childhood) supports adults who have been abused in any way as children. Helpline: 0800 085 3330 www.napac.org.uk

Stop it now: confidential advice about sexual thoughts or attraction to children or teenagers
Helpline - 0808 1000 900 www.stopitnow.org.uk

Questions about the study

If you have any questions about the study please contact:

Rosie Kitson-Boyce, Post-graduate researcher at NTU: rosie.kitson-boyce2004@my.ntu.ac.uk

Thank you for your help,

Rosie Kitson-Boyce, Post-graduate researcher at Nottingham Trent University
Dr Nicholas Blagden, Director of Studies and lecturer at Nottingham Trent University.

Appendix 7: Interview schedule for Core Members (prison)

Interview schedule – Core Members

Intro questions:

How long have you been at Whatton?

What other Programmes/ SOTPs have you done?

- Prompt - What were they like?

How did you hear about Circles of Support and Accountability?

- Prompt – Had you heard of Circles before?

Expectations:

What do you know about Circles of Support and Accountability?

What is the purpose of a Circle?

Why did you want to take part in a Circle at the prison?

- Prompt – why is that important to you?

How do you/ did you feel about meeting the volunteers?

- Prompt - Why do you/ did you feel this way?

How do you feel about starting the Circle? / How do you feel about finishing your prison Circle and moving into the community?

What do you/ did you hope to get from being on a Circle?

Experiences:

What do you think it will be like/ what has it been like taking part in a Circle in the prison?

Is there anything you are/ you were worried about?

- Prompts – What is it? Why are/were you worried about this?

Is there anything you are/were excited about?

- Prompts – What is it? Why are/were you excited about this?

What do you think will be the good things/ were the good things of being on a Circle in the prison?

- Prompts – Why were these good things to you? How did these make you feel?

What do you think will be the bad things/ were the bad things of being on a Circle in the prison?

- Prompts – Why were these bad things to you? How did these make you feel?

What do you think the volunteers will be like/ what are the volunteers like?

Changes:

- How do you feel at the moment (in prison/ on release)?

- What kind of person are you (in prison/on release)?
- How do you feel being on a Circle (in prison/ on release)?
- How do you feel about what you did on in your offence?
- What do you think about why you are in here?
- How has being on a Circle helping you? For the future?

(Prompt more on these questions if need be)

Aspirations:

Do you think being in a prison Circle will help you when you are released?

- Prompt – how will it help you? In what way?

What do you think it will be like when you leave prison?

Prompts – when you go home, get a job

How do you think others will react to you when you are released?

Prompts – the general public/ friends/ family

What are you looking forward to when you leave prison?

Prompts – what are you looking forward to doing? What are you looking forward to about going home?

What would you most like to do when you leave prison?

- Prompts - Work, hobbies, see family/friends etc
- What is most important thing for you to do when you leave prison? E.g. see friends regularly, get a job
- Why is this so important to you?

Do you think being in a prison Circle will help you do these things?

Prompt –How will it help you? What is it that makes you feel that way?

What do you not want to do when you leave prison?

- Prompts - Has being a prison Circle affected what you don't want to do? If so, how? What is it that has made you feel that way?

Level of support

Who will be there to support/ help you when you leave prison?

Role- play (if needed) – Pretend you have left prison and you are in the community. If you needed help who would you ring?

- Why would you ring that person?

Is there anyone outside the Circle you can go to for support/ help when you leave prison?

- Prompts – Who is this? Why would you go to them?

How does this make you feel knowing you have these people (those above)?

How do you feel knowing you will be part of a Circle still when you leave prison?

Concluding questions:

Finally, just to check, what are your hopes going forward now?

Is there anything else you wish to say? Have I missed anything important?

Do you have any questions?

Appendix 8: Interview schedule for Core Members (community)

Interview schedule – Core Members

Intro questions:

How long have you been in the community?

How long have you been on your Circle of Support and Accountability?

How often do you meet as a Circle?

- How sufficient/ ok is this for you?

Expectations:

What did you know about Circles of Support and Accountability before you went on a circle?

What is the purpose of a Circle?

Why did you first want to take part in a Circle at the prison?

- Prompt – why was that important to you?

How did you feel about meeting the volunteers?

- Prompt - Why did you feel this way?

How did you feel about moving into the community?

How did you feel about continuing with your circle in the community?

Experiences:

What has it been like taking part in a circle that started in prison and is now in the community with you?

What was it like meeting your volunteers whilst you were still in prison?

Is there anything you are worried about?

- Prompts – What is it? Why are you worried about this?

Is there anything you are excited about?

- Prompts – What is it? Why are you excited about this?

What were the good things about being in a Circle when you moved from prison to the community?

- Prompts – Why were these good things to you? How did these make you feel?

What were the bad things about being in a Circle when you moved from prison to the community?

- Prompts – Why were these bad things to you? How did these make you feel?

What have the volunteers been like with you?

How do the volunteers support you?

How do the volunteers help keep you out of trouble?

How have others reacted to you now you are released?

Prompts – the general public/ friends/ family

Changes:

- How do you feel at the moment?
- What kind of person are you?
- How do you feel being on a Circle still?
- How do you feel about what you did on in your offence?
- What do you think about why you were sent to prison?
- How has being on a Circle helping you? For the future?

(Prompt more on these questions if need be)**Aspirations:**

Do you think being in a prison Circle is helping you now you're in the community?

- Prompt – how? In what way?

What do you think it will be like for you in the future?

Prompts – when the circle ends?

What are you looking forward to in the future now?

Prompts – what are you looking forward to doing? What are you looking forward to about going home?

What would you most like to do in the future?

- Prompts - Work, hobbies, see family/friends etc
- What is most important thing for you to do? E.g. see friends regularly, get a job
- Why is this so important to you?

How do you think being part of a Circle that started in the prison will help you do these things?

Prompt –How will it help you? What is it that makes you feel that way?

What do you not want to do in your future?

- Prompts - Has being in prison based Circle affected what you don't want to do? If so, how? What is it that has made you feel that way?

Level of support

Who do you have to support you now you are in the community?

Is there anyone outside the Circle you can go to for support/ help?

- Prompts – Who is this? Why would you go to them?

How does this make you feel knowing you have these people (those above)?

How do you feel knowing you are still part of a circle?

Concluding questions:

Finally, just to check, what are your hopes going forward now?

Is there anything else you wish to say? Have I missed anything important?

Do you have any questions?

Appendix 9: Interview schedule for volunteers

Interview schedule – Volunteers

Prompt on the questions where needed.

Intro questions:

How are you? Etc.

What is your normal job (i.e. employed, student etc)

How did you find out about this volunteering opportunity?

What is your volunteering experience?

What was it that made you want to volunteer for a prison-based CoSA?

How did you find the volunteer training?

What did you hope to gain from volunteering on this initiative?

How much has the experience met this expectation?

What is it like coming in to a prison?

How has it made you feel?

What are the positives for you of being involved in a prison-based Circle?

What are the negatives?

Are there any personality/ character traits that you believe to be necessary in order to volunteer in this way?

How could the experience be improved for you, if at all?

To what extent do you believe prison-based Circles provide support for the Core Members?

What do you think are the benefits of prison-based Circles compared to community models?

What impact do you think this support has on the Core Members?

To what extent do you believe Circles hold Core Members accountable for their thoughts and behaviours?

What impact do you think this accountability has on the Core Member?

What impact has your current volunteering experience had on your above beliefs?

What is the balance like between supporting core members and holding them accountable?

What are your supervision arrangements? How have you found this?

What is it like working with elderly and/or intellectually disabled sex offenders in particular?

What extra considerations have had to be made when working with these groups of individuals?

What additional benefits are there in providing a Circle for these people?

Why do you think Circles use volunteers? (As opposed to paid employees).

How do you think other people would react if they knew you worked with sex offenders?
How much would you recommend volunteering in this way to other people?

Concluding questions:

Is there anything else you want to say about your experience that we haven't discussed?
Do you have any questions?

Appendix 10: An example of a blank repertory grid

Appendix 11: Example of a completed repertory grid

Original Grid (Participant 9 - Pre-circle grid)

	Self in the past	Self now	Self in the future	Mum	Dad	Friend	Brother	Sex offender	Non-offending person	Prison officer	OMU	Someone you don't like	
Hardworking	3.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	3.00	1.00	2.00	2.00	3.00	Work shy/ Lazy
Approachable/ go to them with problems	5.00	2.00	2.00	1.00	1.00	2.00	1.00	4.00	1.00	3.00	3.00	5.00	Don't care
A sense of humour	1.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	3.00	2.00	2.00	1.00	3.00	3.00	5.00	Moping/ complaining a lot
Appreciative of life	3.00	2.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	2.00	1.00	4.00	1.00	3.00	3.00	5.00	Expects everything on a plate
Has humanity	3.00	2.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	2.00	1.00	3.00	1.00	2.00	2.00	4.00	Judgemental
Helps others/ caring	3.00	2.00	1.00	2.00	2.00	1.00	2.00	3.00	1.00	2.00	2.00	6.00	Stand offish
Puts other people first	3.00	2.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	2.00	1.00	2.00	1.00	2.00	2.00	5.00	Selfish
Trusts others easily	7.00	3.00	1.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	5.00	2.00	4.00	4.00	7.00	Untrusting
Socially supported	6.00	2.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	5.00	1.00	2.00	2.00	1.00	Socially isolated
Intimate/ meaningful relationships	7.00	4.00	2.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	3.00	1.00	3.00	3.00	4.00	A loner