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Circles of Support and Accountability: An Investigation of Volunteer Motivation and Experiences, and the Effect of the “Sex Offender” Label on Community Attitudes Towards Individuals who have Sexually Offended

Giulia T. Lowe

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology

The University of Auckland, 2017
Abstract
The importance of social support in the rehabilitation and reintegration of individuals convicted for sexual offences is undisputed; however, few community members are accepting of these individuals living in their communities, let alone having regular contact with them. Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) is a promising reintegration framework whereby community volunteers support individuals convicted for sexual offences to reintegrate safely into the community (R. J. Wilson & Prinzo, 2002). The current research utilised a mixed method approach to investigate volunteers’ motivation to join CoSA, their experiences of volunteering with CoSA, and the effect of the “sex offender” label on community attitudes and willingness to volunteer with CoSA. Part One of the current research included three studies that utilised in-depth semi-structure interviews. Study One (N = 18) investigated volunteers’ motivation to be involved with CoSA. Three key motivations were identified: (i) Restorative and Justice Based Motivation, (ii) Altruistic Motivation, and (iii) Faith Based Motivation. Study Two (N = 18) explored volunteers’ experiences of CoSA, including general experiences and how some volunteers coped with their core member being recalled or reoffending. Findings illustrated how volunteers balanced risk management with providing social support, questioned the place of religion in CoSA, and confronted stereotypes surrounding individuals who have sexually abused. In the event of a core member being recalled or reoffending, findings revealed both the volunteers’ commitment to CoSA and their core member, and the negative impact on volunteers. Study Three (N = 23) explored volunteers’ experiences of training and support, and their perceptions of what contributed to effective circle functioning. Findings highlighted a mixed response to the training and support received, and that identifying suitable core members and volunteers, clear communication, establishing boundaries between circle members, and the presence of an external circle coordinator contributed to effective circle functioning. Part Two of the current
research comprised of one study, Study Four, that examined the effect of the “sex offender” label on attitudes and willingness to volunteer with people who have sexually offended, utilising a general community sample (N = 391). Study Four additionally investigated priming effects of labelling versus neutral language on participants own language use. Participants were randomly assigned to either a label condition or a neutral condition and completed an anonymous online survey. The labelling condition utilised labels (e.g., “sex offender”) while the control condition utilised neutral descriptors (e.g., “people who have committed crimes of a sexual nature”). Findings from this study showed that the use of the “sex offender” label was associated with more negative attitudes as measured by the Community Attitudes toward Sex Offenders scale (Church, Wakeman, Miller, Clements, & Sun, 2008), less willingness to volunteer with people who have sexually offended, and primed the voluntary use of labels. Together, findings from the present research advance our understanding of why some people choose to volunteer with a stigmatised population, and the everyday experiences of CoSA volunteers. Moreover, findings offer important insights into how we can promote attitudes that support safe reintegration practices. Preventing reoffending is a core community concern, therefore it is important to find ways of engaging with communities to promote a safe reintegration, and ultimately, desistance from offending.
Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to thank my supervisors, Gwenda Willis and Kerry Gibson. Gwen, I will be forever thankful for your support, enthusiasm, and encouragement of this research. Thank you for pushing me out of my comfort zone, I have learnt so much throughout this research. To my secondary supervisor, Kerry, thank you for your support and invaluable insight regarding qualitative research.

Thank you to the Department of Corrections for supporting Part One of this research. Thanks also to the Circles of Support and Accountability staff, the Bond Trust, and Anglican Action for assisting with recruitment and supporting this research. Thank you to the Ryoichi Sasakawa Young Leaders Fellowship Fund and the Department of Psychology for financial support.

Many thanks to the volunteers who took part in this research and shared their invaluable experiences and insights with me. Without you, this research would not have been possible.

A special thanks to my family; especially my parents, I am forever grateful for your belief in me, your financial and practical support, and for your endless love and encouragement. To my sister, Chiara, thanks for always being there when I needed you, and my brothers, David and Stuart, thanks for keeping me laughing. To my Nonna and Granddad, thank you for all your love and support. Finally, words cannot express the appreciation I have for my fiancé Shane, thank you for being you; your love and confidence in me kept me going.

Thanks to the members of the Advancing Sexual Abuse Prevention research group for your insight, encouragement and support; I thoroughly enjoyed our meetings. Lastly, a big thanks to the friends that have supported and encouraged me during this research, especially Barb, Julia, Emily, Joan, and Val.
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Table of Contents

Abstract ................................................................................................................................. ii

Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................... iv

Co-Authorship Forms ........................................................................................................ v

Table of Contents ............................................................................................................. x

List of Tables .................................................................................................................... xiv

List of Figures ................................................................................................................... xv

INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................................. 1

Overview ............................................................................................................................ 1

Reintegrating from Prison into the Community .................................................................. 2

The “Sex Offender” in the Community .............................................................................. 4

The Impact of Labelling on Community Attitudes .............................................................. 8

Circles of Support and Accountability: A Community Solution ........................................ 10

The Effectiveness of CoSA ............................................................................................... 11

A Circle Structure ............................................................................................................. 12

Volunteer Motivation ........................................................................................................ 13

Volunteering in a Criminal Justice Setting ....................................................................... 14

Volunteering with CoSA ................................................................................................... 15

Volunteering with Individuals who have Sexually Offended ........................................... 17

Experiences of Volunteering with CoSA ........................................................................ 19

CoSA Volunteer Training and Support ............................................................................ 21

Volunteer Training Process .............................................................................................. 21
Experiences of Training and Support .......................................................... 23

The New Zealand Context ........................................................................... 25

Pilot Project ................................................................................................. 25

Volunteer Recruitment ................................................................................. 27

Training and Support ................................................................................... 28

Introduction to Empirical Chapters ............................................................ 29

PART ONE .................................................................................................... 32

Methodology ................................................................................................. 32

The Research Context .................................................................................... 32

Establishing Rigor ........................................................................................ 32

Participants ................................................................................................... 33

Procedure and Research Design ................................................................. 36

Planned Analysis .......................................................................................... 38

Study One: Volunteer Motivation ............................................................... 40

Aims .............................................................................................................. 40

Findings ........................................................................................................ 40

Discussion .................................................................................................... 50

Study Two: Volunteer Experiences ............................................................. 55

Aims .............................................................................................................. 55

Findings ........................................................................................................ 55

Volunteer General Experiences ................................................................. 55
Experiences of Core Member Recalls or Reoffending........................................68

Discussion ........................................................................................................73

Study Three: Operational Experiences .............................................................78

Aims ..................................................................................................................78

Findings .............................................................................................................78

Quantitative Findings: Perceived Support and Satisfaction with Training ..........78

Qualitative Findings: An Examination of Operational Aspects of CoSA ..........79

Discussion ........................................................................................................93

PART TWO .........................................................................................................97

Study Four: The Impact of Labelling on Attitudes, Willingness to Volunteer, and Language Use ........................................................................................................97

Aims ..................................................................................................................98

Methodology ......................................................................................................100

Participants .......................................................................................................100

Measures ...........................................................................................................100

Procedure and Research design .....................................................................104

Planned Analyses ............................................................................................105

Findings .............................................................................................................107

The Impact of Labels on Community Attitudes and Willingness to Volunteer ....107

Qualitative Findings: Why Would You be Willing/Unwilling to Volunteer? ....110

Investigating any Priming Effects of Labelling and Neutral Language ..........118

Discussion ........................................................................................................121
List of Tables

Table 1 Demographic information of participants that took part in an interview and participants that completed a questionnaire .................................................................................................. 34

Table 2 Details of the circles the interview participants were involved with ........... 35

Table 3 Main themes and sub-themes for the motivation to volunteer with CoSA .......... 41

Table 4 Main themes and subthemes for volunteers’ general experiences .................. 56

Table 5 Participants’ perceived level of support indicated on the questionnaire .......... 79

Table 6 Main themes for volunteer experiences of training and support and what they experienced as contributing to an effective circle ................................................................. 80

Table 7 Overall sample demographic information ....................................................... 101

Table 8 Multiple comparison tests examining the willingness to volunteer with different groups ................................................................................................................................. 108

Table 9 Table of Z-test of proportions examining the difference in language used by participants .......................................................................................................................... 121
List of Figures

Figure 1. Participants willing/unwilling to consider volunteering with CoSA .................. 109

Figure 2. Comparison of language used by the participants in each condition ................. 119
INTRODUCTION

Overview

The management of sexual reoffending risk in the community is a significant correctional issue and one that comes with considerable public interest. The release of individuals convicted for sexual offences often receives substantial attention; the nature of the offending, negative public attitudes, and the current punitive culture contribute to the public scrutiny of individuals who have been convicted for sex offences (Craig, 2005; Thakker & Durrant, 2006; Silverman & D. Wilson, 2002). In turn, public opinion and attitudes are reflected in increasingly restrictive and intrusive policies, including residence restriction laws, public registries, and community notification (Levenson, Grady, & Leibowitz, 2016; Pratt & Clark, 2005; Mercado, Alvarez, & Levenson, 2008; R. J. Wilson, McWhinnie, Picheca, Prinzo, & Cortoni, 2007). Such policies receive significant community support with the (mis)perception that community safety is increased and the likelihood of reoffending is reduced (Kernsmith, Craun, & Foster, 2009; Levenson, Brannon, Fortney, & Baker, 2007). Research has found that community members do not want “sex offenders” living in their neighbourhood (Brown, 1999; Burchfield & Mingus, 2008), landlords are reluctant to rent their property (Brown, 1999; Clark, 2007), and employees are unlikely to hire a “registered sex offender” (Levenson, Brannon, et al., 2007). Individuals with sexual offence convictions often face harassment and lack adequate pro-social support when re-entering the community. Further, their family members are often subject to shame and contempt due to their association with a “sex offender” (Burchfield & Mingus, 2008; Grossi, 2017; Levenson & Cotter, 2005; Tewksbury, 2005; Zevitz & Farkas, 2000).

Whilst an understandable reaction to an intolerable crime, research is clear that to reduce the likelihood of reoffending, individuals returning from prison need stable housing, opportunities for employment, and prosocial support (Göbbels, Ward, & Willis, 2012). Yet in
the current social and political context, “sex offenders” often lack these basic, fundamental reintegrative needs. Planning for a safe reintegration is increasingly difficult when access to accommodation, employment, and prosocial support is obstructed; however, a select number of community members have chosen to volunteer and assist with their reintegration via Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA). Recruitment of volunteers to work with individuals convicted for sex offences is understandably difficult (van Rensburg, 2012; R. J. Wilson, Picheca, & Prinzo, 2007a, 2007b). Therefore, the present research seeks to understand what influences some people to volunteer with a population that many would rather never leave prison. The present research also aims to understand the effect of the “sex offender” label on community attitudes and willingness to volunteer with CoSA. Finally, with CoSA gaining international traction, it becomes increasingly important to understand volunteers’ experiences, including general experiences, their experiences of a recall/re-offence, and their experiences of training and support.

This chapter reviews the literature relevant to community reintegration, attitudes and labelling theory, Circles of Support and Accountability, and volunteer motivation and experiences. In the context of this thesis, quotation marks will be used when referring to “sex offenders” or “child sex offenders” as used in past research and literature. As advocated by the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (American Psychological Association, 2010) neutral language that separates the person from the behaviour will be used in all other instances.

**Reintegrating from Prison into the Community**

On average, the observed rates of sexual reoffending are 5% to 15% during the first five years post-release (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005). However, recidivism rates vary depending on risk level defined by the Static-99 – an actuarial risk assessment instrument
Introduction

(Hanson & Bussiere, 1998; Hanson & Thornton, 1999). For individuals rated as low risk, recidivism rates remained at 1% to 5% for all time periods during a 20-year follow up. Whereas the recidivism rate for individuals rated as high-risk had a 5-year recidivism rate of 22%, which decreased to about 4% after 10-years living offence-free in the community (Hanson, Harris, Helmus, & Thornton, 2014). Predictors of recidivism include deviant sexual interest, sexual preoccupation, and an unstable antisocial lifestyle (Hanson & Bussiere, 1998; Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005; Hanson, Morton, & Harris, 2003; Worling, & Langstrom, 2006). Research has proposed protective domains that promote desistance; the protective domains include a healthy sexual interest, capacity for emotional intimacy, constructive social and professional support network (de Vries Robbé, Mann, Maruna, & Thornton, 2015). Research has also demonstrated that desistance is more likely when access to resources that enable stable housing, the establishment of pro-social support networks and intimate relationships, and opportunities for employment are made available (Farmer, McAlinden, & Maruna, 2015; Göbbels et al., 2012).

The importance of a carefully planned reintegration plan for men/women being released from prison is undisputed (Willis & Grace, 2008, 2009). Preparing for re-entry commonly addresses issues of housing, employment, mental health issues, substance abuse, and other documented risk factors (Lussier, Dahabieh, Deslauriers-Varin, & Thomson, 2011; Willis & Grace, 2009). In their retrospective evaluation of prison release plans, Willis and Grace (2008, 2009) found that poor planning with respect to accommodation, social support, and employment was associated with a greater risk of recidivism. Further, the researchers found that on release from prison, non-recidivists were more likely to have had pro-social support from more than one independent group such as friends, family, and work colleagues, compared to matched groups of recidivists. However, the overall number of people in a support network did not predict non-recidivism (Willis & Grace, 2008, 2009).
Negative social influences has been identified as a common risk factor that contributes to recidivism risk (Hanson & Harris 2001; Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005; Hanson, Harris, Scott, & Helmus, 2007). Further, formal social controls such as criminal justice sanctions, and informal social controls such as pro-social support networks, promote desistance and reduce the risk of reoffending (Kemshall & Maguire, 2013; Kruttschnitt, Uggen, & Shelton, 2000). Nevertheless, the social needs and establishment of social networks during reintegration into the community are often neglected (Listwan, Cullen, & Latessa, 2006; Petersilia, 2004; Taxman, Young, & Byrne, 2004). Further, whilst social isolation is a common risk factor, for individuals convicted for sex offences, isolation can be particularly pronounced (Laws & Ward, 2011; Lees & Tewksbury, 2006; Levenson & Cotter, 2005a, 2005b; Tewksbury, 2005).

The “Sex Offender” in the Community

Social support has been identified as a key factor for reducing re-offence risk, promoting desistance, and maintaining an offence-free life (Willis, Levenson, & Ward, 2010; Willis & Ward, 2011). However, the negative reaction elicited by sexual crimes is unlike public reactions to other crimes. Community responses are influenced by several factors, including the sensationalised media coverage of sexual crimes (e.g., Cheit, 2003; Kitzinger, 2004), political pressure to keep communities safe from “predators”, and parental anxiety for children in a world perceived as increasingly dangerous (Quinn, Forsyth, & Mullen-Quinn, 2004).

As a significant source of information with the ability to influence how people perceive the world (Surette, 2014), the way sexual crimes are framed in the media is undeniably linked to how the public defines and views individuals labelled a “sex offender” (Cucolo, & Perlin, 2013; Ducat, Thomas, & Blood, 2009; Surette, 2014). Since the mid-1800s and the development of the penny press, violent crimes have been the bread and butter
of media reporting. In more recent years, sexual crimes have gained increased attention and a sensationalised focus in news reporting (Quinn et al., 2004). Technology and mass media advancements have further fuelled such sensationalism (Cucolo & Perlin, 2013). Around the world, websites have been established dedicated to sharing information about the “monsters” behind such crimes. There are websites enforced by law, most notably the US National Sex Offender Public Registry (https://www.nsopw.gov/en). There are also those set up by community groups based on publicly available court documents and media reports in countries without such legislation, including New Zealand (e.g., http://sst.org.nz/offenders-database/).

The media’s focus on high profile but rare cases (e.g., Corabian, & Hogan, 2012; Ducat et al., 2009; Thakker & Durrant, 2006) becomes a reference point from which community members base their opinion of all individuals who have sexually offended. Identified as “sex offenders”, or more animal-like with terms such as “beasts” or “predators”, individuals convicted for sexual offences are typically depicted as a homogenous group throughout media reporting and legislation (Sample & Bray, 2006).

Given the media’s focus on high profile sex crimes, the stereotype activated by the “sex offender” label is likely that of a dangerous male with a very high risk of reoffending (Pickett, Mancini, & Mears, 2013; Quinn et al., 2004). It is therefore not surprising that community members do not want someone labelled a “sex offender” living in their communities, let alone want to employ them or accept them as part of their social networks (e.g., Burchfield & Mingus, 2008; Craig, 2005; Levenson, D’Amora, & Hern, 2007; Willis, Malinen, & Johnston, 2013). Indeed, public opinion research shows that people believed that “sex offenders” have a high risk of reoffending and are not amenable to treatment (Brown, Deakin, & Spencer, 2008; Katz-Schiavone, Levenson, & Ackerman, 2008; King & Roberts, 2015; Shackley, Weiner, Day, & Willis, 2014; Thakker, 2012). Without counter-stories of,
for example, the more common scenarios of intrafamilial offending and no recidivism (Cheit, 2003), it is not surprising that community reactions are negative.

The Problem with Labelling

Beyond media reports and legislation, the “sex offender” label is prevalent within academia and professional settings, and might unintentionally reinforce many of the stereotypes that researchers aim to disprove (e.g., Malinen, Willis, & Johnston, 2014; Quinn et al., 2004; Sanghara & J. C. Wilson, 2006). Labelling theory suggests that labels are counter-productive and can have the unintended consequence of influencing the identity and behaviour of the person ascribed the label (Tannenbaum, 1938).

Labels are used in everyday language and can be adaptive, for example mother, student, nurse, lawyer, and so on. However, assigning labels that are pejorative or stigmatising can have unintended negative consequences; the individual’s identity becomes defined and shaped by the label, and other people respond to the individual according to beliefs constructed behind the label (Braithwaite, 1989; Robbers, 2009; Tannenbaum, 1938). Indeed, negative effects of formal labelling by the criminal justice system on the individual labelled have been well documented (e.g., Braithwaite, 1989; Chiricos, Barrick, Bales, & Bontrager, 2007; Maruna, LeBel, Mitchell, & Naples, 2004; Mingus & Burchfield, 2012; Robbers, 2009; Schultz, 2014). Thus, although a convenient term, the label “sex offender” is laden with negative connotations that are reinforced through continued use.

With continued exposure to the term, researchers, professionals and the general public are likely primed to use the term instead of alternative non-labelling language (e.g., neutral, person-first). Priming is the cognitive process that refers to the effect of exposure to a stimulus on a subsequent event (Forster & Davis, 1984). Specifically, repeated exposure to a stimulus, such as the term “sex offender”, allows subsequent experiences of the stimulus to be processed more quickly by the brain (Forster & Davis, 1984; Roskos-Ewoldsen, Roskos-
Ewoldsen, & Carpentier, 2009). Therefore, previous exposure to information regarding “sex offenders” can influence how individuals subsequently view the population. Priming is a memory-based model of information processing, as such, information that is most salient contributes to forming attitudes and perceptions (Roskos-Ewoldsen et al., 2009; Roskos-Ewoldsen & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2009; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007; Tversky & Kahneman, 1973). In the context of persons who have sexually offended, the content of news reports establishes the criteria for evaluating information by making certain issues more relevant. Therefore, due to the focus on high profile cases, the image of a high risk “predator” is more easily accessed than the scenario of, for example, isolated intrafamilial offending.

Utilising the label “sex offender” as an umbrella term ignores the heterogeneity between individuals convicted for sexual offences. The label suggests that individuals convicted for sexual crimes represent a homogenous group and, as discussed previously, the stereotype of a dangerous stranger is activated. Problematically, as highlighted by Harris and Socia (2016), the very researchers seeking to understand and influence public attitudes towards individuals who have sexually offended have constructed and used scales that utilise labels. To illustrate, the term “sex offender” has been used across the majority of the scales designed to assess attitudes (e.g., Church et al., 2008; Gakhal & Brown, 2011; Harper & Hogue, 2015; Hogue, 1993). In the Community Attitudes Toward Sex Offenders scale, for example, respondents are asked to rate the degree to which they agree or disagree with statements such as “trying to rehabilitate a sex offender is a waste of time” and “convicted sex offenders should never be released from prison” (Church et al., 2008, p. 256). Primed with the “sex offender” label, it is possible that respondents might endorse more negative attitudes than if they were presented with more neutral terms, such as, “person who has sexually offended” or “people who have committed crimes of a sexual nature”. 
The use of neutral language may be reflected in less negative attitudes because the neutral language may prime the individual to think of a person, rather than the stereotypical “offender” they have heard about in the media. As such, an aim of the present research was to empirically test the hypothesis that labels will generate more negative responses on an attitudinal scale compared to neutral language.

**The Impact of Labelling on Community Attitudes**

Few studies have examined the impact of labelling on public responses to persons who have sexually abused. Harris and Socia (2016) investigated the impact of the “sex offender” and “juvenile sex offender” labels on support for policies such as publicly accessible online registries and residence restrictions, as well as perceptions about amenability to rehabilitation of labelled individuals. Respondents (\(N = 1000\)) were randomly assigned to either the experimental condition or the control condition, and indicated their level of agreement with seven statements. Statements in both conditions were identical, except for the labelling versus neutral language manipulation. In the labelling condition, statements used the label “sex offender” or “juvenile sex offender” (e.g., “The identity of all sex offenders should be made available to the general public on the Internet”, p. 668). In the control condition, statements used neutral descriptors such as “people who have committed crimes of sexual nature” or “minor youth who committed crime of a sexual nature” (e.g., “The identity of all people who have committed crimes of a sexual nature should be made available to the general public on the Internet”, p. 668). Overall, findings indicated that labelling was associated with increased levels of support for sex crime policies, with effects particularly salient for the “juvenile sex offender” label (Harris & Socia, 2016).

A similar study conducted by Imhoff (2015) examined the effect of the label “pedophile” and its derivatives, such as “pedophilia”, on community members’ (\(N = 129\)) perceptions of dangerousness, intentionality, deviance and punitive attitudes. Participants
were randomly allocated to one of two conditions; the experimental condition utilised “pedophile” or “pedophilia” and the control condition replaced “pedophile” with “someone with sexual interest in (prepubescent) children” and “pedophilia” was replaced with “sexual interest in (prepubescent) children” (Imhoff, 2015, p. 37). A 15-item stigma scale was used to assess intentionality (e.g., “pedophilia is something that you choose for yourself”, p. 38), dangerousness (e.g., “pedophilia sooner or later always leads to child sex abuse”, p. 38), and deviance (e.g., “pedophiles are sick”, p. 38). A 13-item scale was also used to examine punitive attitudes (e.g., “pedophiles should be pre-emptively taken into custody”, p. 38). The results illustrated that while participants’ attitudes were negative toward this population, punitive attitudes were more pronounced when the labels “pedophile” or “pedophilia” were present.

In the context of poor access to pro-social support networks and negative community attitudes, Circles of Support and Accountability was developed. CoSA represents a community response to persons who have sexually abused that contradicts the normative negative reaction (Fox, 2016). Indeed, research has shown that compared to a general community sample, CoSA volunteers held more positive attitudes towards individuals convicted for sexual offences, and their treatment and rehabilitation (Kerr, Tully, & Völlm, 2017). Further, CoSA humanises the reintegration process by referring to the individuals convicted for sexual offences as “core members” and not “sex offenders”. Volunteer initiatives such as CoSA complement the rehabilitative services offered by the criminal justice system, yet most people want little to do with people who have sexually offended (Burchfield & Mingus, 2008; Grossi, 2017; Travis, 2005). Community responses that support reintegration processes are necessary for both the continuation of initiatives such as CoSA, and ultimately promoting desistance from sexual offending. A review of research on CoSA follows.
Circles of Support and Accountability: A Community Solution

CoSA is a reintegration framework that aims to address social isolation and provide a restorative approach for reintegrating individuals convicted for sexual offences (Cesaroni, 2001; McWhinnie, 2003; R. J. Wilson & Prinzo, 2002). Restorative justice promotes humanitarian principles, for example forgiveness, healing, community, and supportive reintegration (Zehr, 2015). Braithwaite (1989) proposed that the criminal justice system utilises shaming as a form of social control. According to Braithwaite, shaming can be reintegrative or disintegrative; reintegrative shaming refers to the ‘shaming’ that occurs while the individual is being punished, but once their sentence is complete the individual is supported back into the community (Braithwaite, 1989). Conversely, disintegrative shaming happens when the stigmatisation and shaming continues following completion of the individual’s sentence. According to Braithwaite, reintegrative shaming allows the individual to become a productive member of the community, whilst disintegrative shaming creates an alienated group whereby the criminal lifestyle becomes more established (Braithwaite, 1989).

CoSA is a restorative justice framework that in which the engagement of volunteers taps into a community’s capacity to preserve order, begin healing, and reclaim the conflict (Zehr, 2015).

The CoSA framework was developed to meet both practical and social needs of individuals transitioning from prison into the community. CoSA was developed in 1994 in Canada as an ad hoc response to a situation in which an individual convicted for sex offences, and assessed as high risk, was due to be released from prison. However, he lacked adequate social support and his pending release was met with community resistance and protest (Hanvey, Philpot, & C. Wilson, 2011; R. J. Wilson & Prinzo, 2002). A pastor of a Mennonite congregation was contacted by corrections staff and a small group of volunteers from his
church agreed to meet with and support the individual; this was to become the first CoSA (McWhinnie, 2003; R. J. Wilson et al., 2007b; R. J Wilson & Prinzo, 2002).

The Effectiveness of CoSA

Evaluations of CoSA have so far been promising; a reduction in sexual and violent re-offences was found when individuals who had been a part of a CoSA were compared to matched samples of released offenders who had not been a part of a CoSA (e.g., Bates, Williams, C. Wilson, & R. J. Wilson, 2014; Duwe, 2012; R. J. Wilson et al., 2007b; R. J. Wilson, Cortoni, & McWhinnie, 2009; R. J. Wilson, Picheca, & Prinzo, 2005). In addition, research has found that re-offence rates were lower than what would be expected given core members’ actuarial risk ratings for sexual recidivism (Bates, Saunders & C. Wilson, 2007; R. J. Wilson et al., 2009). Finally, cost versus benefit analyses have also been positive (Elliot & Beech, 2012). In a study conducted by Duwe (2013) the costs of operating a CoSA (USD $442,761) versus the benefits produced by a reduction in recidivism (a total of USD $805,972 was avoided due to fewer re-offences and re-incarcerations) meant that an estimated cost of USD $363,211 was avoided in the four years of CoSA operation in Minnesota.

CoSA has been met with mixed community support (Richards & McCartan, 2017). Community members’ opposition to CoSA was based on their belief that victims’ rights should be prioritised over the rights of those who perpetrate harm, “child sex offenders” cannot be rehabilited, and a general misunderstanding of the CoSA framework. Support for CoSA was based on the belief that CoSA could prevent reoffending and was a framework worth trying. However, there was also support based on the belief that CoSA was formed for individuals with a sexual attraction to children but who had not offended (Richards & McCartan, 2017).

There are now active CoSAs in the UK, the Netherlands, some states of the US, New Zealand, and other European countries (e.g., Bates et al., 2014; Duwe, 2013; Höing,
Bogaerts, & Vogelvang, 2015; van Rensburg, 2012). The development of CoSA in Canada grew out of the community in an organic and independent manner as a response to wider fear. Whilst, the philosophy of inclusion and support is shared in the UK and other European countries, the development was quite different whereby the implementation was systematically structured and funded by their governments. Thus, instead of being community run, CoSA was controlled, in part, by the government (C. Wilson, Bates, & Völlm, 2010). Finally, both Canada and the UK have organisations that have worked to establish sufficient and sustainable funding of CoSA projects throughout their countries (Circles UK, 2017; CoSA Canada, 2017).

**A Circle Structure**

A CoSA is made of concentric circles whereby the “inner circle” consists a group of four to seven community volunteers and an individual convicted for sexual offences, known as the “core member”. The group is supported by an “outer circle” of professional members of the criminal justice system, such as psychologists, probation officers, and police officers (Hanvey et al., 2011; R. J. Wilson & Prinzo, 2002; R. J. Wilson et al., 2007). CoSA circles also include a circle coordinator who provides guidance and advice to the volunteers, bridges communication between the inner circle and the statutory agencies involved with core member, and offers ongoing support (R. J. Wilson, McWhinnie, & C. Wilson, 2008; C. Wilson et al., 2010). The outer circle of professionals provides further support and advice to the volunteers, and step in when required. Previous research has cited a number of factors that have contributed to fostering a mutual and trusting relationship within the inner circle, as well as establishing a working alliance between the inner and outer circles; including appropriate selection, training, and supervision of volunteers and circle coordinators, a systematic assessment of suitable core members and their risks and needs, and establishing a
protocol for communication between the inner and outer circles (Hannem & Petrunik, 2007; Höing, Bogaerts, & Vogelvang, 2013; Höing & Vogelvang, 2011).

In CoSA, volunteers support the core member in a number of ways as he/she transitions into the community; for example, social and practical support includes going out for coffee or a meal, showing the core member how to use public transport, open a bank account, or get a driver’s licence. Support also includes emotional and spiritual aspects whereby the volunteers are available if the core member needs advice or someone to talk to. The volunteers also ensure that risk factors are appropriately managed and that the core member is accountable for their actions (Höing, Bogaerts & Vogelvang, 2014; R. J. Wilson et al., 2007). Accountability is defined as holding the individual responsible for their decisions, behaviour, and the consequences of their actions on themselves and others. In CoSA, accountability is maintained through constructive feedback, asking questions, and discussing the core member’s approach to different situations (R. J. Wilson & Prinzo, 2002). The support offered by a CoSA is invaluable during the transition from prison into the community; the effects of a lack of social support, relationship and life skill deficits, and the institutionalised result of long-term confinement are bridged through the social support and connection within a CoSA (Fox, 2013).

The benefits of CoSA for the core member and community safety are clear; however, the continuation of CoSA relies on volunteers. Whilst CoSA has gained support in many jurisdictions, a consistent operational challenge for CoSA is recruiting appropriate community volunteers. This begs the question – what motivates people to volunteer with CoSA? Research examining motivation to volunteer will be considered next.

**Volunteer Motivation**

There are many models of motivation used to explain and categorise volunteer motivation; for example, the functional approach (Clary & Snyder, 1999) posits that
volunteer motives represent functions that are served by actions. One action, such as volunteering, can serve multiple functions such as supporting intrinsic values (e.g., altruistic and humanitarian motives), career related benefits, and enhancing personal development.

Another theory is the Symbolic theory (Scott & Lyman, 1968) which focuses on subjective meanings that individuals attach to behaviour. Studies (e.g., Clary et al., 1998; Clary & Snyder, 1999; Clary, Snyder, & Stukas, 1996; Stukas, Snyder, & Clary, 2015, 2016; Stukas, Hoye, Nicolson, Brown, & Aisbett, 2016) have highlighted that there is no single motivation to volunteer. The present research will be taking a functional approach to examine the motivation to volunteer with CoSA whereby volunteerism is viewed as an intentional and active process through which individuals seek out opportunities to assist their community.

Volunteering has been shown to offer benefits to both the community and the volunteer (Stukas et al., 2016a; Snyder, Omoto, & Dwyer, in press). Research has shown that volunteers have better functional ability, greater life satisfaction, lower rates of depression in later life, and less incidence of heart disease (e.g., Corporation for National Community Service, 2007; Li & Ferraro, 2006; Parkinson, Warburton, Sibbritt, & Byles, 2010; van Willigen, 2000). Further, volunteering enhances social networks and has a positive effect on psychological factors such as creating a sense of accomplishment (Greenfield & Marks, 2004; Parkinson et al., 2010). However, volunteering with individuals involved with the criminal justice system is arguably unique; literature exploring volunteering in a criminal justice setting will be examined next.

**Volunteering in a Criminal Justice Setting**

Many correctional institutions rely on volunteer assistance with various programmes and tasks, both in prison and in the community (Bayse, 1993; Denney & Tewksbury, 2013; Evans, 2001; Klug, 2002; Tewksbury & Dabney, 2004). While there is little research that has explored motivation to volunteer with CoSA specifically (c.f., R. J. Wilson et al., 2007a),
previous research has found that volunteers in US correctional settings are predominantly white, middle aged and older men, with high levels of education and religious affiliation (Chui & Cheng, 2013; Denney & Tewksbury, 2013; Mills & Meek, 2016; Tewksbury & S. C. Collins, 2005; Tewksbury & Dabney, 2004). Further, many volunteers tend to be motivated by a strong sense of religious belief and care for others, with a prominent motivation being that the volunteers believe they have been called by God to their roles (Tewksbury & S. C. Collins, 2005). Consequently, most choose to volunteer with religious programs (Denney & Tewksbury, 2013; Mills & Meek, 2016; Tewksbury & S. C. Collins, 2005; Tewksbury & Dabney, 2004).

Souza and Dhami (2008) conducted a study in which 76 restorative justice volunteers answered a questionnaire that included questions examining the motivation to volunteer; 17% of the volunteers were involved with CoSA circles. It was found that regardless of age and gender, commitment to restorative justice ideals and dissatisfaction with the traditional criminal justice system were the main reasons for volunteering with restorative justice initiatives. Therefore, individuals with values that aligned with restorative justice values were more likely to volunteer with restorative justice programs (Souza & Dhami, 2008).

**Volunteering with CoSA**

The volunteers must meet certain criteria before they are accepted as CoSA volunteers; the criteria includes maintaining a balanced lifestyle, having a non-judgmental attitude, being adept at problem solving skills, access to transport, and emotional maturity (van Rensburg, 2012). Given the volunteer criteria and the prevailing negative attitudes towards individuals who have sexually offended (e.g., Craig, 2005; Willis, Malinen, & Johnston, 2013), it is not surprising that volunteer recruitment is the greatest operational challenge facing CoSA (R. J. Wilson et al., 2005; van Rensburg, 2012). Van Rensburg (2012) stated that the negative perception of working with an individual convicted for sex offences
often leads people to making vague commitments to volunteer with CoSA and seldom following up with concrete responses. Further, a number of volunteers have presented with the motivation to confront or change the core member (R. J. Wilson et al, 2005). The volunteers are not selected to persecute or change the individual; instead, they are selected to support the core member to reintegrate from prison into the community, and to hold them accountable for their actions to promote an offence free life (Almond, Bates, & C. Wilson, 2015; Höing, Vogelvang, & Bogaerts, 2017; R. J. Wilson et al, 2005, 2007).

Little is known about volunteers’ motivation for participating in CoSA. Understanding the motivation to volunteer is important for developing an effective recruitment strategy to ensure the sustainability of CoSA. R. J. Wilson and colleagues (2007a) presented evaluation data from a CoSA pilot project in South-Central Ontario, Canada, which included an examination of volunteers’ motivations. Fifty-seven volunteers responded to a survey that included questions about attitudes toward CoSA, volunteer experiences, and motivation to volunteer. They found that approximately 30% of the circle volunteers were motivated by wanting to give something back to their community; about 20% stated that a family history of victimisation or personal experiences with sexual offending had motivated them; and slightly more than 10% thought volunteering with CoSA would be an exciting experience (Wilson et al., 2007a). Hannem (2013) conducted interviews with 22 CoSA volunteers, examining volunteer motivation and experiences of CoSA in Ontario, Canada. All but two of the volunteers stated the importance of restorative justice as their motivation to volunteer; further the majority of the volunteers cited religious beliefs as a motivation (Hannem, 2013). Similarly, Silverman and Wilson (2002) interviewed volunteers and found that faith was a significant motivating factor for volunteering with CoSA, as well as community safety, and giving someone a second chance.
Previous studies have found that faith and restorative justice values are significant motivating factors. However, not every jurisdiction that CoSA exists in, is dominated by faith-based volunteers (Wilson et al., 2010); furthermore, there are many individuals with a strong faith who do not volunteer. There will also be people who support restorative justice ideals yet would be unwilling to volunteer with CoSA. With such diverse motivations, it is important to understand the experiences of volunteers, so that they can be appropriately supported to implement successful CoSAs. Research on the experiences of volunteering with persons who have been convicted for sexual offences will be reviewed next.

**Volunteering with Individuals who have Sexually Offended**

Research has shown that in general, volunteering offers benefits to both the volunteer and the community (e.g., Snyder, Omoto & Dwyer, 2016; Thoits & Hewitt, 2001). Further, people who volunteer are generally happier and more satisfied with their lives compared to non-volunteers; these characteristics are both a cause and an outcome of volunteering (Thoits & Hewitt, 2001). It is undeniable that volunteering activities can have significant benefits for volunteers, however there has been little research examining the effects of volunteering with people who have sexually offended. Volunteering with individuals in prison has shown both positive and negative effects on the volunteers (e.g., Duncan & Balbar, 2008; Souza & Dhami, 2008). Positive effects include seeing tangible results for those they are volunteering with, enhancing their own skills, making connections with other people, and the self-reward and satisfaction that comes from volunteering for a good cause. Negative effects include burnout or burnout related symptoms such as stress and fatigue.

Volunteering with individuals convicted for sexually offending has unique challenges; for example, the volunteer often has to deal with and balance conflicting emotions, where on one hand they are appalled by the offence, and on the other hand they have empathy for the
individual as a person and are motivated to help prevent reoffending. Further, the exposure to potentially traumatic material, such as offence details, could have a significant impact on the volunteers, as it does to therapists specialising in working with individuals who have sexually abused (Moulden & Firestone, 2007). Negative effects might reflect vicarious traumatisation (VT). VT is described as a change in the individual resulting from empathic engagement with another person’s traumatic experiences. In therapists working with people who have sexually abused, VT can be exhibited through intrusive thoughts, avoidance behaviours, and hypervigilance (Moulden & Firestone, 2007). The primary characteristics of VT includes the pervasive impact (affecting all aspects of the therapist’s life), the cumulative effect (each exposure to the trauma increases the impact of the response in the helper), and the potentially permanent effects (Moulden & Firestone, 2007).

Given that therapists have had much more training and supervision to manage VT than volunteers, such effects might be especially pronounced in volunteers. Positive and negative effects of working with people who have sexually abused can exist simultaneously and can be mediated by a number of factors, including personal factors, social and organisational support, the complexity of the work, and client characteristics (e.g., Grady & Strom-Gottfried, 2011; Moulden & Firestone, 2007).

A study that has examined experiences of volunteering with people who have sexually abused was conducted by Haslewood-Pocsik, Smith, & Spencer (2008). The researchers interviewed 8 English volunteers involved with IMPACT circles about their experiences – IMPACT circles are based on a similar model to CoSA but with a specific focus on employment. Positive effects reported by the participants included increased confidence, enjoying the connectedness to the other volunteers, professional experience, and witnessing clients change. The main negative effect for the participants was the negative reactions they received from friends and family. However, other negative effects included having problems
dealing with ‘difficult’ behaviour, mixed feelings toward the individual they volunteered with whereby they felt outraged and distressed about their offence, and at the same time, felt sympathy for him/her as a human being (Haslewood-Pocsik et al., 2008).

Experiences of Volunteering with CoSA.

Research exploring the experiences of CoSA volunteers is in its infancy. Volunteering with CoSA involves working long-term with the core member; functional and empathic relationships are formed, and sometimes strong friendships develop (Beitner, 2015). However, unique to volunteering with CoSA is the fact that the core member has committed serious offences that are discussed to varying degrees throughout the CoSA process (Wilson et al., 2010). The volunteers are made aware of triggers and offending related behaviours, so they are able to hold their core member accountable when required (e.g., Wilson et al., 2007a). Thus, the volunteers have to deal with processing the information about their core member’s offence(s) and learn about their triggers and offending patterns, while maintaining a supportive and accountable relationship with the core member (Höing et al., 2013, 2017).

Further, volunteering with CoSA can be emotionally and practically demanding; for example, the core member may have complex needs, activities organised must adhere to parole conditions, and the volunteers may have to deal with family or friends who do not support them volunteering with CoSA (McCartan, 2016).

Höing and colleagues (2015) examined the outcome of volunteering with CoSA in terms of volunteer satisfaction, determination to continue, and mental wellbeing. The study used a cross-sectional, quantitative design; forty volunteers answered an online questionnaire. Results from the research showed high levels of volunteer satisfaction and mental wellbeing, and a strong determination to continue volunteering with CoSA. Further, the researchers found that co-worker support and connectedness was a strong predictor of a positive outcome for CoSA volunteers. R. J. Wilson and colleagues (2007a) also used questionnaires to
examine the experiences of 57 Canadian CoSA volunteers. The researchers reported that the
volunteers felt enhanced feelings of connectedness and a sense of belonging, and had
developed new friendships. However, as the volunteers continued with their CoSA, a decline
in the volunteers’ expectations about making a difference in the life of the core member was
reported (Wilson et al., 2007a). Further, research from 62 CoSA volunteers in the UK
illustrated that while the volunteers were happy to work with their core member, they
compartmentalised their work with CoSA as a protective mechanism against possible
negative responses (McCartan, 2016). Using semi-structured interviews and online
questionnaires McCartan (2016) found that the volunteers were hesitant to introduce their
core member to other people in their lives and were cautious when explaining what CoSA
involved.

Snatersen (2011) conducted interviews about the impact of volunteering with CoSA
with eight Dutch volunteers who had been involved with a circle for one year. Participants
reported both positive and negative effects; positive effects included increased self-esteem
and self-awareness as a result of being a volunteer with CoSA. However, negative effects
included stress, ruminating about their core member’s risk in between circle meetings, feeling
unsafe, an increased awareness of risky situations, and irritation about the social exclusion
that their core member and other individuals convicted for sex offences faced (Snatersen,
2011).

Volunteer experiences highlight the importance of a functional relationship between
the inner and outer circle. Their experiences also emphasised the need for initial and ongoing
training and support. Volunteers are central to an effective circle, as such, it is important that
appropriate training, support, and supervision is in place for the work they do. A review of
literature on the training required for CoSA volunteers and the support offered follows.
CoSA Volunteer Training and Support

Volunteer Training Process

A circle will form generally prior to the core member’s release from prison to foster relationships before the transition into the community (Wilson et al., 2010). Volunteers are recruited from the community and trained by circle coordinators to work in a CoSA. Once screened, a volunteer will meet the other volunteers in their circle and complete training before meeting their core member. The training of volunteers was not intended to make the volunteers “experts” or be viewed as an alternative to professional care, but to familiarise them with potential issues they may face and to establish criteria for when to utilise the professional members in the risk management process (R. J. Wilson et al., 2007a; C. Wilson et al., 2010). Through training, an understanding of issues surrounding sexual offending is gained and the volunteers become “more knowledgeable members of the community” (R. J. Wilson et al., 2007a, p. 11).

The training process in both the UK and Canada utilises a two-step process. The first step involves interviews, orientation sessions, and provided an opportunity for screening prospective volunteers. Orientation sessions include information about CoSA core values, structure and purpose, as well as a basic history of CoSA. The orientation sessions take several hours and generally occur in the evening so that a broad community audience can attend. Following orientation sessions, individuals interested in volunteering with CoSA are registered with future training events (Correctional Services of Canada, 2002; C. Wilson et al., 2010). The second step involves more intensive training (R. J. Wilson et al., 2007a; C. Wilson et al., 2010; McCartan, 2016).

In Canada, the second step involves a training phase and a circle development phase. The training phase takes place over the course of four days (or equivalent) and is used as an opportunity for further screening. The first part of the training phase, “The core workshop”,
details the foundations of CoSA, provides an overview of the criminal justice system and relevant legislation, explores the difficulties of reintegrating an individual with sexual offence convictions, and examines issues relating to sexual offending including power and control, human sexuality, and gender issues. Role-play demonstrations are used to show a basic circle experience and familiarise the volunteers with the various circle roles and logistics.

The second part of the training phase is “The skill building workshop” which facilitates volunteer understanding of the effects of long-term institutionalisation, risk factors, relapse prevention plans in a circle context, typical core member needs, victims’ needs, conflict resolution, and awareness of boundaries and self-care. Following the “skill building workshop”, volunteers are given the opportunity to assess and evaluate whether they wish to continue. The next part of the training, the circle development phase, includes “forging a circle” which occurs over the course of a few months and focuses on building group cohesion, crisis response strategies, meeting the core member and identifying needs, and building a covenant (an agreement about expectations between the volunteers and core member). Clear roles of the members of the inner and outer circle are also established during this phase. The final stage of circle development is “ongoing support”, which provides the volunteers with ongoing training about healthy circle dynamics, preventing burn-out, how to amend the covenant, and how to close the circle (Correctional Services of Canada, 2002).

In the UK, the orientation and screening process is similar to the guidelines set out in Canada. Following initial orientation, volunteers complete a month of training prior to meeting their core member. Training content was similar to the Canadian training whereby volunteers learn about the criminal justice system, issues surrounding sexual offending, the CoSA model, self-care and boundaries, conflict resolution, and circle dynamics. Prior to release, the volunteers were informed of the core member’s past offending and were required to meet regularly where the core member would share the work he or she had completed in
treatment. The purpose of regular meetings while the core member was still in prison was so the volunteers would be aware of the core member’s coping strategies and be able to recognise when the core member was falling back into negative behaviour patterns (Circles UK, 2016; McCartan, 2016; C. Wilson et al., 2010).

In both the UK and Canada, professional members are included throughout the training process; for example, a probation officer (or other criminal justice employee) provides a basic overview of the how the criminal justice system functions and CoSA’s position within that system, and local police explain relevant legislation. Further a prison psychologist (or other professional) provides information about sexual offending, sexual deviancy, and risk factors, as well as self-care, boundary setting, and conflict resolution (Circles UK, 2016; Correctional Services of Canada, 2002). Follow-up training events, for instance training around substance misuse, as well as ongoing support for volunteers are offered in both the UK and Canada (Hanvey et al., 2005; McCartan, 2016; R. J. Wilson et al., 2007a; C. Wilson et al., 2010). In the UK, quarterly reviews are conducted with the volunteers to explore their experiences and support their personal wellbeing (C. Wilson et al., 2010). Finally, in both the UK and Canada, volunteers are supported by the circle coordinator who is trained in issues regarding sexual offending, risk management and reintegration processes, as well as the needs of the individuals volunteering with people who have sexually offended (R. J. Wilson, et al., 2007a; C. Wilson et al., 2010).

**Experiences of Training and Support**

Whilst training protocols are in place, volunteering with individuals who have sexually offended can be particularly difficult, as it can be for professionals working in the area of sexual offending (Moulden & Firestone, 2007). Yet volunteers do not receive anywhere near the same amount of training that professionals receive, who may have trained for several years and receive ongoing supervision and professional development. Further,
whilst the relationship aspect of CoSA is important, there have been concerns from professional members about potential boundary violations between the volunteers and the core member (R. J. Wilson, Picheca, & Prinzo, 2005).

There has been little research examining volunteer experiences of the training and support they received as a CoSA volunteer. In a study conducted in the UK, 62 CoSA volunteers completed an online questionnaire that included both Likert scale and open-ended questions examining their experiences as a CoSA volunteer; including their experience and opinion of the training and support they received (McCartan, 2016). The majority of the volunteers rated training as appropriate or very appropriate. Further, the volunteers believed that the training they received was informative, enhanced their understanding of sexual offending in general, and prepared them to deal with discussions with the core member and the professional members (McCartan, 2016). The findings also highlighted that the volunteers recognised that they required internal resilience strategies because they were working with a challenging population. However, they also thought that additional training or formal/informal support could assist them to become more self-resilient (McCartan, 2016).

Similar results were found by Thomas, Thompson and Karstedt (2014) where 20 volunteers from six CoSA projects across England and Wales took part in interviews that were followed by a short questionnaire. The researchers found that most of the volunteers were satisfied with their training, believing that the training added to their knowledge of sexual abuse issues and prepared them for volunteering with CoSA. Further, the volunteers’ relationship with the circle coordinator was important for providing the volunteers with support and provided a connection with the statutory organisations. However, there were volunteers who felt that “professional language” had infiltrated training content and some of the volunteers thought that their training focused more on accountability than support provision (Thomas et al., 2014).
Finally, in the US, Fox (2013) examined how and why CoSAs work; 63 volunteers took part in group interviews in their teams of three or four. A key finding was that volunteer training was regarded as one of the reasons why CoSAs work effectively. Further, the volunteers believed the training was excellent for preparing them for their role in CoSA and they could not recall any situations where they felt unprepared. The volunteers also emphasised the importance of the circle coordinators for providing ad hoc training and support. However, the volunteers wanted more information from probation officers about insight into particular risk factors for their core member and certain parole conditions (Fox, 2013).

Together, the above studies highlight that the majority of volunteers believed that training adequately prepared them for their role in CoSA, enhanced their understanding about sexual offending, and circle coordinators were identified as essential for providing ongoing support and training. However, where some volunteers felt that there was an emphasis on accountability (Thomas et al., 2014), there were other volunteers that wanted more information about risk factors (Fox, 2013). With volunteers holding a central role within CoSA, understanding the training and support required for an effective circle is undeniably important. Thus, if CoSA is to continue expanding and gaining international recognition, then it is necessary to ensure that the volunteers’ needs are met.

**The New Zealand Context**

**Pilot Project**

The development of CoSA in NZ was similar to the UK whereby CoSA was introduced at a prison-based treatment unit with government support. It was hoped that an existing community organisation would eventually manage CoSA, or alternatively, a community trust similar to Circles UK or CoSA Canada would be formed (van Rensburg,
Indeed, both instances occurred where in one city a trust was formed and in another city an existing organisation agreed to manage circles in their area. Whilst initial volunteer training remained at the prison-based treatment unit, both organisations were contracted to recruit volunteers and provide ongoing support and ad hoc training. Unlike in the UK and Canada, at the time of writing, there was no nation-wide organisation for CoSA in NZ.

NZ adopted a systematic and cautious approach to ensure suitability of all members of the pilot circle (van Rensburg 2012). The pilot CoSAs were implemented as a response to the growing number of individuals serving indeterminate sentences, who had completed intensive sex offender treatment, but were precluded from release due to a lack of suitable social support (van Rensburg, 2012). Further, unlike the UK and Canada, CoSA in NZ was aimed at individuals serving indeterminate sentences. The focus on indeterminate sentences was a unique feature of NZ and was chosen so that a circle could be formed long before the core member would be released (van Rensburg, 2012). Owing to limited CoSA resources, considerable effort was invested in the identification of individuals deemed suitable for a CoSA.

The CoSA pilot project in New Zealand began in 2009 and focused on individuals who were serving an indeterminate sentence, or had complex needs and were on an Extended Supervision Order (ESO). An ESO is a court imposed supervision order following release from prison for up to ten years (Department of Corrections, 2017). By 2013, ten circles had been established for the pilot project; none of the core members had reoffended sexually, a couple had been recalled back to prison, and six core members had been living in the community for more than two years (van Rensburg, 2014). However, in 2014, a core member failed to return to prison from a temporary release and subsequently escaped the country (Meng-Yee, 2016). Since this incident, CoSA was subject to a review and the funding for the volunteer organisations contracted to recruit volunteers was not renewed. In 2016, a new
pilot program was established targeting men on determinate sentences (Pennington, 2016). Volunteers in the current study were engaged with CoSA prior to recent changes, providing unique insight into the volunteers’ experiences during challenging times such as the incident described.

**Volunteer Recruitment**

Recruitment of initial volunteers was a slow process and utilised mostly a word of mouth approach. Volunteers were primarily recruited from faith communities; however, they were also recruited from Māori iwi (extended kinship group, tribe, nation, people, nationality, race – often refers to a larger group of people descended from a common ancestor and associated with distinct territory; Māori Dictionary, 2017), and academic staff and students (Garrett, 2011; van Rensburg, 2012). The development of the first circle coincided with an offer by a visiting church group to accommodate individuals who did not have suitable support in the community (van Rensburg, 2012). Following the identification of seven volunteers, the first circle in NZ was established in 2009. Similar to other jurisdictions (R. J. Wilson et al., 2007a), recruiting volunteers has been the biggest operational challenge for CoSA in NZ (van Rensburg, 2012).

In NZ, prospective volunteer competencies were assessed during the selection procedure involving a written application that included references and an interview (van Rensburg, 2012). The screening process ensured that volunteers were not joining CoSA for inappropriate reasons, including to change or punish the core member. The selection criteria included compatibility with the core member and other volunteers so that a cohesive group with common interests could be formed. Important volunteer characteristics included emotional and social maturity, problem solving skills, and an ability to deal with difficult situations so that the volunteer could appropriately hold their core member accountable and manage any issues that arose. Further, it was considered important that volunteers
demonstrated a restorative and socially inclusive approach, and a non-judgmental attitude toward the core member regardless of their offending profile, age, sexual orientation, and personality traits. The criteria also included that volunteers had no previous serious convictions, particularly for sexual offending and no unresolved issues around sexual offending involving themselves or people close to them as victims. Finally, a balanced lifestyle was regarded as important to avoid volunteers becoming too intense and overbearing, or conversely, not having enough time to adequately support the core member or other volunteers (van Rensburg, 2012).

**Training and Support**

NZ volunteer training material was based on Canadian training material, and adapted to suit the NZ criminal justice context (van Rensburg, 2012). Specifically, NZ training material incorporated information about NZ policies, sentences the core members were serving, and realistic expectations about parole conditions in NZ (van Rensburg, 2012). Training involved two or three half-day sessions to prepare the volunteers for their role in a circle (van Rensburg, 2012, 2014), with follow-up sessions offered by the two community organisations contracted to recruit and support volunteers. Initial training also included a session with the core member’s probation officer in which the role of each member was made clear and ensured that the volunteers understood when the professional members were needed; for example, the probation officer is informed should a relapse occur with alcohol or drugs. However, aside from the probation officer, including other professional members during training sessions proved too complicated (Garrett, 2011; van Rensburg, 2012). As such, members such as police officers would visit the circle when possible to confirm they were available to help if needed. Following the initial training sessions, and similar to the UK and Canada, the training involved a disclosure meeting where the core member detailed their
background, offence and offending-related behaviours, triggers, and maladaptive coping strategies.

Consistent with the UK and Canada, prior to release, core members were required to complete temporary releases. The volunteers were encouraged to meet their core member during a temporary release so that a relationship outside the prison setting could be established. The relationship aspect of a CoSA has been noted as a benefit where modelling prosocial behaviour was based on friendship and trust, as opposed to authority and policies (van Rensburg, 2012, 2014; R. J. Wilson et al., 2007a). Further, the mutual relationships within the inner circle enabled the volunteers to hold the core member accountable without the core member feeling attacked (Hannem, 2011). Therefore, the volunteers were encouraged to get to know the core member and other volunteers before their core member was released from prison (Garrett, 2011). However, part way through data collection for the current study, temporary releases were suspended following an event where a core member failed to return to prison after a temporary release. Accordingly, even though temporary releases were considered an important step in preparing volunteers for their role in CoSA, they were not possible after this event.

**Introduction to Empirical Chapters**

CoSA is a promising reintegration framework for individuals convicted for sexually offending. Developed to strengthen the support network of individuals that many community members would rather never leave prison, CoSA represents both an alternative to the normative negative reaction and a shift toward humanising those who have sexually abused. CoSA is grounded in restorative justice whereby the core member is supported back into the community and a safe, productive, and meaningful life is promoted. From a risk management perspective, CoSA utilises formal and informal social controls to promote a safe reintegration
and support long term desistance. From a community perspective, CoSA promotes the engagement of community volunteers to participate with the criminal justice system rather than watch from the side-lines. However, attitudes toward people who have sexually offended are complex, generally negative, and can potentially hinder a safe re-entry into the community. As such, it is unsurprising that volunteer recruitment is a significant operational challenge.

There has been no research examining how volunteers cope with a recall or re-offence committed by their core member. Further, there has been no research examining the effect of labelling on willingness to volunteer with people who have offended, or volunteering with CoSA specifically. As CoSA gains international recognition and the number of CoSAs rise, it becomes increasingly important to give voice to the volunteers behind CoSA, and explore their experiences. Such an understanding will help inform volunteer training and support needs, and ultimately the continuation of CoSA around the globe.

The overall aim of the current research was to explore CoSA volunteers’ motivation and their experiences of being a CoSA volunteer in New Zealand. Further, the present research aimed to examine the effect of labelling on attitudes, any priming effect of labelling on subsequent language use, and willingness to volunteer with CoSA. The empirical chapters of this thesis are presented in two parts; Part one reports findings from three studies directly examining CoSA volunteers in New Zealand. Part two reports the findings from a study conducted with community members on the effects of labelling.

**Overview of Chapters**

Part One starts by reporting the overall methodology for the first three studies where an in-depth semi-structured interview schedule was developed. Study One investigated the motivation to volunteer with CoSA. Study Two explored volunteers’ general experiences and experiences of a recall or re-offence. Study Three examined volunteer experiences of
operational aspects of CoSA, including the training and support they received. Study Three utilised a questionnaire alongside the interview to examine volunteers’ satisfaction with the training they received and the level of perceived support. Given the exploratory nature of the first three studies, no hypotheses were generated.

Part Two reports the methodology used for Study Four that examined the effect of labels on community attitudes and willingness to volunteer. A mixed method approach was adopted for the final study to examine why participants would be willing/unwilling to consider volunteering with people with different offences, and specifically with CoSA. Further, existing attitude measures were adapted to examine the effect of labelling on attitudes towards individuals who have sexually offended. It was hypothesised that the use of label would be associated with more negative attitudes, less willingness to volunteer with CoSA, and prime the voluntary use of labelling.
PART ONE
Methodology

The Research Context

The present research began mid-2014 and there were 55 active CoSA volunteers in New Zealand. Data were collected between late 2014 and early 2016. In 2015 there were two community organisations external to the Department of Corrections contracted to recruit and support volunteers. However, in late 2015 a core member failed to return from a temporary leave and subsequently left the country. An investigation was launched and CoSA went under review. At the end of 2015, Government funding for the volunteer organisations was not renewed; whilst the organisations were unable to recruit more volunteers, they were able to continue providing ongoing support to active volunteers. In 2016, a project similar to CoSA was launched for individuals serving determinant sentences. Data collection for the present study began before the core member absconded and continued following the review; as such, half the interviews took place prior to the core member absconding and half took place after.

Establishing Rigor

In qualitative research, reflexivity is a key issue in establishing rigor (Morrow, 2005). The experiences conveyed in the context of an interview are the product of both the researcher’s and participant’s experiences and involvement in the interview (Hammersley, 1995; Hollway & Jefferson, 2013; Morrow, 2005). My ontological position is social constructionism in which social phenomena is created by the individuals in groups, can be changed and revised through social interaction, and is subjective over time and place (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Willig, 2013). I have an interest in restorative approaches to crime and justice and my approach is informed by the involvement with CoSA from a research perspective. I attended circle information sessions, prison information sessions, and met with a number of the developers and key members of CoSA in New Zealand. I conducted and
transcribed all interviews; notes were kept of all 18 interviews to aid self-reflection during analysis. Analytic insights were derived about the motivation to volunteer and volunteer experiences following analysis of the transcripts and notes. As the primary researcher and interviewer, I acknowledge my own research position and influence in the interpretation of the data. Therefore, to establish rigor, all participants were invited to review the transcripts and make any edits to ensure the accuracy of transcription. Further, discussion of developing themes and self-reflection was used with the co-author and supervisory team to challenge analytic assumptions (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013; Morrow, 2005).

**Participants**

Recruitment of participants occurred over two recruitment drives in which the CoSA coordinator sent an email to all CoSA volunteers with information about the study; refer to Appendix A for emails sent out for recruitment. The information was sent out to 55 CoSA volunteers in the first email recruitment drive, and 49 in the second. Of the 20 volunteers that responded (12 in the first recruitment drive and 8 in the second), 18 took part in an interview (14 men, 4 women) and 23 (17 men, 6 women) completed the online questionnaire. Of the participants that took part in an interview, 16 identified as New Zealand European and 2 identified as New Zealand Māori, and ranged in age from 26 to 79, with an average age of 57. Of the participants that completed the questionnaire, 20 identified as New Zealand European, 2 identified as New Zealand Māori, and 1 identified as other, and ranged in age from 26 to 75, with an average age of 63. See Table 1 for more detailed demographic information. The online questionnaire was anonymous; therefore, it was not possible to match questionnaire and interview responses, and it is unknown how many participants completed both an interview and the questionnaire.
Table 1
Demographic information of participants that took part in an interview and participants that completed a questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Interview participants</th>
<th>Questionnaire participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n (N = 18)</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>72.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>83.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Māori</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest level of Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-school certificate/diploma</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor degree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor with Honours</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters/ Doctoral</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area of Occupation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retiree</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>38.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tradesperson</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other professional</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>61.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No religion</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The length of time that the participants had been volunteering with CoSA ranged from 4 months to 7 years, and their circles were at various stages of development; some core members still in prison, a few had recently been released, and other core members had been released for a number of years. Refer to Table 2 for details about the circles that the core
members were involved in. Participants described a range of ways they had become involved with CoSA; most of the participants were volunteering in the prison in various capacities (e.g., prison ministry, tutoring etc.). They were either asked directly to join CoSA or they saw a need whereby men convicted with child sex offences were the least likely to get visited. Participants also got involved through their study, people they knew were already volunteering, or hearing about CoSA through presentations (e.g., the CoSA developer presenting information at an organisation).

Table 2
Details of the circles the interview participants were involved with

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volunteer Circle Involvement</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage of Circle</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recently formed</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-release</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Released within a year</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well-established</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length of Involvement</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 1 year</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 – 2 years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 – 5 years</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>38.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 5 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recalls</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recall</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No recall</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>77.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Re-Offences</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-offence (sexual)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Re-offence</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>83.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 25 for the stage of the circle as some volunteers were involved with more than one circle. Further, the three volunteers who reported experiences of their core member reoffending were part of the same circle, not three different circles.*
Procedure and Research Design

An invitation to participate in the research was distributed around CoSA volunteers via an email sent out by the CoSA coordinator. The email included information about the study and research team; refer to Appendix B for the participant information sheet. Interested participants made direct contact with the author to organise in-person interviews. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted either in the participant’s home, in an interview room at the University, or in another private place such as a quiet café. Interviews lasted between 40 and 90 minutes. Participants signed a consent form at the time of the interview, refer to Appendix C for interview consent form, Recruitment and interviewing continued until the point of saturation; a point in analysis where no new themes were emerging and sampling more data would not lead to more information related to the research questions (Mason, 2010; Morrow, 2005). With permission from the participants, all interviews were digitally audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Participants were given an opportunity to review and edit the transcripts prior to analysis, an opportunity taken up by ten participants.

Semi-Structured Interview

The interview schedule was informed by relevant literature as well as through consultation with the pioneers of CoSA in NZ; see Appendix D for the interview protocol. A semi-structured interview format was chosen to bring focus to the interviews whilst not compromising rapport and flow (Rubin & Rubin, 2011); the interview schedule contained several guiding questions, however, to ensure the natural flow of the interview it was not rigidly adhered to. Open questions were used to maximise the richness of responses by allowing for creative answers and self-expression (Morrow, 2005; Rubin & Rubin, 2011). At the end of the interview, participants were invited to raise anything that had not been discussed that they felt was relevant.
**Study One: Motivation to volunteer.** The section of the interview schedule relating to volunteers’ motivation explored how the participants became involved with CoSA and their reasons for becoming a volunteer with CoSA, such as “Why did you choose to become involved in CoSA?” and the processes behind their decision to volunteer with CoSA, including, “What led up to your decision to volunteer with CoSA? Was volunteering with CoSA a difficult decision? Why? Why not?”

**Study Two: Volunteer experiences.** The questions relating to volunteers’ experiences included, “How do you balance providing support to the core member and holding them accountable when they appear to be doing something inappropriate?”, “Did you set up boundaries between yourself and the core member? Were these boundaries ever an issue?”, and, when applicable, “How did the re-offence/recall of your core member affect you/your circle as a whole?”

**Study Three: Operational experiences.** The section of the interview schedule concerning experiences of operational aspects included questions such as “How adequate was training for you in terms of being prepared to deal with and support your core member’s specific needs?”, “Who did you receive support from as a CoSA volunteer? What was your experience of the support offered?”, and, “How effective do you think your circle has been? What could be done to improve the effectiveness of circles in the future?”

**Study Three: Online questionnaire.**

An online questionnaire was developed for Study Three; demographic information was assessed using questions adapted from the New Zealand census (Statistics New Zealand, 2013). The questionnaire started with a consent page where participants indicated that they had read and understood the information about the questionnaire; refer to Appendix E for the online consent form and questionnaire. The questionnaire included questions about the level of support participants received from various people involved with CoSA including CoSA
coordinators/professional members, probation officers, family or friends of the core member who were not a part of the circle, Police, volunteers own family and friends, and other circle volunteers. Participants indicated their perceived level of support on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (no support at all) to 7 (high level of support). Another question examined participants’ overall satisfaction with training which was scored on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (not satisfied at all) to 7 (highly satisfied). Finally, two questions examined participants’ intent to continue their involvement with CoSA by indicating the extent to which they agreed with the following statements: “It is likely that I will quit my work as a CoSA volunteer within six months”, and, “It is likely that I will continue my work with CoSA for the next two years”. Both questions were scored on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 7 (totally agree).

**Planned Analysis**

Qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis; the thematic analysis was conducted following the method by Braun and Clarke (2006), underpinned by a realist epistemological stance. The realist position reports the experiences, meanings, and the reality of the participants as conveyed in the interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The author transcribed, proof-read, and reviewed all transcripts to achieve immersion and familiarisation with the data. The transcripts were coded using NVivo 11, a computerised system to organise data for qualitative research. Given that the data were part of three studies, initial coding involved extracting data relevant to each study; that is, all the transcripts were coded according the a priori categories (1) motivation to volunteer, (2) volunteer experiences, and, (3) operational experiences. In this phase of coding, a document of all the codes relating to each a priori category was created. Following this, volunteer experiences were further coded according to two a priori categories “experiences relating to a recall and/or re-offence”, and
“all other experiences”. Operational experiences were also coded according to the a priori categories “experiences of training and support” and “what makes an effective circle?”

The next phase of analysis involved analysing each category for themes; that is, the author systematically went through each category to identify themes. All the codes for an overarching theme were read and reviewed to identify any subtheme and to consider whether a coherent pattern had been formed. Finally, the themes and subthemes were defined and named. Quotes that supported or illustrated a theme were extracted from the data throughout the review process. Data analysis was an iterative process of identifying themes and re-reading transcripts to ensure accuracy of themes or quotes identified. Further, the researcher was conscious of discrepant findings or disconfirming evidence to avoid confirmatory bias and simplistic interpretations. Contact was maintained with a research team throughout the analysis process to discuss themes identified and to facilitate a reflexive approach, minimise biases, and ensure consistency of analysis.

Quantitative data for Study Three were analysed using descriptive statistics in SPSS (version 24).
Study One: Volunteer Motivation

Aims

Using an in-depth qualitative approach, Study One aimed to extend extant research by examining the motivation to volunteer with CoSA in New Zealand. We know that most of the volunteers in New Zealand are recruited from the faith community, however, we do not know the underlying role that faith plays in the volunteers’ motivation to volunteer with this population. Study one aimed to explore the underlying reasons for volunteering with CoSA to provide greater insight into what enables current volunteers to participate with CoSA and why a select number of people choose to volunteer with such a stigmatised population. Given the exploratory nature of the research no hypotheses were generated.

Findings

Three key themes surrounding volunteer motivation were identified from the thematic analysis and were labelled ‘Restorative and Justice Based Motivation,’ ‘Altruistic Motivation,’ and ‘Faith-Based Motivation’. Each main theme had a few subthemes which are explored in-depth below. Refer to Table 3 for a full list of main themes and subthemes. Aspects of the participants’ motivations overlapped across these categories, that is, the themes are not mutually exclusive. However, this is consistent with the motivation to volunteer, as motivation rarely has a single rationale (e.g., Clary et al., 1996).
Table 3  
*Main themes and sub-themes for the motivation to volunteer with CoSA*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Theme</th>
<th>Restorative and Justice based Motivation</th>
<th>Altruistic Motivation</th>
<th>Faith-Based Motivation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-theme</strong></td>
<td>Reducing reoffending and community safety: No more victims</td>
<td>I want to Help</td>
<td>Practical Christianity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rebels with a cause</td>
<td>Identity construction: I help, therefore I am</td>
<td>Following a calling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CoSA aligns with Maori Justice</td>
<td>Seeing the person beyond the crime</td>
<td>Counter-religious motivation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Theme 1: Restorative and Justice Based Motivation**

Participants made both implicit and explicit references to their position in terms of criminal justice; for example, one participant referred to their restorative justice orientation as, “My framework of understanding is heaps more like restorative justice and reconnecting things” (Participant 14). An implicit reference to justice is illustrated in the following quote in which another participant described how they question the status quo and look for ways to improve the criminal justice system:

> It’s about constantly critiquing and constantly questioning the powers that be or the traditions that are in place, the systems that are in place…and so…I guess I wouldn’t have come to CoSA if I hadn’t…that’s definitely one attitude that’s led me to this sort of work. (Participant 5)

**Subtheme 1: Reducing reoffending and community safety: no more victims.** All participants shared that their primary motivation for participating in CoSA was to reduce reoffending and increase safety in the community. They believed that CoSA was an ideal
avenue to do that, “Because of course, the whole purpose of Circles of Support and Accountability can be summed up in three words – no more victims” (Participant 13).

All the participants were motivated by community safety and had encountered two approaches regarding reintegration attitudes in the community. The first approach was the belief that to keep the community safe, an individual being released from prison must remain locked-up on the outside. Parole conditions such as strict curfews, residence restrictions, and limits on places they could go were asserted to be effective policies for managing an individual released from prison. The second approach was by keeping the released individual safe, you would keep the community safe. By allowing him/her to find suitable accommodation, employment, and being able to appropriately socialise, the risk of reoffending would be reduced. The following quote epitomises the distinct positions:

One school of thought – you keep the community safe which means you basically lock the guy up out in the community; so, if you monitor them and restrict them enough they won’t be able to hurt the community. The other one is – you keep the guy safe and then the community will be safe: so, you support people, you encourage them to have a healthy life and healthy set of relationships. (Participant 13)

The participants aligned themselves with the second school of thought described in the previous quote. The “radical inclusion and justice” (Participant 14) aspect of CoSA, and the goal of reducing reoffending by keeping the core member safe in the community were significant motivators for many of the volunteers. As illustrated in the following quote, underpinning many volunteers’ motivation for joining CoSA was the belief that the core member’s safety and the community’s safety were not mutually exclusive, “It’s not just the community’s safety, it’s his safety. You keep him safe, you keep the community safe” (Participant 11).
Subtheme 2: Rebels with a cause. All the volunteers believed that CoSA was an effective framework for reintegration. The volunteers’ spoke about their restorative approach to justice and dissatisfaction with the current criminal justice system, as such many participants positioned themselves as “rebels” in relation to the current system. The rebel identity was not limited to volunteering with CoSA, many of the volunteers described themselves as rebels in other contexts, for example, within their church context. The rebel attitude influenced the participants to volunteer with CoSA because no one else wanted to. As one participant put it:

Maybe there’s part of me that’s just like a little bit radicalised or wants to resist and not conform or something and I’m a bit like…maybe there’s this part of me that’s like ‘this group of people get really hammered and pushed aside so they’re the ones I’m going to stand with’. (Participant 14)

While working within a framework of restorative justice, the volunteers were motivated by the possibility of influencing change. The participants explained that they believed that increasingly punitive policies were not a solution to community fear. Further, the participants explained that most people who enter prison will one day be released, even if it was unlikely for individuals serving indeterminate sentences. Therefore, they believed it was important that there were processes in place that adequately supported the transition into the community and promoted desistance. As such, the participants explained the CoSA offered both a framework that complemented the services offered by corrections. Therefore, the participants were motivated by possibility of influencing support for restorative justice. That is, by showing the success of CoSA and community driven frameworks, the participants hoped for a shift away from punitive justice. The following quote shows a participant’s belief that CoSA offers the opportunity to move toward restorative justice, “The reason I got involved
with CoSA is actually I saw it was at least one little arrow head that could lead to a much more broader change” (Participant 5).

While most of the volunteers were motivated to participate with CoSA through their restorative approach to justice, many volunteers also felt that a framework such as CoSA opened the door to being able to discuss sexual offending as a community issue. Many volunteers felt that sexual offending continued to be a taboo subject which meant that there was little discussion in the community. The participants noted that the primary discussion occurred in the media, such as through the reporting of an offence, which they believed perpetuated negative public attitudes and limited discussion. Most of the participants believed that being a part of a community driven reintegration framework allowed for discussion to take place. The drive to initiate social change and create a shift away from punitive attitudes was particularly apparent when the volunteers spoke about why they did not react negatively to the release of an individual convicted for sex offences. One participant describes why they were motivated to be involved with CoSA, compared to wanting more punitive sentences:

I don’t get the pitchforks out because I would like to think that we can do better than just lock people up forever. I think actually working with them and changing…partly because the emotional ‘throw away the key’ kind of response means that it’s always going to be an unsafe topic to discuss. Before it’s become a problem, people can’t just go in and talk to friends, ‘hey I’ve had these…these weird kind of feelings,’ and feel that they are able to talk about them safely and maybe get help…because the risk of being persecuted is too high which makes it very hard for people to come forward in the first place and get help that may stop them from behaving as they often do. (Participant 18)
Subtheme 3: CoSA aligns with Māori Justice. Grounded in restorative theory, CoSA aligns well with indigenous approaches to crime and justice. All the participants believed that CoSA views the core member, not as a singular, but within the context of their family/whānau (extended family, family group, a familiar term of address to a number of people; Māori dictionary, 2017) and their community. The participants explained that restorative justice, and CoSA, empowers people to build communities and invites those who are alienated into the community, rather than pushing them further into isolation. Many volunteers were motivated by both the restorative approach of CoSA, and because they felt that it was particularly beneficial for Māori who had offended. This opinion was expressed by both Māori and European participants, however the Māori participants expressed a personal investment in this belief. They explained that their investment was fuelled by the overrepresentation of Māori in New Zealand prisons and the belief that empowering indigenous models of justice would facilitate an environment that supported the successful reintegration of Māori. Many volunteers were motivated by the community and relationship aspect of CoSA, as well as the close alignment with indigenous approaches to crime and justice. One participant illustrated that CoSA is more than just a reintegration framework, it is about human interaction, community, and relationships.

The most important thing is, is a saying in Māori which is like, ‘He aha te mea nui o te o. He tangata, he tangata, he tangata’, which is ‘what is the most important thing, it is people…’ and so like interactions and getting to know people is a really big thing for my – not just for Māori I think – but for my family and a lot of other families that I know. And so like CoSA, for me, is just another extension of that. (Participant 5)
Theme 2: Altruistic Motivation

Subtheme 1: Altruism: I want to help. Altruism is the practice of concern and the moving to help in the welfare of others without any expectation of reward; as such, the altruistic motivation that was identified was the volunteers’ concern for both the individual core member and for the wider community. Many participants expressed that their purpose in life was to help and serve others and CoSA was viewed as an ideal avenue to help in their community. By supporting the core member, they were both helping at an individual level, as well as on a larger scale through increased community safety. The participants’ altruistic motivation is illustrated in the following quote:

If I was to die tomorrow, would I be satisfied with the life that I’ve lived? And the answer always needs to be yes, and if it’s not, why not, and fix it. And so that’s been really helpful for me in life, is like…what am I contributing to… I think I have a really high need to contribute to things. (Participant 14)

Subtheme 2: Identity construction: I help, therefore I am. For several volunteers, altruism went beyond the basic definition of “helping”, whereby volunteering appeared to have become a part of their identity. One participant described how volunteering was a part of who they are as a person, “I’m a kind of person who likes to help others, it’s part of my make-up” (Participant 3). Constructing their identity through volunteering meant that CoSA was often not the first community organisation that they had volunteered for.

Whilst volunteering is important to the participants, it remains interesting that the participants choose to volunteer with an undesirable population. The volunteers placed themselves as distinct in the volunteer culture, thus they chose to work with a stigmatised population. As illustrated in this quote, the participants explained that it was because no one else wanted to work with this population that it was vital for them to do it:
I figure that if we didn’t help them, we men – meaning me and others like me – then who was going to help them…because they were the most shunned of the prisoners in the prison and nobody wanted to work with them. (Participant 11)

Volunteering with a shunned population was made more meaningful by the belief that the participants were making a difference to their community. The participants’ passion for helping, as well as promoting community safety, motivated them to choose CoSA despite it involving a stigmatised population. Counter-intuitively, the motivation to volunteer with CoSA was strengthened because of the undesirable nature of this population. If the volunteers felt that they were making a difference, their motivation was further reinforced because they were working with a population no one else wanted to, and thus making a difference no one else would.

**Subtheme 3: Seeing the person beyond the crime.** While many people would not want to volunteer with individuals convicted for sex offences, the participants’ attitudes toward the population informed their motivation to volunteer with CoSA. The participants humanised the “sex offender” which enabled them to seek out or accept a request to volunteer with CoSA. One participant described their attitude toward individuals who have sexually offended:

I mean it’s something that requires help and treatment, right? As opposed to any kind of vitriolic ‘let’s castrate all the paedophiles, those horrible monsters.’ I really can’t stand that kind of stuff…and interestingly, I think it’s the kind of public reaction and vitriol against child sex offending that makes me think CoSA is even more valuable and important, because there aren’t that many groups in society that are treated…just universally ostracised and totally hated on…their safety actually is at risk if people find out who they are or where they live or what they’ve done…there’s this strange
kind of ‘oh well you did that so anyone’s justified in doing anything to you’... (Participant 14)

The participants viewed this population as people who had made terrible mistakes and were trying to change. Whilst the participants were very specific in stating they did not in any way condone what their core member had done, they also made a point of trying to understand what underlies sexual offending. Many of the volunteers were motivated by wanting to learn more about the issues surrounding sex offending, such as primary prevention, reducing reoffending, and the causes behind sexual abuse. The humanisation of individuals convicted for sex offences served as a catalyst for getting involved with a restorative justice orientated volunteer opportunity, as well as an outcome of participating with CoSA.

**Theme 3: Faith-Based Motivation**

Participants’ accounts also revealed a motivation based on their faith. Whilst most of the volunteers were Christian, the breadth within the Faith-Based subthemes demonstrate that it cannot simply be stated that the volunteers were motivated because they were religious. The volunteers came from different Christian denominations ranging from conservative evangelical faiths, to more liberal faiths. Thus, the subthemes of faith-based motivations illustrate the diverse ways that faith influenced their motivation to volunteer.

**Subtheme 1: Practical Christianity.** Volunteering was described by the participants as being a practical aspect of being a Christian, which was also a reason why many had volunteered with other organisations before CoSA. As illustrated by the following quote, practical Christianity was described by the participants as simply putting their beliefs and teachings into action:

> It’s not enough just to mouth platitudes, you know ‘God bless you and all will be well’; we’re wasting our time if that is the extent of what we’re saying. It’s got to be based on
life experience; it’s really about a very practical, sort of hands on, sort of an expression of one’s Christianity. (Participant 2)

However, as mentioned previously, it remains interesting as to why the volunteers would choose to help a stigmatised group over other populations. The participants explained that volunteering with CoSA is volunteering with a marginalised group in society. A number of participants described that teachings in the bible specifically talk about working with people that society rejects. The following quote – quoted from the bible by a participant to illustrate their motivation – illustrates the belief that volunteer work should not be limited to desirable populations but to include working with those rejected by society because that represented working with God/Jesus:

…and then he said to the sheep, ‘depart into eternal rest’… ‘why?’… ‘because when I was naked you clothed me, when I was hungry you fed me etcetera...and when I was in prison and sick you came and visited me’ and they said, ‘when did we ever do that?’ he said, ‘when you did it to the least of my people, you did it to me’… (Participant 11).

Subtheme 2: Called to volunteer with the marginalised. Many of the participants explained their belief that God has a preference for the marginalised and the underdog, and that Jesus was known for working with the sick and ostracised. Thus, volunteering with CoSA was an extension of God’s will, or Jesus’ teachings. Further, several participants believed that God is love, and everything is created and loved by God. For the volunteers, this belief translated into a love for their fellow human beings. The following quote shows how the preference for the marginalised informed this participant’s motivation to volunteer with CoSA:

I feel that God also has a particular preference for the marginalised and those humans we don’t care too much about…doesn't mean that God doesn't care about them. One could argue that there is no empirical evidence for this...I think that...these guys who
nobody wants to have anything to do with, it’s really important that there are those of us who stand up and say “well, I’ll be your friend, I will walk this journey with you”.

(Participant 13)

For most volunteers that had a faith-based motivation, participation with CoSA was an extension of God’s work and for a few of the volunteers, it was a calling. The participants were passionate about their involvement with CoSA, thus, referring to it as “a calling” illustrates the strength of their motivation. The following quote illustrates that volunteering with CoSA was an extension of God’s will, “So I felt called…as a pastor feels called to the pulpit, I feel called to this sort of work” (Participant 11).

**Subtheme 3: Counter-religious motivation.** There were several participants that were not religious and who explained that they were motivated to join CoSA because they had noted how religious circles seemed to be the only option. The non-faith based volunteers felt that while the core members were not expected to be religious, there seemed to be a certain amount of pressure to attend church meetings from a couple of the volunteers. Further, the non-faith based volunteers felt that having a circle made up entirely of faith-based volunteers might mean that making a connection could be difficult. The following quote shows the motivation to join CoSA to provide an alternative and balance to the predominantly religious circles, “I wanted there to be something else on the other side of the gate other than God” (Participant 6).

**Discussion**

Following a thematic analysis, three main themes were identified: “restorative and justice based motivation”, “altruistic based motivation”, and, “faith based motivation”. Together, the main themes and subthemes highlight the diverse and complex nature of the motivation to volunteer with CoSA. The subthemes illustrate different functions served by volunteering with CoSA that underlies volunteer motivation. Functions on both an individual
level such as values (altruistic motivation), and community level (promoting community safety or supporting restorative justice) motivated the volunteers to participate with CoSA.

The Restorative and Justice Based Motivation theme has subthemes which illustrated that the volunteers were motivated by wanting to reduce reoffending and enhance community safety, shift away from the salient punitive discourse, and promote indigenous methods of criminal justice. The motivation to reduce reoffending and increase community safety subtheme was also found in previous research (Almond et al., 2015; Silverman & D. Wilson, 2002; R. J. Wilson et al., 2007a) where it was found that giving back to the community and community safety were significant motivating factors for CoSA volunteers. The ‘no more victims’ motto goes hand in hand with the restorative position and radical inclusiveness that the participants found attractive about CoSA. As described by Hannem (2013) the ‘no more victims’ motto is a priority for CoSA, as well as a political mask for the inclusive nature of the framework.

Volunteering with CoSA was also viewed as an avenue to rebel against the punitive attitudes and offer an alternative to common negative stereotypes. Souza and Dhami (2008) found that volunteers with restorative values were more likely to volunteer with restorative justice programs. The present study’s findings extend upon Souza and Dhami’s (2008) findings as the volunteers were not solely motivated because their values aligned with restorative values, but also because involvement in CoSA created a platform for discussion around punitive and restorative justice. Further, the participants were motivated by their belief that CoSA aligned well with Māori and indigenous approaches to justice. The restorative justice foundation of the CoSA framework is heavily influenced by Indigenous practices (Zehr, 2015). The belief that CoSA aligns with Māori approaches to justice illustrates that, regardless of location, the underlying processes of CoSA support Indigenous justice.
The main theme, Altruistic-Based Motivation, included a subtheme that demonstrated a straightforward altruistic motivation (Tewksbury & Dabney, 2004; R. J. Wilson et al., 2007a), as well illustrating that many of the volunteers constructed their identity based on their volunteering behaviour. Further, the attitudes of the participants meant that they humanised “sex offenders” so they were seen as a group of people that needed help (R. J. Wilson et al., 2007), rather than “monsters” requiring a life-long prison sentence. Lastly, and counter-intuitively, the participants were more motivated to volunteer with CoSA and with men convicted for sex offences because they are a stigmatised group. The rebels with a cause subtheme highlighted that the stigmatised nature of CoSA strengthens the volunteers’ motivation. Volunteering with CoSA meant going against the generally accepted attitude that individuals convicted for sexual offences should remain in prison. Thus, the participants felt they were making a difference by volunteering with a population that no one else wanted anything to do with.

The Faith-Based Motivation has subthemes which illustrated that volunteering was putting their Christianity into practice (Silverman & D. Wilson, 2002; Tewksbury & Dabney, 2004). Further, the volunteers worked with the marginalised group because many of Jesus’ principles and bible philosophies relate to being non-judgmental, inclusive, and working with the marginalised (Luke 6:37-42; Matthew 25:42-46; Proverbs 14:21, The New King James Version). The volunteers were also motivated by a God-given calling (Tewksbury & S. C. Collins, 2005). Lastly, providing a counter-motivation, a number of the participants were motivated to offer an alternative to the predominantly religious circles in New Zealand. Consistent with research about volunteers in the correctional setting, most volunteers in NZ circles were religious (Tewksbury & Dabney, 2004); providing an alternative to religious volunteers maintains a balance of individuals in a circle and offers the core member different world views.
Implications

Recruiting volunteers is a significant operational challenge for CoSA (R. J. Wilson et al., 2005; van Rensburg, 2012), thus developing a greater understanding as to why individuals choose to volunteer with a population that many would rather never leave prison is fundamental to being able to identify potential groups to target recruitment. Attitudes that support restorative justice can be shaped by personal traits and experiences (Souza & Dhami, 2008), thus affecting motivation to volunteer with restorative justice initiatives such as CoSA. The implication is that values may be a useful criterion in volunteer recruitment and screening. In New Zealand, the predominant method of recruiting volunteers is via church groups. However, beyond church groups there are organisations that support restorative justice frameworks, such as JustSpeak in New Zealand (JustSpeak, 2017), through which advertising could occur. Using a values-based approach to recruit, as well as emphasising community safety served by volunteering with CoSA, broadens the scope for advertising CoSA, increases the pool of potential volunteers, and highlights the civic contribution made by volunteering with CoSA.

Limitations

There are limitations that should be considered when examining the findings of this study. Firstly, as with all qualitative research, emphasis was placed on achieving trustworthiness and credibility about the subjects of the study, rather than asserting absolute truth (Hammersley, 1995; Morrow, 2005); that is, the findings of the study are not expected to be replicated, rather they should reflect the volunteers’ experiences conveyed in the interviews. Further, each study has unique variables according to the context of the study, and the participants lived experiences (Morrow, 2005), therefore, statistical generalisations should not be attempted from this kind of small-scale, qualitative study, and there is no expectation that the findings will be replicated in other situations (Schofield, 1993). However, it is hoped
that this study will inform an understanding of some of the possible motivations that might be influencing volunteers working with people who have sexually offended in similar contexts.

**Conclusion**

Why would anyone want to volunteer to spend time with individuals convicted for sex offences when many would prefer they spend the rest of their lives in prison? The answers to this question illustrate the complex and multifaceted nature of the motivation to volunteer. The volunteers were motivated by individual reasons such as putting their faith into action, as well as larger, societal reasons such as creating an avenue to shift the discourse away from punitive policies to restorative orientated strategies for criminal justice. The CoSA framework responds to sexual offending in a way that addresses risk and safety in the community, whilst humanising the core member. The volunteers are an essential part of the continuation of CoSA and the present study has illustrated that while their motivation to volunteer is complex and varied, their goal remains the same. Study Two and Three explore volunteers’ experiences, both in general and of operational aspects of CoSA. These studies aim to understand training and support required for an effective circle.
Study Two: Volunteer Experiences

Aims

Study two aimed to examine the experiences of CoSA volunteers in New Zealand. The research aims to contribute to extant research by examining the experiences of CoSA volunteers in New Zealand where CoSA has received mixed government support. Further, the experiences of a core member reoffending or being recalled into prison were explored. A qualitative approach was adopted to explore the everyday and ongoing experiences of the volunteers in an in-depth manner. Given the exploratory nature of the research, no hypotheses were generated.

Findings

Findings are presented according to the a priori categories “volunteer general experiences” and “re-offence/recall experiences”. Main themes and subthemes identified are described in detail in the following sections.

Volunteer General Experiences

Most of the volunteers described their involvement with CoSA positively and were eager to share their experiences. Two main themes relating to volunteers’ general experiences were identified: “Life inside a circle” and “Life outside a circle”. Each theme incorporated a number of subthemes that are explored in depth. Refer to Table 4 for the list of main themes and subthemes.
### Table 4

*Main themes and subthemes for volunteers’ general experiences*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main theme</th>
<th>Life inside a circle</th>
<th>Life outside a circle</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subthemes:</td>
<td>You can’t have one without the other: Risk management and social support</td>
<td>Volunteering in a risk averse society</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Developing relationships</td>
<td>Justifying my involvement in CoSA to others</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Different roles, same goals</td>
<td>Confronting long held stereotypes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Questioning the role of religion</td>
<td>Involved in making a difference</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Uncertainty over CoSA’s future in New Zealand</td>
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### Theme 1: Life Inside a Circle

The participants all described their experiences within their circle in a generally positive way. The participants had to navigate offering support while ensuring risk factors were appropriately managed, developing different relationships within their circle, and seeing how different volunteers took on different roles. However, some participants were cautious about the number of religious volunteers in NZ CoSA circles.

**Subtheme 1: You can’t have one without the other: Risk management and social support.** While volunteers were cognisant of the distinct concepts of support and accountability within CoSA, the majority of participants explained that in practice, support and accountability were not separate concepts. Rather, participants emphasised the notion that support and accountability can and should be practiced concurrently, as illustrated by the following quote: “Here’s the thing about providing support...and holding him accountable, they're not two different things” (Participant 13).
The volunteers believed that outside the context of a CoSA and the supportive environment that a circle provides, encouraging the core member to be accountable may not be as successful. The volunteers believed that a sense of accountability evolved organically with the growing and strengthening relationship that being a part of a CoSA can foster. That is, accountability is a natural outcome of the supportive relationship, and likewise, a supportive relationship comes from the accountability inherent to being a member of a CoSA. The volunteers described how once they had established a strong relationship, they felt that they had developed the credibility to comment on core members’ decision making and behaviour:

The accountability comes down to establishing a strong, trusting relationship where we do get the information we need to be able to see where he’s at…it kind of ties hand in hand because the support gives us a platform to build that relationship, and the accountability comes with us staying vigilant and also checking. So actively checking if things are an issue and potentially challenging him on his behaviour…and for the relationship to be strong enough so that it can survive that. (Participant 13)

The volunteers explained that they had to establish a method of maintaining contact without being intrusive, be able to question their core member without being accusatory, and allow them the freedom to develop a productive life. One participant clearly described the balance between accountability and suspicion, ‘It’s definitely about asking questions…it’s so interesting…how do I differentiate between asking a question to create a space of accountability versus asking a question as a really suspicious act that’s quite distrustful’ (Participant 17). The participants described that accountability did not only come from the volunteers, the core members’ self-accountability was paramount to an effective CoSA. The participants believed that working collaboratively formed the foundation to an effective circle.
**Subtheme 2: Developing relationships.** All the participants described how they believed that a major strength of CoSA was the focus on relationships. The participants described that the relationship between the volunteers and core member differed to that between a parolee and a parole officer because CoSA did not have the same institutional arrangement; that is, the dynamic within a circle allowed for a mutual relationship to develop that minimised the power difference between the core member and volunteers. Many of the volunteers became good friends with their core member and maintained contact after the required commitment time post-release. Most of the participants described that their core member, and other individuals who had committed similar crimes, often had no family or friends to support them in the community. For many of the volunteers, the friendship that developed was a natural part of spending time with their core member, but also a fundamental process of CoSA. The following quote illustrates the importance of friendship in a CoSA and in the reintegration process, ‘he is a good friend and I see that as being really important…a really important part of his reintegration into society is to have people that he can trust and rely on and feel comfortable with’ (Participant 3).

As well as developing friendships with the core members, the volunteers often developed strong friendships with the other volunteers. Developing a strong relationship with the other volunteer members meant that if issues arose with their core member they were comfortable with talking to another member of their circle to offer or receive support. The friendships developed in a CoSA entailed a significant amount of communication and honesty, both between the volunteers themselves, and the core member with the volunteers. The volunteers all supported and communicated with each other following difficult conversations with their core member to minimise the risk of manipulation and enhance their ability to hold their core member accountable. The participants described that their ability to communicate confidently with the other volunteers was affected by the strength of the
relationships in the circle; some participants described that their circle was very close and cohesive, whilst others explained that their circle still needed some work to strengthen the relationships and ensure everyone was consistent, ‘It’s based on relationships; the whole thing is based on relationships and they’re either good or bad and that's put pretty simply’ (Participant 5).

Subtheme 3: Different roles, same goals. Often the circles were structured whereby the circle had a leader, co-leader, and someone who kept minutes of the meetings; the volunteers described that they naturally fulfilled roles within the structure created. That is, some volunteers were happy to lead meetings and others were happy to let others lead. The volunteers described differing approaches to providing support depending on available time, their relationship with the core member, and what they believed they brought to the circle. For example, some volunteers were more comfortable with providing practical support such as supplying clothes or appliances; whilst others were more comfortable with providing emotional support and friendship. The volunteers described that the diverse nature of a circle enabled the volunteers to balance what the other volunteers brought to the circle. The following quote illustrates how this participant feels more comfortable offering emotional support compared to practical support:

A lot of it for me is hanging out and checking that he’s ok emotionally…if there is any practical bits and pieces I can do I'm not very good at ‘doing’…more of the talking and just that kind of people stuff. (Participant 15)

Some volunteers developed a friendship with the core member, whilst others felt they did not need to be overly friendly with their core member. Indeed, some volunteers distanced themselves personally from core members, and treated their involvement with CoSA as a mentoring relationship. The difference in the approaches appeared to work well as the
‘mentor’ and the ‘friend’ could play different but supportive and complementary roles in the circle.

Most of the volunteers commented on the dynamics of the circle they were involved with. The participants described how different all the volunteers’ backgrounds were, and they believed that being involved with CoSA fostered a lot of diverse discussion. Most of the participants expressed their amazement that a group of people with different backgrounds were united by a single goal. The participants believed that their varied life experiences and different ways for dealing with issues created diverse and adaptable circles; the following quote illustrates the diverse nature of the circles:

We’ve all become friends, we’re a very diverse group, hugely diverse; I mean our interests are like chalk and cheese, our lives are like chalk and cheese. And so, it must be incredibly interesting for him, and he’s very involved with all of us and I just think that’s wonderful. Yea, I think he’s lucky. (Participant 3).

Subtheme 4: Questioning the role of religion. Whilst the volunteers commented on the diversity of circles, several participants mentioned the overrepresentation of religious volunteers. Further, the participants described issues that had arisen between different volunteers regarding negative attitudes toward core members based on their sexual orientation. The volunteers felt that being a member of CoSA necessitated that the volunteers were open-minded and non-judgmental, and they had felt uncomfortable when they had been confronted by judgmental attitudes toward their core member because he was gay. Some volunteers shared that they had been asked to volunteer specifically with core members who were gay because of some of the issues with a few volunteers not wanting to volunteer with the gay community. The following quote illustrates the disruption to a circle caused by negative attitudes:
The two people who dropped off the group was because they had some rather pointed views when it came to things like homosexuality and ah...I guess the nature of it which...definitely not a good fit for the core member...but also the rest of the group was kind of a bit...a little bit unsettled by some of the beliefs. (Participant 13)

The volunteers believed that having faith was a positive and often important part of their core members’ lives. However, some of the participants felt that religion created a barrier between some religious volunteers and core members who did not want to participate in a religion. The non-religious volunteers described feeling that there seemed to be a certain level of pressure to attend church events from a couple of the more religious volunteers. The following quote illustrates the participant’s concern with religious dominated circles and the possible pressure felt by the core members:

I don’t think anybody should be made to feel excluded if they're not a part of a religion, just like religious people shouldn’t be excluded from things...but I think you're always going to be prone to a type of pressure with that sort of thing, whether it is direct or not. I think maybe some of the guys inside would feel like maybe they need to associate with that religion in order to get the help...that would be just a gut feeling. (Participant 15)

**Theme 2: Life Outside a Circle**

Volunteering with CoSA was not without its challenges; participants described their experiences of volunteering in a risk averse climate where they often had to justify their involvement with CoSA and confront stereotypes. However, all participants experienced the value of CoSA and were satisfied with the contribution they were making to their community. Finally, participants explained how the core member absconding had affected their circle and core member.
Subtheme 1: Volunteering in a risk averse society. The participants described that they felt that the broader correctional and societal perspective was to be overly cautious and restrictive in the approach towards reintegration. The participants felt that in general, there was more concern with short term community safety compared to ensuring a safe re-entry into the community for long term successful reintegration. As illustrated by the following quote, the participants felt that the cautious approach could potentially hinder the core member’s ability to become an integrated member of the community, “they are more concerned, I suppose, about community safety and they don’t want him in a situation where there may be an opportunity to reoffend” (Participant 4). However, all participants were understanding of the wider socio-political context that criminal justice is practiced within and acknowledged that caution was unavoidable due to the population they were volunteering with. The participants acknowledged that community safety is extremely important and that being overly cautious was a way to mitigate possible re-offences, “I guess they have to sort of cover themselves because they have had a few people who have stuffed up on them, and they are left red faced and answerable to all sorts of people” (Participant 4).

Subtheme 2: Justifying my involvement in CoSA to others. As a volunteer with CoSA it is inevitable that at some stage, family members, friends, or members of the public will ask questions or want to know more about CoSA. Many volunteers were hesitant when explaining to other community members what they did with regards to CoSA; only a few actually explained that CoSA was focused specifically on individuals convicted for sexual offences. Instead, they explained in general terms of volunteering in the prison, as illustrated by the following quote, “they just see it as quote ‘prison ministry’ really, the detail of how we go about it isn’t really widely known” (Participant 5). Further, the participants were all acutely aware of how (un)receptive the public could be when talking about individuals convicted for child sex offences. Gauging how each person would react to information about
CoSA defined exactly what they would say, with many volunteers never offering more information than the bare minimum. The following quote illustrates how the participants assessed the possible reactions of people before talking about CoSA, “It’s so politically sensitive and it’s really a sensitive issue for a lot of people…so if they're not comfortable talking about or I don’t think they're going to be receptive, I generally don’t get into it” (Participant 12).

Many volunteers found that when they did explain what CoSA involved, people were more understanding and wanted to know more. The volunteers were happy to talk about CoSA to people who wanted to know more; however, a number of participants shared that explaining what CoSA was often turned into reaffirming confidence in the criminal justice system. The volunteers explained that often after briefly describing CoSA to a community member, they would assume that the core member would have few parole conditions because they were in a CoSA. The participants described that many people they spoke to felt that individuals who had sexually offended could not change, and if they were to be released, they needed very strict rules. Thus, the volunteers found themselves reassuring community members that their core member had been through treatment, was monitored by the Department of Corrections, and still had strict parole conditions they had to adhere to. This participant described how he would often end up reassuring people that CoSA did not mean absolute freedom for the core member:

It’s like they need to hear that he's got all these rules that he has to meet … and so they need to hear that he's still actually, like he might be outside but he still actually has got a lot of rules and regulations … so it’s kind of like you have to reassure people a whole lot about all that sort of stuff before you get to the bit you want to say which is, I actually think he is kind of worth it. (Participant 15)
Not all volunteers were hesitant about explaining what CoSA involved and gladly shared their involvement with CoSA, and specifically that they volunteered with people who have sexually offended. The following quote shows that other peoples’ judgements fuelled how this participant shared their involvement with CoSA:

Where I think other people are just being really prejudiced or violent or something I’ll be heaps more confrontational and challenging and like really push them because I’m like ‘why do you get to think this and not have your ideas tested?’ (Participant 17)

The reactions from the public, once the volunteers had explained what was involved with CoSA, were mixed. Some participants received very negative responses, for example family members disowning them or neighbours avoiding them. Other participants received positive responses whereby some people they had spoken to wanted to become involved with CoSA. However, the majority of responses were relatively neutral, as illustrated by the following quote: “I've explained it to them and they've said, ‘look its great what you’re doing, I could never do it’,” (Participant 8). However, due to some negative responses, a couple of the volunteers had changed their approach and how they explained CoSA:

I’m a bit more cautious now about who I say it to, so originally, I used to talk about it a lot, but now I’m a bit more cautious, I sort of suss [infer or intuitively figure out] the person out before I talk. (Participant 10)

CoSA is a big commitment and often takes up a lot of the volunteers’ time. The participants who did not share what was involved with CoSA with their family and friends described how they had to compartmentalise their life. That is, they kept CoSA separate from other aspects of their lives. The separation of a big part of their life led some of the volunteers to feel quite isolated as a result of their involvement with CoSA, “It feels slightly odd...like I feel like I'm doing something really important, but I don’t talk about it” (Participant 15).
Subtheme 3: Confronting Long Held Stereotypes. For some of the volunteers, the initial thought of joining CoSA was quite confronting, and before they could commit to a circle they had to reflect on some long-held beliefs. The participants described that prior to meeting their core member and other people in prison, it was easy to keep this population as an abstract ‘other’, or dehumanised, with their only source of information being from the media. Thus, they described how their first meeting with their core member challenged what they initially believed about the population. The following participant described their first encounter with a man who had sexually offended:

I can recall the first time I went in and I met the first prisoner and I shook his hand and I thought “oh, I hope I don’t catch something, I better go and wash” and that's the feeling that you have....but immediately after, or shortly after that though I met two other prisoners and told them who I was and what I was trying to do and their answer to me was “for god’s sake, get out there and tell them that we’re not all old men with long raincoats and pockets full of lollies” [candy] and they're not… I do not condone for one second anything that any of these guys have done, but there is a great variance. (Participant 8)

The volunteers shared that through CoSA they had learnt about the large intragroup variation of behaviour patterns, risk level, offence profiles, and motivations of persons who have sexually offended. For most of the participants, volunteering with CoSA led to a deeper understanding of the issues surrounding sexual offending, stereotypes, and opened their eyes to how the public views this population:

I think having actually worked in the prison system made a big difference to me – made me realise that prisoners are people. I think until then I had had the attitude, which I think a lot of us have…ah you know…‘he’s committed a crime, lock him up, throw away the key’. (Participant 3)
**Subtheme 4: Involved in making a difference.** The participants believed that the focus on relationships, support, and future thinking, positions CoSA as an inherently positive framework. As such, all the participants believed that CoSA was an effective framework for reintegration. The participants described their satisfaction with being able to make a difference to an individual core member, as well as contributing to creating a safer community. The volunteers believed that having a group that the core member could rely on could be the difference between a successful reintegration and an individual struggling to find their place in the community. The participants explained that having a group of supportive individuals for one core member showed the core member that the volunteers believed he/she could successfully desist from crime and reintegrate into the community, thus providing more incentive to live a productive life. One participant described how the community and future orientated nature of circles influenced their core member:

> I think it was really great for him to see that people did care…and I think that’s been really effective in the way that he sees himself, like in the community I think he sees a way forward now, that he might not have before. And he’s got people he will be able to turn to…obviously that’s beneficial and I think he knows that to. It’s given him a real reason to be enthusiastic about things and really hopeful for the future.

(Participant 12)

The participants described how they believed that the obvious stigma associated with a sexual offence meant that CoSA was essential to their core member’s reintegration, ‘society gives you that label, and the label is branded heaviest by those people who offend’ (Participant 3). The participants acknowledged how difficult gaining suitable employment or accommodation could be for someone with a sexual offence. Further, the participants believed that it was difficult for their core member to create an alternative identity when they were seen first and foremost as a ‘sex offender’. Many of the participants commented on the
importance of living a meaningful and ‘good life’ believing the strengths-based support offered by the circle was fundamental to maintaining the identity shift away from crime. The participants believed that the ongoing support from a circle gave their core member a safe space to foster a productive and crime-free life. After having volunteered with CoSA, the participants believed that a framework such as CoSA would be effective for other populations of offenders: “I was looking at it and thinking wow this good, not just for sexual offenders but for other offenders…um and I could see this happening I think…we’ve got to support it” (Participant 9).

Subtheme 5: Uncertainty over CoSA’s future in New Zealand. As previously described, over the course of the present research the situation where a core member absconded while on temporary release ultimately led to the CoSA funding not being renewed. Half the interviews took place after the core member had absconded.

The participants shared that they were disheartened about what they saw happening to CoSA. Following the event, participants described how temporary releases and other reintegrative initiatives, such as work-to-release, were suspended. The participants explained that the biggest issue they had faced was the suspension of the reintegrative initiatives that had been previously available to the core members still in prison. The volunteers believed that the temporary releases were an important part of the reintegration process, and without completing the required number of temporary releases, the core members were precluded from release, “they would ask us if he had met the conditions for release, but the conditions were temporary releases and stuff so…it was an impossible situation” (Participant 12). Further, the participants who had core members still in prison, described how insecure their core members were feeling now that their opportunity for release was increasingly difficult. The following quote shows the disruption to the release plan for a core member still in prison, “When things were taken away, release to work and temporary releases, that was a huge
knock for my guy…for the core member…so that was a couple of dark months for us as a group” (Participant 12).

Some of the participants explained that it was difficult to support their core member when they did not know how long they would be in prison or how long CoSA would continue. Further, the participants also felt that there was a limit to the reassurance they could offer their core member, when they could not make concrete plans regarding temporary releases and their eventual release. The effect of not knowing what was going on with the inquiry process, and the uncertainty about the release date for their core member culminated with some the participants feeling that they had lost some of the connection they had with their core member. However, the volunteers all wanted to continue with their core member and worked hard to offer them the support they needed whilst still in prison. The following quote illustrates how one volunteer continued to offer support while their core member was uncertain about their future:

We talk about things with him and try to encourage him to…I don’t need to encourage him to stay positive because he hears that all the time and it’s like a default that he has to stay positive but…so yea I guess I’m just there to be understanding and listen to him and I try to plan the future with him but it’s kind of a bit bleaker now. (Participant 12)

Experiences of Core Member Recalls or Reoffending

Several participants shared that their core member had been recalled due to parole violations or displaying offending-related behaviour, and a few shared that their core member had reoffended and was back in prison. CoSA is a small community in New Zealand so all the volunteers knew the people involved in the circles where the core member had been recalled or had reoffended. Three main themes relating to core member recall or re-offence
experiences were identified, “The emotional toll of a recall or re-offence”, “Commitment to support”, and, “A recall is not a sign of CoSA failing”.

**Theme 1: The Emotional Toll of a Recall or Re-Offence.**

The participants that experienced a recall or a re-offence committed by their core member described the experience as an extremely stressful time. The level of involvement in the recall differed whereby some of the volunteers actively worked with the probation officer up to the point of recall, while other volunteers felt completely surprised. Following the recall, the volunteers described feeling emotionally fatigued; this was in part caused by the large amount of guilt that they felt. The participants felt that they had failed their core member because he was back in prison; for example, some participants felt that their circle had not adequately held their core member accountable to prevent being recalled. Some of the participants shared that they felt distressed because they felt they should have done more to prevent their core member from being recalled, “I was really upset about it...I felt I had failed the core member… I just couldn’t get passed that feeling that we had somehow failed him” (Participant 11). To add to the stress of the recall, some of the participants described how their core member blamed their circle for their recall and return to prison, “he saw it as the circles fault that he was inside” (Participant 11).

The stress, emotional fatigue, and guilt was particularly acute for the participants whose core member had reoffended; the participants explained that one of the key principles of CoSA was ‘no more victims’, and because their circle had ended up with a new victim they felt like they had failed, “This is hard because you know...there’s someone been offended against and another guy in prison” (Participant 12).

The participants also feared that the re-offence would harm the trust and confidence that was being developed for CoSA. The volunteers stated many times that they believed CoSA was an effective framework for reintegration, thus when the core member reoffended
the volunteers were devastated. The participants described different ways of coping with the
guilt they felt; for example, trying to find a reason within their circle for the re-offence.
However, in doing so, some of the volunteers looked for someone to blame and turned on the
other volunteers in their circle in an attempt to create accountability. The following quote
illustrates a participant’s experience following a core member reoffending:

One of the circle members in that guy’s circle has really...almost turned on the circle
and said, ‘You know we’re at fault…we should be in prison as well…not only
him…because we didn’t do this or that or the other’. (Participant 5)

The participants also shared that upon reflection, they felt that their circle had not
connected well, had experienced conflict amongst themselves, and were not supporting each
other to hold the core member accountable. At the time, they felt that the circle was managing
okay, but a clash of personalities amongst the volunteers meant they felt they did not offer
adequate support or accountability. The participants explained that the dynamic between the
volunteers in a circle can be positive or detrimental to the success of the circle. Most of the
participants described that their circle worked as a cohesive unit to both support and hold
their core member accountable. However, some of the participants explained that there were
differences regarding what accountability meant; for example, some participants thought a
few volunteers were being too intrusive, whilst others thought some volunteers were not
utilising the concept of accountability at all. The following quote illustrates some conflict
experienced in a circle due to different views of accountability which led to the participant
feeling like they did not present a united group the core member:

Now, holding him accountable was tricky…in that some views were different than the
other circle members…so there was conflict within the circle…and one of the...one of
the rules we were given before we started is to not to let the core member dominate
how things go but that was something our core member did very well. (Participant 1)
A couple of the participants still had lingering guilt that their core member had reoffended, however the participants shared that they had accepted that they were not at fault, and believed that their core member is responsible for their own behaviour. The participants shared that while they would do everything possible, within reason, to support their core member to not reoffend, it was ultimately up to the core member to choose their behaviour.

**Theme 2: Commitment to Support.**

Despite the stress, guilt, and emotional fatigue felt by the volunteers, all the participants were committed to continuing their support of their core member. A couple of the participants described how initially they were going to walk away from CoSA, however, after some thought they decided they were firm in their commitment to both supporting their core member and supporting their fellow volunteers. The following quote illustrates how one participant continued their support because they did not want to let down the other volunteers in the circle:

> When he got recalled to prison it was really a question of, 'good luck, you’ve blown it’, sort of thing. But the rest of the group wanted to keep going…we’ve all got different skill sets so…pulling out would be let[ting] down the rest of the circle.

(Participant 2)

Whilst a couple of the volunteers were initially hesitant with continuing their support, the other volunteers’ support was unwavering. The participants shared that they firmly believed in CoSA as a reintegrative framework and when they had agreed to become a CoSA volunteer, they understood the risks involved. The participants said that even though they had not anticipated that their core member would ever be recalled or reoffend, they signed up to support their core member and they were committed to continuing. The following quote illustrates the unwavering support of some of the participants:
When he got recalled to the prison we were asked to disband … and I said you know, “If we’re going to support this guy, we’re going to support him through thick and thin. Sure, we’re disappointed, sure we feel we have failed somewhere along the line, but if he’s willing then we are...there for him”. (Participant 11)

**Theme 3: A Recall is Not Sign of CoSA Failing.**

Despite the emotional toll of a recall and the feelings of guilt, the participants stated that a recall could be seen as a sign of failure. However, the participants all shared that they believed a recall was also a sign that CoSA was working. The participants explained that identifying triggers, behaviour patterns, and through working with probation they were able to prevent potential reoffending, even if it meant their core member had to be recalled back into prison. The following quote illustrates the idea that a recall is not a failure because they avoided a possible re-offence:

> The circle had to have been effective because the aims of circles is for a safe community and no more victims. One, we had no more victims, and two, we recognised manipulative and controlling behaviour before it could lead to grooming. (Participant 11)

The following quote also illustrates the idea that a recall shows CoSA is working because not only did they avoid further victims, through the process of the recall they identified behaviours and attitudes that the core member still needed to work on.

> The fact that he got recalled first time round…you could sort of say, some might say ‘well the circle failed, didn’t it?’ Well, I actually think that the circle worked because it brought out certain behaviours within him which hadn’t been sufficiently addressed. (Participant 2)

The participants whose core member reoffended felt that although they believed their circle had failed, CoSA as a program was not a failure. Further, they still believed that CoSA
was a beneficial framework for reintegrating not only people who had sexually offended, but other offender populations. These participants believed it was essential that their circle functioning, processes, and relationships were examined and then given a chance to reflect on what they did wrong and what they did right. In doing so, they felt that their circle could be used as an educational tool for future training and support strategies. Although they believed that the re-offence was not their fault, they also believed that as a circle they could have done some things differently and that recalls/re-offending provided an opportunity for reflection: “It’s also meant that the circle has had to review what we did, what we didn’t do at the time, whether we should have been a bit stronger” (Participant 5).

Discussion

Investigating volunteer experiences offers insight into both the positive and negative aspects of volunteering with CoSA in NZ. Volunteer general experiences were described according to “life inside a circle” and “life outside a circle”. Experiences of a recall/re-offence highlight the seemingly contradictory experiences of some volunteers whereby they felt a considerable amount of stress and guilt, while still being committed to support their core member.

Volunteer General Experiences

The “life inside a circle” theme has subthemes which illustrate the complex and adaptable nature of a circle. The “you can’t have one without the other: risk management and social support” subtheme highlights the ongoing negotiation required amongst the volunteers, as well as with the core member. Further, consistent with research presented by Fox (2016), the findings of the present study explained that the concepts of accountability and support should be practiced concurrently. Further, the relationships developed through the CoSA process enable the volunteers to comment on the core member’s behaviour and hold them accountable while remaining supportive.
While the volunteers commented on the diverse nature of the circles, the role of religion was questioned. Faith can play an important role in the reintegration process; previous research has noted that religion can provide a support network and access to pro-social peers, offer moral guidance and opportunity to seek forgiveness, and help bring meaning and psychological comfort (Kewley, Beech, & Harkins, 2015; Kewley, Larkin, Harkins, & Beech, 2016). However, findings from the present research also indicated that the pressure to endorse a particular faith may be counter-productive to the process of CoSA. Further, judgmental attitudes associated with some religious beliefs created uncomfortable situations for some volunteers and alienated core members. The volunteers in New Zealand are primarily recruited from faith communities (van Rensburg, 2012) and a number of the volunteers were motivated to offer a different perspective to religious volunteers. Findings from the current study highlight that it is important to find a balance of perspectives as a reliance on religious volunteers could be detrimental to core members who may feel alienated by religious beliefs.

The subthemes within the main theme, “life outside a circle”, highlighted both the challenges and the rewards that the volunteers face as a result of being involved with CoSA. The volunteers described having to navigate explaining to others what CoSA involves, volunteering with a stigmatised population, and working in a risk averse culture. Participants were met with the reality that many community members would rather persons convicted for sex crimes never leave prison, yet alone be supported (e.g., Craig, 2005; Kernsmith et al., 2007; Levenson, Brannon et al., 2007; Levenson, D’Amora et al., 2007), which meant volunteers ended up reassuring others that being in a circle did not mean absolute freedom for the core member and he/she did still have restrictions. Although the volunteers were positive about their involvement with CoSA, many would gauge how (un)receptive others would be to the framework before sharing details about their involvement with CoSA. Consistent with
previous research, the cautious approach to telling other people about CoSA suggests 
volunteers separate their work with CoSA and compartmentalise it as a protective mechanism 
(McCartan, 2016). Compartmentalisation may offer short-term benefits, however, as a long-
term approach, the implications for the volunteers may be negative. A significant amount of 
time is required of the volunteers, especially in the early stage of release. Keeping separate 
such a big part of their life has implications for when stressful events arise both inside and 
outside of CoSA whereby the volunteers may find themselves lacking adequate support 
outside of CoSA.

**Experiencing a Recall or Re-offence**

The three themes identified relating to the experiences of a core member recall or re-
offence emphasised that volunteering with CoSA can be very challenging. The themes 
highlight the different feelings of failure associated with a recall or re-offence; for example, 
the volunteers felt they had failed their core member following a recall because they felt 
personally responsible for keeping them out of prison. Further, the volunteers felt they had 
failed the community following a re-offence because one of the main tenets of CoSA is 
having no more victims. The volunteers had to deal with the complex situation with their core 
member, as well as their own emotions. The dichotomy of emotions described created a 
situation whereby they felt upset that their core member was recalled, or were personally 
appalled at the re-offence, and at the same time they were committed to providing support 
through CoSA. The volunteers made it clear that they did not condone what their core 
member had done that resulted in the recall or re-offence. Further, the volunteers explained 
that their support for CoSA had not changed and they maintained their view of their core 
member as a fellow human being in need of support to transition from an offending identity 
to a non-offending identity.
The current study is the first to explore volunteer experiences of recalls or re-offences. Unlike the professional members of CoSA, or therapists working with individuals convicted with sexual offences, the volunteers do not have strict professional boundaries or supervision requirements that must be maintained. The themes identified emphasise the need for appropriate supportive follow up to situations where the core member is recalled or reoffends, as well as ongoing support during other challenging times. Findings highlighted the importance of preparing the volunteers for the possibility of a recall/re-offence. The demanding nature of being a CoSA volunteer necessitates adequate training and preparation for challenging situations, as well as ongoing support.

**Implications**

Volunteers’ involvement in CoSA provides a platform for discussion about sexual violence prevention in the community. CoSA as a restorative justice approach is inconsistent with prevailing public discourse around sex offending, for example, the focus on labelling and stigmatising language used for individuals who have sexually offended, or the wide support for punitive policies (Harris and Socia, 2016). Volunteer experiences illustrate the value of restorative justice initiatives and community driven frameworks. Further, the success of CoSA, shown through the reduced risk of reoffending and promotion of desistance (e.g., Duwe, 2012; R. J. Wilson et al., 2009), demonstrates that restorative justice can be used effectively in a risk averse society in a way that empowers communities to include ex-offenders and build social support networks rather than reject and isolate them.

**Limitations**

A limitation of the current study could be the context in which the study was conducted – at the same time, the context could be an advantage. It is possible that the core member absconding while on temporary release during the course of this research might have impacted what information or how much information the volunteers divulged. In contrast, the
publicity surrounding the absconding and impact on CoSA could have motivated some volunteers to participate to have their voices heard. The latter explanation seems more likely, given participants’ eagerness to talk and the richness of data obtained.

Conclusion

Working with individuals convicted for sexual offences presents numerous challenges, not least working with one of the most stigmatised groups in society. Volunteers are crucial to the continuation of CoSA, yet despite CoSA’s steady expansion, few studies have investigated volunteers’ experiences of working with a population that many in society would rather never leave prison. In NZ, where CoSA was been met with mixed government support and the initial pilot project halted following a core member absconding, volunteer experiences can provide valuable insight into maintaining model fidelity. Enhancing our understanding of volunteer experiences will help inform training and support needs, and ultimately the continuation of CoSA in NZ and around the globe. Therefore, Study Three will examine in-depth the volunteers’ experiences of training and support received in NZ.
Study Three: Operational Experiences

Aims

Study Three aimed to extend extant research by examining volunteer experiences of the operational aspects of CoSA in NZ using a mixed-method approach, and was guided by the following research questions: (1) How did volunteers experience the training and support received? And, (2) What helps a circle to function effectively? Given the exploratory nature of the research, no hypotheses were generated.

Findings

Quantitative Findings: Perceived Support and Satisfaction with Training.

Descriptive statistics were used to examine the overall level of support volunteers received from different people involved in CoSA, their overall satisfaction with training, and their interest in continuing their involvement with CoSA. Participants indicated the level of support they received and their satisfaction with training on a scale ranging from 1 (no support at all/not satisfied at all) to 7 (high level of support/highly satisfied). As shown in Table 5, participants indicated a moderate to high level of support from the other volunteers in their circle ($M = 5.17$, $SD = 1.51$) and CoSA coordinators/professional members ($M = 4.87$, $SD = 2.14$). Whereas they indicated a low level of support received from Police involved with their core member ($M = 2$, $SD = 1.26$). Experiences of support received from family and friends of the core member and the core member’s probation officer(s) were mixed.

Overall, participants were generally satisfied ($M = 4.65$, $SD = 1.75$) with the training they received, and no participants reported that they were “not satisfied at all”. Just over half were moderately to highly satisfied with the training they received, whilst about a third of participants were moderately to slightly dissatisfied with the training they received. Table 5
details the level of perceived support from each group the volunteers had contact with as a part of CoSA and participants’ overall satisfaction with training. Finally, 83% of the participants stated that they were very likely to continue volunteering with CoSA for the next 6 months. However, only 52% of participants stated that they were likely to continue volunteering for the next 2 years.

Table 5
Participants’ perceived level of support indicated on the online questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of support received</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CoSA Coordinators</td>
<td>4.87</td>
<td>2.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probation Officers</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>1.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family/Friends of Core Member</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>2.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Circle Volunteers</td>
<td>5.17</td>
<td>1.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family/Friends of Volunteer</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>1.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall satisfaction with training</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. A higher mean indicates a higher level of support perceived by the participants.

Qualitative Findings: An Examination of Operational Aspects of CoSA

Qualitative findings are presented according to the a priori categories “experiences of training and support” and “what makes for an effective circle?” Main themes identified for each a priori category are listed in Table 6 and described in detail in the following sections.

Experiences of Training and Support Received.

Participants were split regarding whether they thought the training and support they received was adequate. Four main themes were identified that related to volunteers’ experiences of training and support received: Some participants believed that the training adequately prepared them to work effectively in a circle (theme 1: “The training and support was adequate…it’s what kind of held it all together”), whereas other participants thought that
the training was inadequate (theme 2: “The training and support was inadequate…I felt like I was floundering”). Further, some participants believed that whilst the training sessions were satisfactory, the training content and the amount of support provided was sometimes lacking (theme 3: “It was good…but there could have been more”). Finally, there were participants that believed that CoSA was based on common sense and experience, and too much training could undermine the natural development of reciprocal relationships (theme 4: CoSA is about “common sense, building rapport, and adapting”).

Table 6
Main themes for volunteer experiences of training and support and what they experienced as contributing to an effective circle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experiences of training and support</th>
<th>What makes for an effective circle?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main themes:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The training and support was adequate…it’s what kind of held it all together”</td>
<td>Training sets the foundation for an effective circle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The training and support was inadequate…I felt like I was floundering”</td>
<td>The core member can make or break a circle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It was good…but there could have been more”</td>
<td>Selecting the right mix of volunteers for a cohesive circle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CoSA is about “common sense, building rapport, and adapting”</td>
<td>Communication keeps a circle running smoothly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Circle coordinators are essential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Setting boundaries to avoid accidental collusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Study Three – Operational Experiences | 81

Theme 1: “The Training and Support was Adequate…it’s what Kind of Held it all Together”

About a third of the participants thought the training was adequate and they struggled to think how it could be improved. These participants explained that the training prepared them for their role in the circle, effectively communicated the CoSA philosophy and approach, and opened their eyes to the realities of reintegration. Further, participants said that the training provided them with understanding of the criminal justice system in New Zealand, procedural information (e.g., rules regarding visiting the prison, adhering to parole conditions etc.), and insight into the experiences of being institutionalised. All the participants said that the disclosure session with the core member was a vital part of training. Most of the participants said they did not need to know too many details about the core member’s index offence, however, they needed the core member to be transparent about their behaviour leading up the offence, their triggers and coping strategies, as well as what their core member needed from the volunteers during a stressful period. The following quote highlights the commonly held notion that knowing their core member’s specific offending-related behaviours enabled the volunteers to hold them accountable or question them in a situation that may seem harmless to someone who had not been informed of certain behaviours:

He listed all the danger areas for himself, he had to give his personal statement which told us all about himself his offending, his modus operandi and what danger signals there were such as boredom, withdrawal, argumentativeness etc...and you know, kind of childish behaviour and so on, and we recognised a lot of these and we could pull him up on them that’s part of the accountability thing. (Participant 11)

Many participants said that support was available if they needed it during a challenging time; for example, some of the volunteers experienced a recall of their core member, these volunteers explained that prior to the recall, the volunteers relied on their core
member’s probation officer for support and advice, and following the recall, the professional members provided support and an opportunity to debrief. Consistent with findings from the questionnaire, volunteers explained that most of the perceived support was offered by the other volunteers in their circle or from the CoSA coordinators. Finally, several participants felt the probation officer was proactive, came to their meetings, discussed the core member’s needs, and helped them if an issue arose.

**Theme 2: “The Training and Support was Inadequate…I Felt Like I was Floundering”**

There were several participants who were not happy with the training that they received. Some of the participants felt that they had just been “thrown” into their circle and did not fully understand their role. One of the main reasons participants were unsatisfied with the training they received was an over-emphasis on procedural processes such as rules regarding prison visitation. The participants explained that while knowing all the rules was necessary, they felt unprepared for what was actually involved with the everyday running of a circle. Further, some of the participants explained that they had attended other circle’s disclosure sessions and realised that their core member’s disclosure lacked information about offending pathways, maladaptive coping strategies, or specific offences. These participants acknowledged that while the disclosure relied on the core member being honest, they felt that the disclosure sessions appeared to be somewhat inconsistent.

Several participants explained that although the CoSA objectives, model, and background were clear, there was a lack of information on what to expect during the CoSA process. For example, several participants said they would have liked a document that laid out the likely timeline of a CoSA and what to expect at different stages of release. Further, the participants said that they knew all the formal rules and regulations while their core member was in prison, and all the parole conditions when released, however, there were certain “grey areas” that they felt should have been covered in the training. Illustrated in the
following quote, these grey areas included what to do in situations that were not covered explicitly in their core member’s parole conditions:

If your prisoner has been very naughty and absconds…you report it at the nearest police station and ring this number…that was sort of very much a procedural issue. You know, what do you do when you take a person out to the shopping mall…how do you ascertain that the place where you’re going to sit down and have lunch or whatever is going to be a safe place…what are the best ways to look after a situation, say for example, if your person needs to go to the toilet and so on. (Participant 4)

Some of the participants also noted a lack of support from probation officers; these participants believed the lack of support stemmed from a misunderstanding about CoSA’s function. Some participants felt the probation officer viewed the circle as obstructive, unable to appropriately manage risk, and did not have the ability to hold their core member accountable. Whereas others thought the probation officer viewed CoSA members as another mechanism to monitor the core member in the community. The lack of support from some of the probation officers meant that some of the participants felt they were unable to approach the probation officer for advice.

**Theme 3: “It was Good…but There Could Have Been More”**.

Other participants explained that while the initial training was good and prepared them to join their circle, they would have liked ongoing or follow up training. These participants believed that the quality of the training was high, however, they thought that without follow-up their training was not reinforced. Further, the participants stated that because CoSA was an intensive framework to volunteer with, they felt that periodic follow-up training or supervision sessions would have been beneficial. The volunteers in the first recruitment drive for the current study explained that at the time of their interviews, unlike CoSAs in Canada or the UK, there were no circle coordinators to provide the ongoing
support, follow-up training, and provide the connection between the inner circles and the statutory agencies. The following quote is from a participant that took part in an interview when there was no external coordinator:

> What’s actually needed for Circles of Support and Accountability is more formal support mechanisms. Firstly, there needs to be a role…a person who’s actually appointed to coordinate and to...to maintain training and ongoing professional development for CoSA members. Secondly, it needs more formal links with the police and probation… so those links aren’t there at the moment…it’s very ad hoc…to have those links there would really strengthen CoSA…so they’d start to function more coherently and consistently a lot earlier on. (Participant 11)

Volunteers who took part in an interview following the second recruitment drive explained that there was two organisation that had coordinators that offered periodic training and ongoing support. Many of the volunteers acknowledged that CoSA was new in NZ and thus more training and support mechanisms would evolve over time. Indeed, some of the participants who have been involved with CoSA for a number of years, had seen an improvement in the training and support offered. Finally, the volunteers were also mindful about how much time CoSA training could realistically take up and did not want burdensome training to discourage potential volunteers. Nevertheless, they felt that some form of professional development or facilitated meetings would have been valuable.

**Theme 4: CoSA is About “Common Sense, Building Rapport, and Adapting”**.

Several participants described how a circle enables a core member to become a community member rather than remain institutionalised. As such, the participants believed that the training should remain semi-informal and adaptable to avoid re-institutionalising the core member in the community by creating “wardens” out of the CoSA volunteers. Finally, the volunteers acknowledged that CoSA was an effective framework because each circle
could be personalised to the core member. As such, the participants did not believe that the training should be too standardised. That is, the training must be adaptable, “It’s got to be a living document because every person is different, so you've got to leave room in that for that particular person…you've also got to leave room for the circle to grow around that person”. Indeed, all the volunteers felt that the disclosure session individualised the training so that they could prepare for their core member’s specific needs.

Several participants described that there was only a limited amount that could be theoretically taught, and the rest was based on life experience and learning and adapting as a circle progressed. These volunteers believed that CoSA training was based on “common sense”, and that it takes time to get to know their core member and how they will cope outside of prison. Some of the volunteers thought that the training was rather ad hoc, but that it worked. That is, the accumulation of time in CoSA enhanced their overall understanding of their role and the logistics of CoSA. The volunteers agreed that it was vital to learn about the procedural side of CoSA, the parole conditions, the role of the parole officer, and have the disclosure session. However, many believed that too much training could undermine the relationship aspect of CoSA and create relationships similar to the parole officer and parolee relationship. The volunteers explained that the relationship between the volunteer and the core member minimised the “established power difference” between the parole officer and parolee. As such, some participants believed that too much training would distract from the adaptable nature of CoSA; these participants believed that reciprocal relationships were necessary within a CoSA. The following quote illustrates that too much training could undermine the natural development of relationships:

I mean the beauty of CoSA circles is that they're sort of…they adapt…so it’s not about trying to standardise it too much…because then it loses…CoSA circles lose
their ability to adapt. But I think that at least early on there should be a bit of structure and some definite sort of training targets. (Participant 5)

What Makes for an Effective Circle?

Participants described several elements that contribute to an effective circle. Six main themes were identified that related to volunteers’ experiences of an effective functioning of a circle. An effective circle included adequate training (theme 1: Training sets the foundation for an effective circle), appropriate core member (theme 2: The core member can make or break a circle) and volunteer selection (theme 3: Selecting the right mix of volunteers for a cohesive circle), clear communication (theme 4: Communication keeps a circle running smoothly), making circle coordinators available (theme 5: Circle coordinators are essential), and establishing appropriate boundaries (theme 6: Setting boundaries to avoid accidental collusion).

Theme 1: Training Sets the Foundation for an Effective Circle.

A lot of the participants thought that getting the practical experience with their core member, both before release and post-release, was the best way to learn about how a CoSA functions. Participants also thought that talking to other more experienced volunteers would be beneficial. All the participants said that the training received gave the volunteers a chance to get to know the other volunteers in their circle before their core member was released. However, they believed that it was vital that the volunteers were proactive and set up their own meetings outside of the prison. Developing a bond between the members to form a cohesive group allowed the volunteers to be prepared for their core member’s release. As such, many of the volunteers felt that “informal training” was just as important as the formal training provided by the professional members, “It wasn’t so much what they did, so much as what they asked us to do” (Participant 5). That is, the volunteers that followed up with each other after the formal training and arranged meetings found they were able to get to know the
other volunteers in their circle and feel established in their circle by the time their core member was released. Participants described, “The strengths of a circle is in its unity and its ability to focus on the core member” (Participant 11), as such, utilising the combination of both formal and informal training meant many participants felt that they were adequately prepared for CoSA, and thus had effective circles.

**Theme 2: The Core Member Can Make or Break a Circle.**

All the participants believed the selection of core member was central to creating an effective circle. The participants explained that volunteering with CoSA was resource intensive, as such, they did not want to work with a core member who was not committed to being a participating member of their circle. The following quote illustrates the commonly held notion that the core member’s attitude was important for circle success.

> The other thing is that the key issue for a circle really, to me anyway, is...is that it can be time well invested…in a particular prisoner…because their own attitude to their recovery and beyond...I don’t want to waste my time on people who are going to be…you know…less productive if you like (Participant 5)

The participants all explained that the core members went through a rigorous selection process before being accepted for a circle. The participants described that the success of a circle was dependent on the core member because although they could hold them accountable or question certain situations, the core member had the final decision about whether they would follow their circles advice or not. Whilst a few participants described manipulative behaviour from their core member, most participants explained their core member was respectful, set and accomplished goals, and was grateful for their circle.

**Theme 3: Selecting the Right Mix of Volunteers for a Cohesive Circle.**

All the participants described that they believed that the selection of volunteers was just as important as the selection of the core member for an effective CoSA. The following
quote highlights one participant’s experience with the selection of volunteers in their circle, “The selection of the people and the core member are really important, you know like the combination of all the different people…our group sort complements itself quite well…we’ve got a few different people from quite different backgrounds” (Participant 10).

The participants explained that “matched diversity” was an important factor in a circle; that is, having a diverse range of volunteers that could also relate to the core member was important. For example, including Māori volunteers in a circle for a Māori core member. Most of the volunteers recognised that one individual cannot provide the core member with all the support they need. Therefore, as illustrated by the following quote, the volunteers explained that working in a diverse group allowed the volunteers to play to their strengths and support the other volunteers:

It’s really lovely because they are both younger people and it’s nice to have that, although you also need in a group, you need to have people who are world savvy, and that's a problem for me because I’m very trusting and naive … you need a cynical old bastard [sic] in the middle of the group to keep it grounded (Participant 6)

Finally, selecting volunteers that can fully commit to a circle for the required time would enhance the effectiveness of the circle. The participants believed a stable circle was paramount for an effective CoSA. They felt that a circle with reliable volunteer members provided the core member with greater stability when released. The participants explained that the first few months reintegrating into the community was an especially difficult time for the core member and thus having a stable and reliable circle would facilitate reintegration and provide a secure foundation of support if any issues arose:

You’ve got to be very careful once you get that circle together because if someone is not wanting to carry on for much more…then how’s the core member going to feel
with people coming and going, like this it’s very…it would make me feel quite insecure. (Participant 7)

Theme 4: Communication Keeps a Circle Running Smoothly

Communication was also described as important for an effective circle, “it’s just communication – knowing each other and having confidence in each other” (Participant 5). Communication entailed that the volunteers were able to talk honestly to one another about any issues they had, as well as being able to communicate effectively with the core member. That involved establishing from the outset the importance of communication and making it clear the volunteers would share information if required, “we never tried to hide anything from him, there was never anything hidden” (Participant 16). The participants explained how important it was to share information between the volunteers, especially if the core member had spoken to one of the volunteers about an issue, another one of the volunteers, or a goal the core member wanted to achieve. The following quote illustrates how the volunteers kept each other updated while their core member was still in prison:

When we’re in prison visiting…we email each other after every visit because we’re only, you know, going as individuals…and so they’ll just email around the group and say, ‘I saw so and so yesterday, he's feeling down, I talked about such and such, but he’ll be alright’…or whatever (Participant 5).

The participants felt that when communication happened effectively, they were able to manage any issues that could have arisen, as well as help the core member achieve their goals. However, several participants described how they felt that communication was lacking in their circle, which had led them to feeling that their core member had been able to manipulate the volunteers. The experiences of a recall (discussed in study two) highlighted the importance of ongoing communication between the volunteers. The participants believed that ongoing communication was necessary to identify manipulative behaviour (and other
offence related behaviours) and then confront and hold the core member accountable. The transparency established clear boundaries and ensured that the core member did not feel like the volunteers were just sharing idle gossip. The following quote highlights the importance of communication to minimise the risk of manipulation:

Of course, we all knew that if he did that to ring and say, ‘what actually happened?’ and so this is what he said about you. So, I would confront him because I was running, leading the circle…I would confront him, take him out for coffee and say, ‘you told such and such this the other day, what did you mean by that?’ – give him a chance to back out...and of course when he realised that we were talking amongst each other...he stopped trying to play us off against each other. (Participant 16)

Theme 5: Circle Coordinators are Essential.

As described previously, at the time of the first set of interviews, there were no circle coordinators in NZ. However, all participants believed having a circle coordinator would enhance circle effectiveness. For example, several participants described uncomfortable situations whereby an issue arose between the volunteers, but they felt unable to approach and confront their fellow volunteer. However, many participants believed that finding a balance between offering support to the volunteers that required it, and letting them sort out their issues was important. The participants explained that CoSA is about the core member, and conflict between the volunteers detracted from the purpose of the circle. A couple of participants felt that it would be quite awkward to have to approach another volunteer in their circle if they had an issue with them and felt that an external organisation to sort out significant issues would be good. Conversely, several the participants believed that as adults they should be able to sort out issues themselves.
Also keeping the environment in the group where it is ok for us to say, ‘as a group, look I think…we’re not working well as a group and maybe we need to change, this isn’t going to work’. (Participant 10)

All the participants believed that an external support organisation would be beneficial so that a specific professional member would be available for conflict resolution, ongoing support and training, and to provide advice about their core member.

**Theme 6: Setting Boundaries to Avoid Accidental Collusion.**

The participants explained that as part of the training, they were encouraged to think about boundaries that they would establish and to be clear about them with their core member. A lot of the participants described that although developing friendships was a positive by-product of being a member of a CoSA, they also understood the importance of boundaries. The participants explained that unlike a formal workplace, there are no strict guidelines governing the boundaries between the volunteers and core members. For instance, their core member’s probation officers would not give out their address to the core member, however a CoSA volunteer may have their core member over for dinner or to stay for the weekend (provided this follows parole conditions). The participants described different boundaries that they were prepared to set with their core members. As illustrated in the following quote, a couple of participants maintained strict boundaries with their core member; they explained how they kept CoSA and their core member separate from their friends and other social activities, and only spent time with their core member one-on-one or with the circle:

There were lots of boundaries for me; I did not introduce him to any of my friends…I did give him a very limited view of what I did in my spare time as far as social contacts…just because I didn’t want him wanting to come along, I didn’t want him to
wanting to follow me to these events...you know, so I did keep two totally separate lives (Participant 1)

Further, the female participants shared that initially they had to establish the working relationship with their male core member, “I need to emphasise like ‘so there’s no confusion I’m in your circle, you’re really great, we’re friends, don’t read further into this’...and...and it’s really useful having those conversations” (Participant 17).

Where some participants established clear boundaries, other participants explained that the boundaries they had set up were similar to boundaries they would set up with a friend. For example, some participants had no problem with their core member coming over to their house or staying for the weekend: “haven’t set boundaries like that...he would be welcome to come to my house as long as I don’t have other young people around” (Participant 11).

However, most of the participants had to consider the opinion of their family or people they lived with; a few of participants wouldn’t have minded having their core member over to their house, but their family or people they lived with wouldn’t allow it. The participants were happy with the arrangement and explained that it was simple enough to work around. Many participants did explain that having boundaries kept the goal of CoSA at the forefront of their minds. Although the relationship aspect of CoSA was important, as explained in the following quote, the participants described how they had to be careful about accidental collusion with their core member to maintain circle effectiveness:

I think if things were to get blurred or you were to end up in...in my work they often talk about just like accidental collusion ... and I think that can be a risk here as well, if you were to mix up your role (Participant 17).
Discussion

The four themes identified in relation to experiences of the training and support participants received, illustrated that the training and support was experienced differently between participants and not perceived as consistent. Where some participants explained that they were adequately prepared to work effectively in a circle, others were left feeling like they were floundering. Consistent with McCartan’s (2016) findings, the theme “It was good…but there could have been more” indicated that although experiences of training were positive, the volunteers would have liked more follow-up training sessions. Finally, the theme CoSA is about “common sense, building rapport, and adapting” illustrated that not every aspect of CoSA could be taught in a classroom setting. The participants explained that the volunteers needed common sense and that it was important that the training could be adapted to suit the core member.

The differing experiences of training were likely a reflection of the stage that CoSA was at in NZ. Introduced in 2009 in NZ, several of the volunteers that took part in the current study were amongst the first volunteers trained in CoSA. As such, despite significant preparation conducted by the developers of CoSA in NZ (van Rensburg, 2012), the volunteers accepted that the trainers were also learning about launching CoSA in NZ.

Consistent with previous research, the themes identified in relation to what makes an effective circle highlighted how training was one of the reasons that ensures CoSAs are effective (Fox, 2013); including how training and support contribute to volunteers being able to communicate effectively and set up boundaries they are comfortable with (Hannem & Petrunik, 2007; Höing, et al., 2013; Höing & Vogelvang, 2011). Previous research has noted that professional members have shown concern about lack of boundaries (R. J. Wilson et al., 2005). In NZ, the training encouraged the volunteers to establish boundaries they felt comfortable with. The female volunteers stated the importance of establishing clear
boundaries so they could focus on providing the core member support without the situation becoming awkward for them. Finally, both formal and informal training was highlighted as important. Similar to previous findings (McCartan, 2016; C. Wilson et al., 2010), the training delivered by the professional members needed to be complemented by the volunteers own proactive approach to getting to know other members of their circle, including the core member.

The findings also supported previous research that illustrated that screening the volunteers and selecting the right mix of volunteers was important (Correctional Services of Canada, 2002; C. Wilson et al., 2010) whereby having a diverse group of volunteers provided the core member with different points of view. Further, including volunteers that could also relate to the core member fostered successful relationships and supported the group dynamic. Previous research has also indicated that communication and transparency was important for an effective circle (Höing & Vogelvang, 2011); the findings of the current study support this notion, with participants explaining that the training enabled them to develop communication strategies, so they could effectively communicate with the professional members of CoSA, as well as adequately hold their core member accountable. When the volunteers felt their communication was lacking, they believed they were more prone to being manipulated by the core member. Finally, consistent with previous research (Fox, 2013; Thomas, et al., 2014) the findings emphasised the importance of including a circle coordinator who could provide ongoing support and training, provide advice during difficult situations, facilitate communication and conflict resolution, and provide a connection between the circle and statutory agencies.

Implications

Research has shown that volunteering with CoSA can be demanding on the volunteers; they have to navigate working with a stigmatised population, a resource intensive
volunteering framework (particularly when the core member has just been released), and potentially deal with difficult behaviour from the core member. Previous research has noted the importance of boundaries as there is the potential that volunteers’ interpretation of risk may become biased (Höing et al., 2015; R. J. Wilson et al., 2005). In NZ, CoSA does not have specific regulations about the boundaries that the volunteers should set up; however, the volunteers should be encouraged to discuss boundaries they feel are appropriate for themselves and their family with the circle from the outset. Further, the trainers and circle coordinators need to remain aware of gender-specific training or support needs which should be addressed in individual meetings.

It is important that training prepares volunteers for potentially difficult or stressful situations, including negative reactions from the public, their core member reoffending or being recalled back into prison, or a clash of personalities in a circle. Volunteers acknowledge that internal resilience is important for effectively managing their role in CoSA (Höing et al., 2015; McCartan, 2016); however, providing support that promotes volunteers’ self-care would reduce the impact of negative experiences (Höing et al., 2015, 2016). For instance, supportive follow-up is paramount following a recall or re-offence to enable the volunteers to process the situation information without taking on the blame.

The training received in different jurisdictions will vary, thus experiences will differ. Qualitative research emphasises trustworthiness and credibility in data analysis, rather than proclaiming absolute truth (Morrow, 2005). Statistical generalisations and replication of findings is not expected, instead, it is anticipated that the current research will contribute to the broader understanding of volunteer needs. That is, regardless of jurisdiction the volunteers will have basic training requirements to form a functional and effective circle. The present research hopes to inform current and ongoing training and support criteria so that the volunteers are prepared to participate in a circle.
Conclusion

The fundamental goal of CoSA is to prevent reoffending and promote a safer community. Volunteering with CoSA offers a meaningful and important role whereby the volunteers can benefit both an individual and a community. The volunteers are central to the expansion and continuation of CoSA, as well as maintaining model fidelity. Although some of the volunteers in the current research did not perceive the training as consistent, most of the participants felt they were adequately prepared for CoSA. All the participants spoke highly of CoSA as a reintegration framework; thus, the development of appropriate training that meets volunteer needs should be continued. It is vital that the training for the volunteers is of a high standard, prepares the volunteers for the realities of CoSA, and acknowledges and celebrates the valuable work they do.
PART TWO

Study Four: The Impact of Labelling on Attitudes, Willingness to Volunteer, and Language Use

CoSA is a framework that humanises the reintegration process by referring to the “sex offender” as the core member; the volunteers that took part in this study clearly represented the framework of humanisation whereby they often referred to their core member as a friend, group member, or mentee. Part One of this thesis explored volunteers’ motivation and experiences of CoSA in New Zealand. The next part of the research expands on Part One by including community members and their perspectives on volunteering, as well as examining how we talk about people who have sexually offended and the wider effects of language.

The first three studies directly examined CoSA volunteers’ motivation and experiences. However, it remains that CoSA volunteers are a unique group; they give their time to individuals convicted for sexual offending (a “core member”), accepting and supporting such people into their communities. Further, research has shown that compared to a general community sample, CoSA volunteers hold less negative attitudes towards people convicted for sexual offences, their treatment, and rehabilitation (Kerr, et al., 2017). The final study in the present research took a step back from CoSA volunteers and focused instead on a general community sample, where prevailing negative attitudes dominate and stigmatising labels are common. Study Four aimed to examine the extent to which the commonly used “sex offender” label influenced language choice, community attitudes toward people who have sexually offended, and their willingness to volunteer with frameworks such as Circles of Support and Accountability.
Aims

The final study aimed to contribute to the growing body of research on community attitudes towards individuals who have sexually offended. Study Four aimed to extend extant research by exploring the effects of labelling on responses to commonly used attitudinal scales, willingness to volunteer with people who have offended, and any priming effect of labels on subsequent language use. Using a mixed methods design, the current study sought to investigate the following aims using a community sample:

1. Whether manipulating an existing measure of attitudes towards individuals who have sexually offended by including neutral descriptors will influence responses. It was hypothesised that the use of labels would be associated with more negative attitudes toward people who have sexually offended on the Community Attitudes Toward Sex Offenders scale (Church et al., 2008) compared to the use of neutral descriptors.

2. Whether labels would influence people’s willingness to volunteer with individuals convicted for varying offences. It was hypothesised that labels would be associated with people being less willing to volunteer with people who had offended compared to neutral descriptors. Moreover, it was hypothesised that effects would be especially pronounced for the “sex offender” and related labels compared to labels associated with other offences (e.g., “murderers”). In addition, reasons why people would consider or not consider volunteering with individuals with convictions for varying offences were explored.

3. Whether labels would influence people’s willingness to become a CoSA volunteer. It was hypothesised that labels would be associated with less willingness to volunteer with CoSA compared to neutral descriptors. In addition,
reasons why people would consider or not consider volunteering with CoSA were explored.

4. Finally, the current study aimed to examine any priming effects of the “sex offender” label through investigating voluntary use of labels in qualitative data generated in relation to Aims 2 and 3. It was hypothesised that participants presented with labels would use more labels than participants presented with neutral language.
Methodology

Participants

Questionnaire responses were received from 446 New Zealand community members following online advertisement of the study; see Appendix F for the advertisement used. There were 55 participants who completed demographic data only and were therefore excluded from subsequent analyses. The total sample for analyses was N = 391. Overall participant characteristics are summarised in Table 7; the participants, ranged in age from 18 to 76 (M = 34.6, SD = 13.76), and the majority of the respondents were female and of New Zealand European descent. Education level was skewed towards high levels of educational attainment, with 49.6% of respondents having a Bachelor’s degree or higher (22.7% having a postgraduate level of education). Various occupations were reported, with most respondents selecting “other professional” 23.3%, followed by 19.9% selecting “student”, and 17.9% selecting “other”. Given that the population of people reached through online sampling is unknown (Wright, 2005) it is not possible to calculate a response rate.

Measures

Using random assignment, participants responded to one of two versions of an anonymous online questionnaire comprising of the CATSO, questions about willingness to volunteer with people with different criminal convictions, and a question about willingness to volunteer with CoSA. The questionnaires were identical, except one version used labelling language and the other used neutral descriptors, as illustrated for each measure below; refer to Appendix G for questionnaire containing labels and Appendix H for neutral questionnaire.
Table 7

*Overall sample demographic information*

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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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| **Highest level of Education** |     |             |
| Some High School          | 49  | 12.5        |
| Completed High school     | 49  | 12.5        |
| Post-school certificate/diploma | 69 | 17.6  |
| Bachelor degree           | 135 | 34.5        |
| Bachelor with Honours     | 40  | 10.2        |
| Masters/ Doctoral         | 49  | 12.5        |

| **Occupation**            |     |             |
| Beneficiary              | 5   | 1.3         |
| Student                  | 70  | 19.9        |
| Administration/Sales     | 39  | 10          |
| Education                | 27  | 6.9         |
| Health                   | 45  | 11.5        |
| Hospitality/Tourism      | 10  | 2.6         |
| Human resources/ Recruitment | 6  | 1.5         |
| Other Professional       | 91  | 23.3        |
| Tradesperson             | 7   | 1.8         |
| Retiree                  | 21  | 5.4         |
| Other                    | 70  | 17.9        |

**Community Attitudes Toward Sex Offenders Scale.** The CATSO scale, developed by Church and colleagues (2008), was chosen over other validated tools such as the Attitudes to Sexual Offenders Scale (Hogue, 1993) given the inclusion of items assessing stereotypical
attitudes concerning people who have sexually offended. The scale consists of 18 self-report items that include both standard (e.g., “people who commit sex offences want to have sex more often than the average person”) and reverse scored items (e.g., “with support and therapy, someone who committed a sex offence can learn to change their behaviour”). Responses are recorded on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Scores can range from 18 to 108, and higher scores indicate beliefs that “sex offenders” are considered to be “loners, are unlikely to change, are especially dangerous and commit overly serious crimes, and are sexually preoccupied” (Church et al., 2008, p. 257). A factor analysis of the 18 items identified a four-factor structure: social isolation, capacity to change, severity/dangerousness, and deviancy. However, subsequent studies have not replicated these factors (for a review see Harper & Hogue, 2017). The CATSO total score demonstrated sufficient internal consistency in the development sample (Cronbach’s alpha = .74; Church et al., 2008) and in subsequent studies (see Harper & Hogue, 2017), and was therefore included as a measure of general attitudes in the current study.

In the CATSO questionnaire, the first three questions use neutral descriptors (e.g., “with support and therapy, someone who committed a sex offence can learn to change their behaviour”); thus, for the label condition these three questions were changed to include the label “sex offender” (e.g., with support and therapy, a sex offender can learn to change their behaviour) and the remaining 15 questions were unaltered. For the neutral condition, the first three questions were unchanged, and the remaining questions were adapted to include the neutral descriptor “people who have committed crimes of a sexual nature” to replace the “sex offender” label (e.g., “sex offenders cannot be rehabilitated” was changed to “people who have committed crimes of a sexual nature cannot be rehabilitated”).

**Volunteering with people who have offended.** Seven questions were developed by the researchers to assess whether the participants would consider volunteering in various
capacities with people with different convictions. All questions were responded to on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (highly likely/would consider) to 7 (highly unlikely/would not consider at all). In the label condition, the questions included volunteering with “female offenders”, “male offenders”, “theft convicts”, “assault convicts”, “murderers”, “sex offenders”, and “child sex offenders”. In the neutral condition, the questions included volunteering with “females who have offended”, “males who have offended”, “someone convicted for theft”, “someone convicted for assault”, “someone convicted for murder”, “someone who has sexually offended”, and “someone who has sexually offended against children”. Following these questions, there was one open-ended question inviting participants to provide an explanation for their answers. Specifically, participants were asked to “Please briefly explain your answer to the previous questions: how likely or unlikely you are to volunteer with the different groups”.

**Volunteering with Circles of Support and Accountability.** Participants were provided with a brief description of CoSA, CoSA’s aim, and effectiveness. The description was followed by the question, “Would you consider volunteering with Circles of Support and Accountability?” The participants responded either yes or no. In the label condition, labelling language was used in the description of CoSA: “Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) are groups of volunteers who act as a support network for sex offenders…”. Whereas neutral language was used in the neutral condition: “Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) are groups of volunteers who act as a support group for individuals convicted for sex offences…”. Refer to Appendix G for description of CoSA containing labelling and Appendix H for neutral description. The question was followed by one open-ended question asking the participants to explain their answer. Participants were reassured that their answers were anonymous and that they would not be approached about volunteering with CoSA following completion of the questionnaire.
Procedure and Research design

The questionnaire was developed using Qualtrics (version 2017), an online survey development tool (Qualtrics, Provo, UT). The researcher posted information about the present study on her Facebook™ page and community Facebook™ and Reddit™ pages (e.g., Auckland subreddit, Wellington subreddit, Mangere Bridge Community Facebook page, Kumeu & Huapai District Facebook page etc.). The information was posted as a status update, thus anyone who was friends with the first author or who was a member of the community pages could access the information. See Appendix F for the advertisement used online. Potential participants were informed that the researchers were conducting a study on attitudes towards individuals who had committed crimes of a sexual nature using a questionnaire that would take approximately 10 – 15 minutes to complete. Neutral language was used in the advertisements to avoid priming participants before they saw the questionnaire. Interested people clicked on the survey link which directed them to the questionnaire on the Qualtrics website. Cookies were enabled to prevent multiple responses from the same computer and to avoid multiple responses from the same person. The first screen of the survey included more detailed information about the study. Participants were informed that participation in the study was anonymous and they could withdraw up until the time they submitted their survey. The participants indicated informed consent by clicking a “consent and proceed” button which confirmed that the participant had read and understood the information. Participants were then randomly assigned to one of the two experimental conditions (a feature made possible using Qualtrics software) and presented with the survey questions. At the end of the questionnaire participants could opt to go into a draw for one of four shopping mall or petrol vouchers. To ensure anonymity, Qualtrics software can store the answer given to the prize draw question separately from the rest of the survey questions. Finally, participants were thanked for their participation in the study and given the contact
information of the first author in case they had questions or wanted more information about the study.

**Planned Analyses**

A series of independent sample t-tests were conducted in SPSS (version 24) to analyse between-group differences on the CATSO and questions examining willingness to volunteer with people convicted for varying offence types. Willingness to volunteer with CoSA was tested using a Chi-Square test for independence.

Qualitative data were analysed using thematic analyses following the procedure outlined in Braun and Clarke (2006). The thematic analysis was conducted using NVivo 11, a computerised system for organising qualitative data. All the answers from the open-ended questions were copied into a Word document and then loaded to NVivo. The data were analysed according to the a priori categories “willing to volunteer”, “unwilling to volunteer”, and “mixed responses to volunteering” to better understand the reasons behind the participants’ answers. Initially, responses concerning willingness to volunteer with different groups were analysed separately to responses regarding willingness to volunteer with CoSA specifically. However, given that the themes identified in each analysis overlapped, both analyses were combined. Subjectivity is inherent in qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2006), thus, discussion about developing themes between the authors was used to minimise subjectivity and facilitate reflexivity.

Finally, a content analysis was conducted to examine any priming effect of labels versus neutral descriptors in participants’ voluntary use of labels in their answers to the two open-ended questions concerning the willingness to volunteer generally, and with CoSA specifically. Berelson (1952) defined content analysis as “a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication” (p. 18). In the current study, the content analysis involved systematically reviewing the
qualitative data and recording the use of labelling language and neutral language. Responses to both qualitative questions for each participant were combined; 149 units of data were available for analysis in the label condition and 146 units of data in the neutral condition. Participants’ answers were coded for the presence of at least one stigmatising label. The presence of a label was coded if the label used was stigmatising or pejorative; these included “sex offender”, “rapist”, or “paedophile” (e.g., “I have nothing to offer sex offenders”), at least one neutral descriptor (e.g., “people who have committed sexual crimes are still deserving of efforts to rehabilitate”), use of both a stigmatising label and a neutral descriptor (e.g., “work with adolescents who have sexually offended…working exclusively with sex offenders doesn’t appeal to me”), or the absence of both stigmatising labels and neutral descriptors (e.g., “I don't have a lot of time to volunteer”). A Chi-square test for independence was conducted to examine whether there was a significant difference in the use of labels vs. neutral language between conditions.
Findings

The Impact of Labels on Community Attitudes and Willingness to Volunteer

The impact of labels on CATSO total scores. A total of \( n = 391 \) participants completed the CATSO section of the questionnaire (\( n = 272 \) female, \( n = 119 \) male). An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the attitudes of participants presented with labels compared to participants presented with neutral descriptors using the CATSO total score (which demonstrated sufficient internal consistency, \( \alpha = 0.82 \)). Total CATSO scores for participants in the labelling condition (\( M = 51.66, SD = 10.03 \)) were significantly higher than total CATSO scores for participants in the neutral condition (\( M = 48.46, SD = 10.51 \)), \( t(391) = 3.08, p < .01 \), indicating that labelling was associated with more negative attitudes as measured by the CATSO. However, while significant, the effect size was low-moderate (Cohen’s \( d = .31 \)), and even in the neutral condition the mean response was 2.7 (disagree to probably disagree), indicating mean responses were still somewhat negative.

The impact of labels on willingness to volunteer with different populations. A total of \( n = 376 \) participants completed the section about volunteering with individuals with varying offences (\( n = 263 \) female, \( n = 113 \) male). Multiple independent samples t-tests were conducted to examine the effect of labelling on participants’ willingness to volunteer with people convicted of different offences. Bonferroni corrections were applied to significance tests to reduce the likelihood of Type 1 error (i.e., rejecting the null hypothesis when it is true) which can occur with multiple comparisons; the corrected \( p \) value was .007. Table 8 displays results of the multiple comparisons conducted.
Table 8  
*Multiple comparison tests examining the willingness to volunteer with different groups*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>( t )</th>
<th>( df )</th>
<th>Significance (two-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>4.34 (2.09)</td>
<td>3.64 (1.97)</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>4.43 (2.09)</td>
<td>5.05 (2.18)</td>
<td>-2.83</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conviction</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theft</td>
<td>3.99 (2.01)</td>
<td>4.12 (2.06)</td>
<td>-.634</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>.527</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault</td>
<td>4.47 (1.95)</td>
<td>4.61 (2.14)</td>
<td>-.655</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>.513</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murder</td>
<td>5.16 (2.00)</td>
<td>4.74 (2.07)</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>.046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex Offences</td>
<td>5.16 (1.95)</td>
<td>4.31 (2.11)</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Sex Offences</td>
<td>5.75 (1.83)</td>
<td>4.57 (2.13)</td>
<td>5.74</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. A higher mean indicates less willingness to volunteer where 1 indicated “would definitely volunteer with…” and 7 indicated “would definitely not volunteer with…”*

Overall, participants indicated that they were neutral to somewhat unlikely to consider volunteering with the different groups, regardless of experimental condition. Of the seven comparisons, significant differences were observed on four. Participants in the label condition were significantly less likely \((M = 5.16, \ SD = 1.95)\) to consider volunteering with “sex offenders”, compared to participants in the neutral condition \((M = 4.31, \ SD = 2.11)\), \(t\) \((374) = 4.07, \ p < .001\). Cohen’s effect size \((d = .42)\) was low to moderate. Further, participants in the label condition were significantly less likely \((M = 5.75, \ SD = 1.83)\) to consider volunteering with “child sex offenders”, compared to participants in the neutral condition \((M = 4.57, \ SD = 2.13)\), \(t\) \((374) = 4.07, \ p < .001\). Cohen’s effect size \((d = .59)\) was moderate. In addition, participants in the label condition were significantly less likely to consider volunteering with females \((M = 4.34, \ SD = 2.09)\) than participants in the neutral condition \((M = 3.46, \ SD = 1.98)\), \(t\) \((374) = 3.35, \ p = .001\). Cohen’s effect size \((d = .34)\) was low-moderate. By contrast, participants in the label condition were significantly more likely
to consider volunteering with males ($M = 4.43$, $SD = 2.09$) than participants in the neutral condition ($M = 5.05$, $SD = 2.18$), $t (374) = -2.83$, $p = .005$. Cohen’s effect size ($d = .29$) was low.

**The impact of labels on willingness to volunteer with CoSA.** Figure 1 illustrates participants’ willingness to volunteer with CoSA in the labelling and neutral conditions. A Chi-Square test for independence found a significant between-group difference, $X^2(1) = 5.36$, $p < .05$. However, Cramer’s V ($v = .12$) was small.

![Figure 1](image)

*Figure 1. Participants willing/unwilling to consider volunteering with CoSA*

A Z test of proportions was conducted to compare the differences between the label and neutral condition using standard normal approximation formulas. Participants in the label condition (66.12%) were significantly more likely to *not consider* volunteering with CoSA compared to participants in the neutral condition (54.34%), $z = 2.332$, CI$_{95}$: 0.019, 0.217, $p < .05$. Conversely, participants in the neutral condition were significantly more likely to be *willing to consider* volunteering with CoSA (45.65%) compared to participants in the label
condition (33.87%), \( z = 2.332, \text{CI}_{95}: 0.019, 0.217, p < .05 \). That is, participants in the labelling condition were less likely to consider volunteering with CoSA than participants in the neutral condition, and, participants in the neutral condition were more likely to consider volunteering with CoSA than participants in the label condition.

**Qualitative Findings: Why Would You be Willing/Unwilling to Volunteer?**

The two open-ended questions were intended to gain a richer understanding of participants’ willingness to volunteer (with people with different criminal convictions and with CoSA) than what is possible using numeric response scales. Five themes were identified as reasons for participants being willing to volunteer, four themes were identified as reasons for participants being unwilling to volunteer, and two themes were identified as mixed responses. Whilst the answers to both qualitative questions were combined for the analysis, five themes specific to volunteering with CoSA were identified. Each theme will be explored in-depth in the following section.

**Willing to Volunteer…**

...Because rehabilitation is essential. Many participants viewed rehabilitation as an integral part of the criminal justice system. Many believed that people can change when given appropriate support, treatment, and opportunities to improve their work and life skills. These participants recognised that volunteer programs complement the treatment offered by professionals. The participants explained that prison alone would not support long-term desistance. As such, the role of volunteers as supporting rehabilitative efforts whilst in prison meant many participants were willing to volunteer. The following statement illustrates the importance of reinforcing the goal of rehabilitation for individuals who had offended:

The penal system is altogether backwards if not done with the end-goal of rehabilitation. No effort should be spared in attempting rehabilitation of all persons
who have found themselves outcast from society. You cannot simply ignore certain groups, the attempt is to reduce recurrence of all offending so to not volunteer to rehabilitate those who have done the most heinous crimes is only going to ensure that they're the ones that are re-committed.

...Because volunteers play an important role in supporting reintegration. Some participants pointed out how difficult the reintegration process could be. The participants believed that prison sentences have the potential to alienate individuals from their family or friends, particularly if the prison is in another city. Therefore, some participants were willing to volunteer to create a connection between the individual and their community because they viewed the connection as fundamental to a successful reintegration. The following quote highlights the value of volunteers for providing support for individuals re-entering the community, “Without volunteers, none of these groups will ever reintegrate into the community”

...Because volunteering can contribute to a greater understanding of the criminal justice system. Some participants stated that volunteering provides the opportunity to learn more about the criminal justice system. Many participants explained that their knowledge of the criminal justice system was limited, as such, volunteering with people who have offended or with different justice orientated programs would be beneficial for their own understanding. Additionally, these participants explained that volunteer programs have the potential to contribute to enhancing community awareness and education about crime and justice, issues surrounding sexual offending, the importance of prosocial support, and safe reintegration processes. The following statement highlights that volunteering can positively affect education and rehabilitation: “If volunteering could help with rehabilitation or at least contributes to education around the issue that can be a positive thing”. Therefore, there were
several participants who were willing to volunteer with individuals who had offended because of the potential of developing a greater understanding of justice processes.

...Because of my own life experience. Some of the participants shared that they had a history with the criminal justice system, either directly as perpetrators or victims, or indirectly through family members or friends. Such a history influenced the participants’ willingness because they had experienced the impact of an offence and were willing to support attempts to reduce offending. The following quote illustrates how such experiences influence willingness to volunteer whereby the participant believes supporting reintegration can benefit both the community and the individual:

As a person who has been to prison…I’m looked at in a different light when people find out I’ve been to prison. After getting to know me...they know what I’ve done and that I’ve hurt many people but I’m trying to change that. That is something that a lot of people don’t realise is…yes, they did bad things, but they are still people...If we don’t want them hurting people and doing crime then we need to help these people.

...Because they’re people too. It was clear that the many of the participants were able to separate the individual from the crime and believed that people deserve a second chance, “At the end of the day they are just people the same as us…they have just made some bad decisions…it’s not your job to judge”. Some of the participants described themselves as compassionate people who would help anyone, regardless of their offending history, “I have compassion towards people in prison, they are human beings capable of rehabilitation; their time in prison can be productive for them and our community”. These participants expressed a belief that never letting someone forget the worst thing they have done can have negative consequences for reintegration. As such, many would consider volunteering to support reintegration because they believed that people deserve a second chance and not to be defined by their offence, especially if they were taking part in rehabilitation.
Unwilling to Volunteer…

…Because of the potential risk to me or my family. The main reason participants were reluctant to volunteer was the perceived risk to themselves, family members, or friends. Several participants explained that their safety could not be guaranteed if they volunteered with people who had been willing to offend. The following quote illustrates the notion that the participants support justice initiatives, however they are not willing to risk harm to themselves or family, “Not likely to volunteer with any prisoner groups. This may be selfish, but while I care about social justice, and will vote for prison reforms, I wouldn't risk putting myself in direct harm”. Further, some of the participants detailed that there was a scale of risk whereby those convicted for theft were viewed as less serious compared to a murder conviction, and would thus pose less risk to themselves of family: “Entirely based on perceived risk to myself, a female offender is much less of a threat to me due to lower average physical strength”.

While many participants were wary of the risk posed by volunteering with people who have offended, they understood that not everyone posed the same level of risk. A lot of the participants stated that more information was required before they would consider volunteering. The participants acknowledged that there are vast differences in offences, triggers and motivation to commit crime, risk level, relationship to the victim, and level of remorse. The following quote reflects the view that more information was necessary before committing to volunteering with someone: “murder, assault, and unspecified ”sex offender" status can all mean wildly different things in context, so I would have to evaluate the person on a case by case basis”.

…Because I would be wasting my time. Some of the participants did not believe that prisoners can be rehabilitated, and it would be “a waste of time” to volunteer with
rehabilitative efforts. The following quote illustrates the view that “offenders” cannot change, particularly those who had committed serious crimes:

Sicko's, if they don’t have the self-control they never will!!! It's not worth taking the risk! Best thing would to line them all up and shoot them! As a tax payer, why should I work to pay for them to sit around doing nothing?

Many participants stated that they would prefer more punitive options such as longer sentences or stricter parole conditions. Volunteers were viewed as somewhat meaningless in prison and some felt that resources should be directed elsewhere, including primary prevention, victim support, and developing tougher policies.

...Because of my own life experiences. While personal experiences were associated with willingness to volunteer for some participants, for others personal experiences were a reason for being unwilling to volunteer. Some of the participants shared that they had been survivors of childhood abuse (sexual, physical, and/or emotional), knew someone that had been victimised, or know someone who had committed serious offences. Living with or seeing the direct effect of a serious crime meant they were unprepared to volunteer with perpetrators of abuse. Some of the participants explained that whilst they were supportive of rehabilitative efforts, they were not prepared to engage with the criminal justice system.

...Because of I don’t have the time. Practical considerations were identified as a reason for being unwilling to volunteer including already volunteering with other organisations or a lack of time. Some of the participants stated that whilst they supported rehabilitative and reintegrative efforts they were not interested in volunteering.

Mixed response to volunteering...

...Because I wouldn’t volunteer with people with certain convictions. Many of the participants described that some of the populations would be easier to volunteer with because they could understand the root of the crime, for example, “stealing out of necessity”. That is,
many of the participants explained that the more serious the crime, the less likely they were to consider volunteering. Although many participants were reluctant to volunteer with someone convicted for murder, there were several participants who stated that murder was often a “one-off” type of crime, and therefore they would potentially consider volunteering.

Sexual offences were crimes that most of the participants felt they could not understand. The participants described being unable to overlook the seriousness of the crimes and thus unwilling to volunteer: “I would find it hard to treat them fairly, and a negative attitude or comment would neither be beneficial or constructive towards the offender’s progress. They need support, not criticism from those working to help them”.

Further, a lot of the participants stated that they would refuse to volunteer or associate with anyone who had hurt a child. The following quotes illustrate the view that participants were least likely to want to associate with individuals who had sexually offended against a child: “I would never knowingly associate with a child sex offender. I have no time for them and don't want them being out in society”, and, “I cannot relate in any way, shape or form to a sex offender or a child sex offender. I therefore could not possibly have anything positive to contribute by volunteering with them”.

...Because I don’t have the necessary skills. Many of the participants stated that with adequate training and support they may consider volunteering. However, they were also hesitant as to what they would be able to offer the criminal justice system as a volunteer. Further, while a lot of the participants believed that volunteers were an integral part of the criminal justice system, many also believed that caution should be taken with the different populations. Some of the participants believed that individuals who committed serious crimes such as murder or sexual offences, had rehabilitative needs that cannot be met by untrained volunteers: “I’m not disturbed by the nature of the offending, but I think sex offenders have rehabilitative needs that untrained people like myself are unlikely to be able to help with”.
Indeed, some participants believed that volunteers could be counter-productive if they were able to be manipulated: “In my experience…people who commit sexual abuse are very sociable, cunning, manipulative, and dangerous. Only professionals should be involved”. As such, many participants expressed a belief that the rehabilitation should be left to professionals and thus they were not willing to volunteer.

**Themes Specific to Volunteering with CoSA**

The following themes were identified in relation to the participants’ willingness or unwillingness to consider volunteering specifically with CoSA.

**Willing to Volunteer with CoSA…**

* …*Because CoSA seems like common sense.* Many participants explained that they could see the value in a framework such as CoSA. These participants explained that people are eventually released from prison into the community, thus it is logical that there are effective frameworks for reintegration and promoting community safety, “Well if it reduces reoffending, it’s a no brainer”.

* …Because wouldn’t I volunteer if the result is increased community safety?* Most of the participants focused on the benefit to the community that CoSA provides, including the reduction in recidivism, facilitating safe reintegration, and preventing future victims. The participants would be willing to volunteer with CoSA to contribute to community safety, as illustrated by the following quote, “If I could make an impact on someone’s life, help them to not reoffend, and preventing harm to people in the community, I think I would volunteer”. Further, several participants explained that they would consider volunteering with CoSA because they understood the need for social support in the community, “I believe community and whānau support is key to addressing issues arising during a convict's re-entry into wider society”
Unwilling to Volunteer with CoSA…

...Because why would I volunteer with a framework that supports someone who has sexually abused? A lot of participants held negative attitudes toward CoSA as a framework because it was specifically for people who had sexually offended. As illustrated by the following quote, many believed that: “The efforts should be directed at the victims rather than the attackers”. Several participants explained that there was not enough support for victims, therefore they were unprepared to support someone who had caused harm. Further, the participants believed that the harm caused by sexual offences warranted more punitive sentences rather than reintegration. As such, they were unwilling to volunteer for CoSA because it meant supporting individuals who had caused harm. The following quote illustrates a commonly supported notion, that participants supported harsher policies for sexual offences:

On the scale of sex offending there is no point at which I consider the offending tolerable. For this reason, I could not volunteer my time with sex offenders. I'd rather volunteer my time to a legal organisation who wants harsher penalties for sex offending.

...Because people would react negatively. A number of participants mentioned that being involved with an organisation such as CoSA could have the potential to isolate the volunteers. The participants questioned the response they would get from other people regarding volunteering with CoSA due to the negative view of individuals convicted for sexual offences, “It'd be very difficult to talk to friends about this sort of volunteering as I imagine many people would respond very negatively to sex offenders being rehabilitated”. The potential for negative reactions and isolation meant many participants were unwilling to volunteer for CoSA. However, the knowledge that a CoSA is supported by professional
members provided the participants with reassurance that there would be support for the volunteers if needed.

...Because even though I support CoSA, I do not want to volunteer. There were many participants who would not consider volunteering but still supported CoSA as a reintegrative framework. The participants explained various reasons for not being willing to volunteer with CoSA, including reasons explored in themes for not volunteering generally; however, they also explained that they recognised the value of a framework such as CoSA. The following quote illustrates a common view, that is, although they felt they were unable to volunteer, they believed that it is important that programs such as CoSA are available:

I think it is a great program and that it is good that sex offenders get the help and support they need to reintegrate back into society, but I personally feel like I wouldn't be a very good volunteer in helping them.

Investigating any Priming Effects of Labelling and Neutral Language

A content analysis was conducted on the qualitative data to examine any priming effects of labelling language on participants’ own use of labels in their qualitative responses. In the label condition, at least one label was used in 42.28% of responses, compared to 11.64% of responses in the neutral condition. Further, at least one neutral descriptor was used in 34.25% of responses in the neutral condition, compared to 27.52% of responses in the label condition of responses in the neutral condition; Figure 2 illustrates language used by participants.
A Chi-Square test was conducted to examine whether there were significant differences in the voluntary use of labels and use of neutral descriptors between conditions. A Chi-Square test for independence found a significant between-group difference, $X^2(3) = 40.9$, $p < .001$ and Cramer’s $V (V = .372)$ indicated a moderate effect size.

**Between group analyses.** A $Z$ test of proportions was conducted to compare the differences in language use between the label and neutral condition using standard normal approximation formulas. Participants in the label condition were significantly more likely to use one or more labels (and no neutral language) (42.28%) compared to participants in the neutral condition (11.64%), $z = 6.33$, CI$_{95}$: 0.212, 0.401, $p < .001$. However, there was no significant difference between the label condition and neutral condition for participants using neutral language (27.52% and 34.25%, respectively).
Within group analyses. Within the label condition, participants were more likely to use one or more labels (42.28%) compared to neutral language (27.52%), $z = 2.192 \ CI_{95}: 0.016, 0.280, p < .05$, and within the neutral condition, participants were more likely to use neutral language (34.25%) compared to labels (11.64%), $z = 4.277 \ CI_{95}: -0.122, -0.330 \ p < .001$; Table 9 includes the results of all the comparisons.

In summary, consistent with a priming effect, participants in the label condition were significantly more likely to use labelling language compared to participants in the neutral condition, and they were also more likely to use labelling language compared to neutral language. Neutral language was used at a similar rate between the two conditions; however, participants in the neutral condition were more likely to use neutral language, a mixture of labels/neutral language or neither compared to using solely labels.
Table 9
Table of Z-test of proportions examining the difference in language used by participants

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Comparison between condition</th>
<th>Label condition</th>
<th>Neutral condition</th>
<th>difference</th>
<th>Se(d)</th>
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<th>z</th>
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<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Labels used</td>
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<td>.054</td>
<td>-.172</td>
<td>.034</td>
</tr>
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<td>15.07</td>
<td>-.097</td>
<td>.035</td>
<td>-.029</td>
<td>-.165</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neither used</td>
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<td>39.04</td>
<td>-.014</td>
<td>.054</td>
<td>-.037</td>
<td>-.247</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparison within condition</th>
<th>difference</th>
<th>Se(d)</th>
<th>CI95</th>
<th>z</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Labels x Neutral</td>
<td>.148</td>
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*Note. *significant at p < .05; **significant at p < .001

Discussion

The current study aimed to investigate the effects of labelling on attitudes toward individuals who have sexually offended, willingness to volunteer with people with different convictions, and any priming effect of labels on subsequent language use. Overall, findings supported the hypothesis that compared to using neutral descriptors, labelling was associated with more negative attitudes towards individuals who have sexually offended and less
willingness to volunteer with these individuals. As expected, effects of labelling on willingness to volunteer were especially pronounced for individuals convicted for sexual offences versus nonsexual offences. Findings were therefore consistent with previous research illustrating the negative effect of labels on public opinion and attitudes (Harris & Socia, 2016; Imhoff, 2015). The findings also supported the hypothesis that using labelling language would prime voluntary use of labels. While each main hypothesis was supported, effect sizes for between-group comparisons were consistently low to moderate, indicating that regardless of label use, the public tends to hold negative attitudes and are generally unwilling to have contact with or volunteer with people who have sexually offended. Nevertheless, the differences found do support the notion that labels have an impact on attitudes, willingness to volunteer, and language use.

Consistent with previous findings, the use of labelling influenced perceptions of those being labelled (Harris & Socia, 2016; Imhoff, 2015). Stereotypes associated with the “sex offender” label were likely elicited when the label was used (Pickett et al., 2013; Tversky & Kahneman, 1973). For example, the stereotype of a high risk “predator” is easily brought to mind as the media focuses on high profile, high risk, and stranger-perpetrated crimes (Pickett et al., 2013; Quinn et al., 2004; Sample & Bray, 2006). Thus, when the label “sex offender” was used in the questionnaire, a negative stereotype is more salient than the more common scenario of an individual who is low risk, in turn, influencing attitudes toward this population (Cheit, 2003). Whereas the neutral language provided the opportunity for participants to form their own assumptions about an “individual who has committed crimes of a sexual nature” without the influence of the associations implicit in the “sex offender” label.

**The Impact of Labels on Willingness to Volunteer**

Labelling affected willingness to volunteer with people with different criminal convictions. Labels were associated with less willingness to volunteer with “female
offender”, “sex offender”, and, “child sex offender” populations. Further, labels were associated with less willingness to volunteer with CoSA. However, contrary to expectations, the label “male offenders” was related to a greater willingness to volunteer compared to “males who have offended”. A possible explanation for this finding could be that participants made automatic assumptions about who commits crime. Previous research has found that violent offences committed by a man or men were overrepresented and normalised in media reporting (Naylor, 2001; Surette, 2014), whereas offences committed by females were typically reported in an archetypal manner or as an act committed out of character (e.g., “sexy bad girl” or “black widow” p. 305, R. E. Collins, 2016; Naylor, 2001). Unlike the label condition, the offence status in the neutral condition is not explicit; as such, the ambiguity of the neutral statement could mean that participants made automatic assumptions about the crimes committed based on salient information. The representation of gender and crime in the media likely elicits an image of a male who commits crime, more so than a female who commits crime. It is likely that participants associated the listed offences (e.g., “someone convicted for assault” or “some convicted for sexual offences”) with “males who have offended”. Therefore, in the neutral condition, where participants were able to make their own assumptions, participants were less likely to consider volunteering with “males who have offended” compared to “male offenders”.

There were no significant differences between the label condition and neutral condition for volunteering with people convicted for theft, assault, or murder. The non-significant effect could be because theft and assault were not viewed as negatively as sex offences (Craig, 2005; Levenson et al., 2007) and the labels did not activate negative stereotypes in the same as way. Such an explanation is consistent with qualitative findings; that is, the specific conviction was a deciding factor influencing willingness to volunteer, for example, individuals convicted for theft were viewed as posing little risk to the individual
volunteering whereas people convicted for sexual offences or child sexual offences were
considered the most dangerous. Further, a plausible explanation for the non-significant effect
for volunteering with someone convicted for murder could be that although a murder
conviction results in a longer prison sentence compared to assault or theft, several
participants mentioned that they were prepared to volunteer because they considered murder
was a “one-off” type of offence. That is, perception of an offence was central to participants’
willingness/unwillingness to volunteer.

Qualitative data provided an enriched understanding of participants’
willingness/unwillingness to volunteer as indicated on numeric response scales. The theme
“Unwilling to volunteer for CoSA…Because people would react negatively”, highlights that
anticipating a negative response from other community members would deter individuals
from volunteering with CoSA. Indeed, previous research has found that CoSA volunteers
compartmentalised their involvement with CoSA to avoid negative responses (McCartan,
2016). However, the themes “Because CoSA seems like common sense” and, “Because
volunteers play an important role in supporting reintegration” highlight that contrary to the
normative negative response, there were many participants who recognised that reintegration
processes that promote a safe re-entry into the community are essential for long-term
desistance.

Examining any Priming Effects of Labelling and Neutral Language

After being presented with labels, participants were more likely to voluntarily use
labels than participants who had been presented with neutral descriptors. Further, within the
label condition, participants were more likely to use labelling and no neutral descriptors. The
repetitive use of labelling or neutral language made either the labels or the descriptors more
salient in participants’ minds, and therefore, more readily available when expanding on their
rationale for willingness/unwillingness to volunteer (Roskos-Ewoldsen & Roskos-Ewoldsen,
The succinct term “sex offender” provided the participants with both an easily accessible term to use and a term that is emotionally significant and laden with negative connotations (Cheit, 2003; Kitzinger, 2004; Pickett et al., 2013; Robbers, 2009). Therefore, in the label condition, participants were more likely to voluntarily use labelling.

There was no significant difference between the two conditions regarding the use of neutral descriptors; however, in the labelling condition, neutral language was used less frequently compared to labels. Further, in the neutral condition, participants were more likely to use neutral language, both neutral and labels, or neither and less likely to use solely labelling language. Accordingly, where the use of succinct labels allowed intuitive, heuristic-driven responses (Tversky & Kahneman, 1973; Harris & Socia, 2016; Imhoff, 2015), neutral descriptors require a greater level of processing because they are not as familiar, therefore, subsequent language use is more varied.

Implications

While the effect sizes of the significant findings were small to moderate, the findings are important. The results show the negative effect of labelling on public opinion and willingness to volunteer. Exploring how researchers can influence public opinion in a way that promotes safe rehabilitation and reintegration cannot be ignored. The labels “sex offender” and “child sex offender” (among other labels) are convenient and succinct. However, language plays a central role in shaping perceptions via a number of mechanisms, including, linguistic choices, narratives and framing, inferences, and priming (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). The current study has shown that, in part, labelling can affect attitudes, how people respond to individuals who have offended, and prime the continued use of labelling. Attitudes toward those convicted for sexual offences play an important role in policy development, social interaction, and clinical contexts. Research has shown that
desistance from offending is more likely when access to adequate housing, employment, and social support networks are made available, however research has also shown that the use of labels perpetuates punitive attitudes (Harris & Socia, 2016; Imhoff, 2015) and increases the likelihood of reoffending (Chiricos et al., 2007). Thus, journalists, researchers, and policy makers focused on delivering accurate information and developing effective policies would be advised to anticipate the effects of labelling on public views.

It should be noted that the current study examined the effect of the “sex offender” label on community attitudes towards people who have sexually offended, and willingness to volunteer with such people. This label, however, is not the only label used to categorise this population. Indeed, even though only “sex offender” and “child sex offender” labels were used, participants used other common terms including “rapist” and “sexual predator” (which were coded as using labels. Future research may highlight which labels are more, or less, harmful in terms of activating negative stereotypes. Further, research examining the use of different labels, their effects on public opinion, and their effects on those being labelled may inform the language used by professionals. Although researchers and clinicians cannot directly influence media narratives or community attitudes, language can be modelled that does not stigmatise a population.

**Conclusion**

The main goal of the present study was to examine the possible negative consequences of the “sex offender” label. The current study found that humanising the person behind the offence was associated with less negative attitudes, greater willingness to volunteer with CoSA, and less voluntary use of solely labelling language. In a climate pushing for increasingly punitive and restrictive policies, CoSA represents a shift away from reactionary and punitive justice by empowering communities to engage with the criminal justice system. CoSA humanises “sex offenders” by referring to them as core members, and
this seemingly small distinction can make all the difference to individual core member. While it is unlikely that stigmatising language will ever be completely removed from dialogue, it is hoped that creating an awareness about the effect of language may facilitate community discussion about how we brand people who offend.
GENERAL DISCUSSION

Summary of Findings

The current research sought to explore the motivation to volunteer with CoSA, the experiences of CoSA volunteers in NZ, and the impact of labelling on community attitudes, willingness to volunteer, and subsequent language use. Three studies were conducted directly with CoSA volunteers using an in-depth semi-structured interview and a questionnaire. The fourth study examined the effect of labelling language compared to neutral descriptors using a questionnaire in which participants were randomly allocated to one of two conditions, one that utilised labels or one that used only neutral, person-first language.

Study One investigated the motivation to volunteer with individuals convicted for sexual offences through CoSA. Although the decision to volunteer was not always easy, all the participants were passionate and intended to continue with their volunteering, even after the required post-release commitment. As a result of the thematic analysis, three main themes regarding the motivation to volunteering with CoSA were identified. The themes were Restorative and Justice Motivation, Altruistic-Based Motivation, and Faith-Based Motivation. Findings from Study One support previous research whereby individuals with a restorative justice orientation are more likely to volunteer with a restorative framework (Souza & Dhami, 2008). Further, similar to previous research (Hannem, 2013; Silverman & D. Wilson, 2002), many volunteers were motivated by faith and altruism. However, volunteers in NZ also conveyed a counter-religious motivation, whereby they were motivated to join CoSA to offer core members an alternative to a faith-dominated circle. The present research extended extant research by exploring subthemes reflecting the motivation underlying each theme, allowing for a deeper understanding as to why some individuals will volunteer with a highly stigmatised group. For example, the subthemes of faith-based
motivation highlighted that a belief within Christianity is to work with the marginalised which was why some volunteers chose to volunteer with such a stigmatised population.

Study Two explored the experiences of CoSA volunteers in New Zealand. Using the a priori categories ‘general experiences’ and ‘experiences of recall or re-offence’. Two main themes were identified for general experiences: ‘life inside a circle’ and ‘life outside a circle’; the subthemes identified within the overarching themes spoke to the life enhancing and sometimes challenging experiences that volunteering with CoSA entailed. The two themes emphasise how the volunteers balance their work with CoSA with their everyday life.

Consistent with previous research (McCartan, 2016), many volunteers in NZ compartmentalised their involvement with CoSA as a defence mechanism against potential negative reactions. However, many volunteers also explained that while they got some negative feedback from community members, most people were interested to hear about their work with CoSA.

Three themes relating to recall/re-offence experiences were identified that highlighted the seemingly contradictory experiences associated with re-offence and recalls: ‘the emotional toll of a recall or re-offence’, ‘commitment to support’, and, ‘a recall is not a sign of failure’. Study two extended extant research by exploring in-depth volunteer experiences of recalls/re-offences committed by core members; these experiences highlight just how challenging volunteering with CoSA can be. As such, it is vital that the volunteers are appropriately trained and supported throughout their involvement with CoSA.

Study Three explored volunteer experiences of the training and support received in NZ, as well as their experiences of what contributes to effective circle functioning. The findings of the present research show that the volunteers get most of their support from the CoSA trainers/coordinator and their fellow volunteers, and the least amount of support from police and family/friends of the core member. The support received from probation officers
was mixed; however, similar to previous findings, this mixed support was based on a lack of understanding about what CoSA involves (Fox, 2013; Höing & Vogelvang, 2011; C, Wilson, et al., 2010). Similar to volunteers in other jurisdictions, the findings of this study showed that overall, the volunteers were satisfied with the training they received (Fox, 2013; McCartan, 2016; Thomas, 2014). However, the qualitative data highlighted mixed responses to the training and support; some thought the training was adequate while others felt like they really struggled. However, all volunteers believed that CoSA worked because each circle could be adapted to the individual core member. Furthermore, many volunteers believed that too much training could undermine the relationship aspect of CoSA; that is, the relationships formed within CoSA minimise the power differences inherent in the relationship between the core member and professional members. Too much training could damage the reciprocal relationships between the core member and volunteers. Finally, the majority of participants were very likely to continue volunteering for at least the next six months. However, all volunteers were passionate about their involvement with CoSA and were keen to see the framework extended. Study Three added to previous research by examining the training and support offered in NZ where CoSA received mixed government support and has experienced a significant setback.

Study Four examined the effect of labelling language compared to neutral, person-first language. This study investigated the impact of labelling on community attitudes towards individuals who have sexually offended as measured by the CATSO (Church et al., 2008). Further, the impact of labelling on volunteering with people with different convictions and with CoSA was examined. Finally, any priming of labels or neutral descriptors on subsequent language use was examined. Consistent with previous research, findings from Study Four illustrated the negative effect of labelling on community attitudes (Harris & Socia, 2016; Imhoff, 2015). The findings of this study supported the hypothesis that
compared to using neutral descriptors, labelling was associated with more negative attitudes towards people who had been convicted for sexual offences and less willingness to volunteer with these individuals. Further, there was a more pronounced effect for labelling on willingness to volunteer with individuals convicted for sexual offences compared to nonsexual offences. That is, many participants determined whether they would consider volunteering with an individual based on the offence, and individuals who had committed sexual offences, or sexual offences against children, were seen as the most dangerous, manipulative, and high-risk population to volunteer with. Finally, the findings supported the hypothesis that using labelling language would prime voluntary use of labels. Study Four extended extant research by examining the effects of labels on attitudes toward individuals assigned the labels, as well as the practical effect on willingness to volunteer and participants’ own language use.

**Implications of the Present Research**

**Implications for volunteer recruitment.** Findings from the current research highlighted that NZ circles were dominated by religious volunteers. Findings also showed that some of the volunteers were concerned that religion could create a barrier between a religious volunteer and a non-religious core member if the core member felt pressure to attend church or religious events. While recruiting from faith groups proved valuable initially, recruitment in the future should focus on attracting diverse volunteers.

Recruiting for CoSA volunteers requires a level of impression management; that is, the advertisement must attract people to volunteer without “scaring” or evoking negative attitudes. Further humanising CoSA is one way in which CoSA can be presented to the public. That is, highlighting the people involved with CoSA and their motivations for volunteering illustrates that there are community members willing to be involved with population. Providing the wider public with real stories of different circles gives people the
opportunity to learn more about the framework and those involved. In turn, this reduces the taboo nature of volunteering with people who have sexually offended.

Indeed, for the first time in New Zealand, CoSA volunteers spoke publicly in an article “Deliver us from evil” about their involvement with CoSA (Chisholm, 2015). The article followed one circle in New Zealand and explained the process of CoSA. Interviews with the volunteers and core member highlighted the benefit of CoSA for the core member and the community, and illustrated a core member making an active effort to live a productive life. Articles such as these give community members the opportunity to view the core member as a productive member of society, as well as showing the public that there are people willing to work alongside punitive policies in a restorative way to support reintegration.

Consistent with previous research (Souza & Dhami, 2008), the volunteers in the current study supported restorative justice initiatives. Current CoSA volunteers will not be the only people supportive of restorative justice; indeed, findings from Study Four showed that there were many people willing to consider volunteering with CoSA. Further, findings from Study Two showed that the responses volunteers got from members of the public were generally supportive, however, many people needed reassurance that CoSA did not mean absolute freedom for the core member. Therefore, promoting CoSA as a framework used in conjunction with strict parole conditions could generate greater interest in restorative justice frameworks. Finding a balance between highlighting the community support aspect of CoSA, and emphasising that the core member remains accountable to the circle and Corrections, may have a wider appeal for recruitment.

**Maintaining effective circles.** An effective circle relies on a functional relationship with the professional members and statutory agencies; therefore, the roles of each stakeholder need to be clear and volunteers are aware of when the professional members will be required
to step in (Höing & Vogelvang, 2011; R. J. Wilson et al., 2008, 2010). Realistic expectations of CoSA and the criminal justice system also need to be clearly conveyed during training. For example, the Parole Board will lean towards caution and ensuring community safety, therefore, the volunteers need to be realistic about what they can expect to do with their core member when released (van Rensburg, 2012).

The above points emphasise the importance of an external circle coordinator to provide ad hoc training and support as required. While there could always be a few volunteers that will not be satisfied with the training, it is important that the training appropriately prepares the volunteers for their role in CoSA, without deterring potential volunteers. Being unpaid work, it is important not to burden the volunteers with significant amounts of training. Therefore, a circle coordinator who provides ongoing training/support on as-needed basis is important to maintain the fidelity of the CoSA model; for example, maintaining contact with a coordinator for advice can support the balance between friendship and managing risk. During the first part of the current study, there was no external coordinator and the volunteers relied on the professional members for training and ongoing support; these volunteers understood the importance of external support organisations and highlighted that such organisations existed in other jurisdictions (Circles UK, 2017; CoSA Canada, 2017). However, the second half of the interviews took place with volunteers when circle coordinators had been appointed who provided ongoing training/support.

Implications for community approaches to criminal justice. While many community members will maintain a punitive position towards individuals convicted for sex offences, open discussion may provide an opportunity for individuals with restorative justice values to come forward and volunteer without the fear of reproach. Many of the volunteers believed that CoSA created a platform to talk about sexual offending and reintegration processes. For many, CoSA as an option for reintegration will remain unpalatable and
controversial, however there will be people in the community who will be willing to volunteer with CoSA, and it is clear that there is a need for more balanced discussion in public domains. The risk management paradigm dominates correctional practice and public attitudes remain negative towards the reintegration of individuals convicted for sexual offences (e.g., Hannem, 2013; Levenson, Brannon et al., 2007; Levenson et al., 2016; Lussier et al., 2011), thus, positioning CoSA as a risk management tool enables a greater level of acceptance with the public.

While the dominant discourse in criminal justice is punitive, findings from this thesis illustrate that many people are in fact open to discussion regarding community engagement with criminal justice. Consistent with previous research (Richards & McCartan, 2017) community responses to CoSA varied. CoSA volunteers described some negative responses from the public, but the general response was relatively neutral; that is, many community members were encouraging of the volunteers and CoSA, but were not willing to volunteer themselves. Indeed, Study Sour showed that there were community members willing to volunteer and whilst most people had never heard of CoSA, many acknowledged the value of a dedicated and supportive group for an individual reintegrating into the community.

Silverman and D. Wilson (2002) suggest that a viable solution to community violence is found when the criminal justice system engages the community. CoSA engages the community to take an active role in managing risk while supporting individuals reintegrating to become positive, productive, and contributing members of the community. The responses in Study Four illustrates that perhaps not everyone is as unwilling to engage in discussion about community management of individuals convicted for sexual offences. Indeed, while community members may never fully accept this population back into their communities, the CoSA volunteers’ experiences of the public provide counter evidence to the prevailing negative attitudes. The volunteers’ experiences of explaining what CoSA involves
demonstrates that community members can and are able to move constructively beyond the understandable negative emotions elicited by sexual offending, and support a framework that promotes safe reintegration.

Implications for influencing public responses. To reduce bias in written language, the American Psychological Association guidelines states that “a label should not be used in any form that is perceived as pejorative; if such a perception is possible you need to find more neutral terms” (p. 72). An example of neutral terms includes “person first” language; person first language removes the dehumanising nature of labels by naming the person first and the condition second. The structure of the person first sentence separates the person from the behaviour. For example, the language used in the neutral condition in Study Four replaced the “sex offender” label with the person first descriptor “someone who has committed crimes of a sexual nature”.

The issue with labelling is that it conflates the act with the individual and depicts the individual as part of a homogenous group. While many will argue that people who have committed sexual crimes deserve the label, the label is assigned indefinitely (e.g., Mingus & Burchfield, 2012; Robbers, 2009). Another issue with labelling individuals based on a crime they have committed is that differences between the individuals are not recognised when they are subsumed within the label. That is, the crimes are based on normative categories that are subject to change over time or jurisdiction, and therefore, lack scientific validity.

Previous research has asserted that harm reduction is a separate issue from punishment (e.g., Ward & Salmon, 2009, 2011), therefore, the stigmatising use of labelling extends punishment from prison into the community. Maruna and LeBel (2010) stated that “not only must a person accept conventional society in order to go straight, but conventional society must accept that this person has changed as well” (p. 76). Therefore, becoming a
productive member of a community is obstructed if an individual is continually identified by their offence conviction.

Most individuals who are serving a prison sentence will return to a community, therefore, maintaining connections and social support are important. CoSA promotes community engagement and empowers community members to be active within the criminal justice process. Further, CoSA provides one of the few examples where individuals convicted for sex offences are not referred to as “sex offenders”, but as members of a group (“core member”). Other examples include the community based treatment facilities in NZ such as the Safe Network which states that their services are offered to “people who have problematic or concerning sexual behaviours” (Safe Network, 2017) or the Stop program which specifies “services for adolescents and adults who have engaged in harmful sexual behaviour and for children with concerning sexual behaviours” (Stop, 2017). Fostering attitudes that support safe reintegration, removing stigmatising language, and humanising individuals who have offended, functions to support desistance from offending and promotes safer communities.

Limitations

As with all research, the current thesis has limitations that should be kept in mind when interpreting findings. As is common to qualitative research in general, the analysis and interpretation of the transcripts was undoubtedly influenced by the researchers’ personal experience and perspectives. Further, people’s experiences are understood as the product of a broader context and in an interview context, the experiences conveyed are the product of both the interviewer’s and participant’s experiences as well as their interactions during the interview (Stephens, 2011). A number of steps were taken to avoid biases and to ensure consistency; first, the first author conducted and transcribed all interviews. Second, the participants were given access to their transcripts to review and make any edits to ensure they reflected what the participants wanted to say. Finally, the analysis included immersion of the
data by transcribing, proof-reading, and re-reading the transcripts, further ongoing discussion with the research team and reflection of codes and themes were used to challenge analytic assumptions and ensure consistency.

In Part One, while the response rate was reasonable, and the sample size was typical of similar qualitative studies (e.g., Morrow, 2005; Hannem, 2013), it remains possible that volunteers who chose not to participate in the current research were motivated to volunteer for CoSA for other reasons. Those very reasons – for example, wanting to take the law into their own hands or provide another source of monitoring – may have explained why they chose not to participate in the research (i.e., possibly knowing they were not like the other God-based or altruistic volunteers). Further, the findings may not reflect all CoSA volunteers’ experiences of training and support. Selection bias could have occurred whereby volunteers who were satisfied with the training and support participated because they wanted to share their positive experience of training. Conversely, volunteers who were deeply unsatisfied with the training may not have responded because they were disappointed with their experiences as a CoSA volunteer. However, as the analysis illustrated both positive and negative experiences of training and a wide range of views were offered, it is considered unlikely that participants with a specific agenda participated in the interviews. Rather, it could be simply that those volunteers who had the time took part in an interview.

Finally, with regards to Study Four, there are other variables that may explain more variance in attitudes that were not a focus of the current study; for example, previous research has cited educational attainment (e.g., Willis et al., 2013) and level of contact of people who have sexually offended (e.g., Hogue, 1993; Kjelsberg & Loos, 2008) as influencing attitudes towards individuals convicted for sexual offences. Further, recruitment was achieved via the snowball method from the first author’s social network; however, the level of education in the author’s network was quite high. As such, the sample in Study Four was not
representative of the general public and it is not expected that findings will generalise. However, although higher levels of educational attainment are associated with less negative attitudes (Willis et al., 2013), the effects of labelling were still observed in Study Four. Individuals with higher levels of education may rely less on stereotype attribution, therefore, should the sample have been more representative, perhaps the effects of labelling would have been more pronounced.

**Conclusion**

The present research brings together a novel exploration of CoSA volunteers’ motivation and experiences in NZ with an examination in how language can influence willingness to volunteer, community attitudes, and subsequent language use. At a time when CoSA faced unique and significant challenges, volunteer experiences provide valuable insight for future recruitment, ensuring model fidelity, and promoting CoSA to the wider public. In a climate of increasing support for punitive policies, CoSA is a restorative framework that functions effectively alongside the work carried out by professionals. CoSA humanises the individuals who have sexually offended and supports them to become productive members of the community.

While it unlikely that stigmatising language will be completely removed from dialogue, it remains that a small change in language has the possibility to affect larger change for both the individual receiving the label, and the wider community. Thus, if the continued use of labelling language contributes to negative attitudes, hinders community engagement with the criminal justice system, and potentially obstructs the safe reintegration of people leaving prison, perhaps it is time to reframe the representation of people who offend. Supporting empirically-based discussion, and shifting away from reactionary and punitive approaches to crimes, creates the opportunity for alternative, original, or complementary frameworks to be developed, as demonstrated with CoSA.
CoSA started as a grassroots initiative in Canada in 1994; it is unlikely that those initially involved would have anticipated the level of international traction CoSA has gained since then. An individual convicted for sexual offences reintegrating into the community could be seen as a risky liability; however, there are volunteers who chose to take a chance on someone most community members would rather never left prison. CoSA is more than just a promising reintegration framework, it represents a shift toward humanising those involved with the criminal justice system, empowers community members to engage with rehabilitative and reintegration processes, and offers a platform for wider community discussion. It is hoped that findings from this thesis will support the continuation and expansion of CoSA internationally, by supporting and giving voice to the people that make CoSA possible.
REFERENCES


Appendix A: Study One – Two Recruitment Emails:

First Recruitment Email:

Dear CoSA Volunteers,

I am writing to invite you to participate in research exploring volunteer experiences of CoSA. I am conducting this research for my Master’s thesis\(^1\) under the supervision of Dr. Gwenda Willis, through the School of Psychology at the University of Auckland.

Please find an information letter and consent form for this research attached. If you are interested in participating in this research, please contact me directly (contact details are provided in the information letter).

I look forward to hearing from you!

Kind regards,
Giulia Lowe

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Second Recruitment Email:

Dear CoSA volunteers,

Thank you for your response to my request for participation in my research. I have enjoyed meeting and talking to those that were available and I appreciate the time taken out of your day to meet with me.

I am still recruiting participants to interview. If anyone does have the time to meet with me it would be great to hear from you – I am more than happy to interview you at a time and place that suits you.

I am also writing to you today with the link to the online questionnaire for those who cannot commit to the interview but are still interested in participating. The survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

*Survey link*: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/CoSAvolunteers

Please do not hesitate to get in contact if you have any further questions (email: glow024@aucklanduni.ac.nz)

Kind regards,
Giulia Lowe

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\(^1\) *Note*. The CoSA volunteer study started out as a Master’s research project and was upgraded to a PhD after the first recruitment
Appendix B: Study One – Three Participant Information Sheet

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) in New Zealand: Understanding volunteers’ experiences

Names of researchers: Giulia Lowe (PhD candidate), Dr. Gwenda Willis (supervisor)

Introduction to the research team
This research is being conducted by Giulia Lowe for her PhD thesis at the University of Auckland, under the supervision of Dr. Gwenda Willis, a Senior Lecturer and Clinical Psychologist at the University of Auckland.

Research aims and description
You are invited to participate in a study investigating CoSA volunteers’ reasons for volunteering in CoSA in New Zealand, their experiences of CoSA, and personal attributes of volunteers. Without volunteers, CoSA could not operate. Findings will help inform the future recruitment of volunteers as well as volunteers’ training and support needs.

What will participation involve?
If you agree to participate, you will be invited to a semi-structured interview with the researchers. The interview will include questions about your motivation to become a CoSA volunteer and your experiences of CoSA (e.g., what works well and what doesn’t work well, navigating boundaries with core members, satisfaction with training/support provided). In order to protect their confidentiality, we will ask you to avoid naming core members. The interview will take place at a time and place of convenience to you – for example, in your home, at the University of Auckland, or in some other private space. It is anticipated that interviews will last approximately 45 – 60 minutes. The interview would, with your consent, be audio recorded and transcribed by the researchers. You are welcome to review a transcription of the interview (please indicate on the consent form whether you would like to receive a copy of the transcription). Prior to the interview, the researchers will ask you to complete an anonymous online survey which looks at personal attributes including your attitudes towards CoSA core members. This survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.
Anonymity and confidentiality:
Your decision to participate in this research (or not) and all personal information collected from you will remain confidential to the researchers. Transcriptions of interviews will be stored using a code number and not your name. Your name will only appear on the consent form, which will be stored separately from transcriptions. All information collected during this research will be stored in a locked filing cabinet and in password-protected electronic files for six years following publication of research findings. It will only be accessible to the researchers. After six years, all data will be destroyed (paper records will be shredded and electronic files will be permanently deleted).

Research findings will be published as a PhD thesis, and may be published in academic journals and presented at international conferences. Identifying information will be changed, and a pseudonym given to any of your data used in publications arising from this research. This means that your identity will never be made public.
You have the right to withdraw from this study at any time. This includes withdrawal of any information provided up until the date that all data are collated and analysed (approx. date August 2014).

Risks and benefits
There are no anticipated risks to participating in this research. We hope that you find participation in this research encouraging and rewarding of the important work that you do. It is expected that the research findings will be beneficial to your work through helping identify training and support needs of volunteers, as well as helping inform future recruitment of volunteers.

Research findings
You are welcome to a summary of the research findings (please indicate on the consent form whether you would like to receive a copy).
If you have any further questions about this project you can contact the research team or Head of School at the addresses below. If you agree to participate, we will ask you to sign a consent form indicating that you have understood the information in this letter.

Researchers
Giulia Lowe
School of Psychology
The University of Auckland
Ph. 027 7386985
glow024@aucklanduni.ac.nz

Dr. Gwenda Willis (supervisor)
School of Psychology
The University of Auckland
Ph. 09 9234395
g.willis@auckland.ac.nz

For any queries regarding ethical concerns you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Research Office, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 ext. 87830/83761.
Email: humanethics@auckland.ac.nz.
APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 5 May 2014 for 3 years, Reference Number: 011398.
Thank you for taking the time to consider participating in this research!
Appendix C: Study One – Three Interview Consent Form

CONSENT FORM
This form will be held for a period of 6 years following publication of research findings

Circles of Support and Accountability in New Zealand: Understanding volunteers’ experiences

Names of Researchers: Giulia Lowe & Gwenda Willis

I have read the research invitation letter for the above named project. I understood the nature of the research and why I have been selected. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

- I agree to take part in this research.
- I understand that I am free to withdraw participation at any time, and to withdraw any data traceable to me up until data are collated and analysed.
- I understand that interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed, and that I can request for recording to be stopped at any time.
- I would like to receive a copy of the transcription Yes/No (please circle) If Yes, please provide an email address: ____________________________
- I understand that I am able to edit the transcription and return the edited version to the researchers within two weeks of receiving the transcription.
- I understand that all personal information collected from me will remain confidential to the researchers and that no identifying information will be published.
- I understand that all data will be securely stored for 6 years following publication of findings, after which they will be destroyed.
- I would like to receive a summary of the research findings Yes/No (please circle) If Yes, please provide an email address: ____________________________

Name: ____________________________

Signature: _________________________ Date:________________

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 5 May 2014 for 3 years, Reference Number: 011398
Appendix D: Study One – Three Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Introduction to Interview:

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today about your experiences as a CoSA volunteer. As you know, CoSA relies on the generosity of people like yourself to give their time and support to reintegrating prisoners who have no or very little support. We want to hear about your experiences as a volunteer, and some of your personal attributes. Information collected in this research will be used to help with volunteer recruitment and training in the future. I have prepared some questions and will leave some time at the end to talk about anything relevant we might have missed.

Before we start I’ll just ask that you please not discuss details that might identify specific core members – if you want to discuss examples, use a fake name to protect their confidentiality.

Interview Questions:

1) Motivation to Volunteer, reasons for becoming a CoSA volunteer, what CoSA is like for the volunteer:

- How long have you been a CoSA volunteer? How many circles are you a part of?
- How did you become involved in CoSA? Why did you choose to become involved in CoSA? / What led up to your decision?
- Was volunteering with CoSA a difficult decision? Why? Why not?
- How do you explain your involvement with CoSA to other people? (elicit whether explanation changes if speaking to family/friends vs. people don’t know)
- Have your perceptions about people who have sexually offended changed at all since becoming involved with CoSA? How so?
- As you’ll know release of individuals with sexual offences often attracts a lot of negative media attention (ref. recent media item if appropriate). How do you approach/deal with this type of publicity? Are there particular issues which you feel strongly about?
- What specific things do you do to support a core member? (prompt with common things if necessary – e.g., how about assisting core member find housing)
- How do you hold a core member accountable for his behaviour? (e.g., What do you do when a core member doesn’t turn up for a meeting? Or doesn’t do something he said he would do?)
- Would you like to become a member of another circle in future? If so, what would your main motive be? What would your involvement depend on? If no, why not?

2) Process of the circle:

- How long were you visiting the core member prior to his release?
- In your opinion, how well did the Circle Preparation Group help prepare the core member for release? (elicit strengths and weaknesses of CPG and volunteer’s participation in it)
- Were you involved in any of your core member’s temporary releases? If yes: what did you think of the temporary release conditions? (e.g., Were they strict
enough? Too strict? Do you think others should be included – which ones? Were some conditions unnecessary – which ones?)

- How often were you in contact with the core member after his release? What methods of contact did you use (e.g., phone, text, email)?
- What boundaries did you set up between yourself and the core member (e.g., inviting the core member into your home, going to his home, hours you were available to be contacted). Were these boundaries ever an issue? How? How was this resolved between you?
- How do you balance providing support to the core member and holding them accountable when they appear to be doing something inappropriate? Which is the predominant aspect of being a CoSA member for you: support or accountability?
- How do you and other volunteers manage coordination of the circle? How are meetings with other circle volunteers organised? Was there a formal or informally elected leader or coordinator? How was that person selected? In your opinion, how well do you all work together? How effective was the leadership within your circle?
- How effective do you think your circle(s) have been? For what reasons do you think your circle(s) was/ was not effective? What could be done to improve the effectiveness of circles in the future?

3) Training/Support:

- How adequate was the training in terms of:
  …being prepared to deal with and support the specific core member? (Did training prepare you for the core member’s particular needs?)
  …being able to work alongside other members of the circle
  …being able to work alongside other professional members of the circle – e.g. probation, Te Piriti staff
- How could volunteer training be improved? How useful would it be to have an external coordinator (“circles coordinator”) to recruit and train volunteers?
- How would you describe your experience with Probation? Did you experience anything that you did not expect/ were not trained for? How helpful (or not) were parole conditions and the way they were managed?

4) Personal attributes:

I’d like to ask a few questions about your fundamental beliefs and values. Please give some thought to each of these questions.

- Consider for a moment the religious or spiritual dimensions of your life. Please briefly describe your religious or spiritual beliefs
- What else can you tell me that would help me understand your most fundamental beliefs and values about life and the world, the spiritual dimensions of your life, or your philosophy of life?
5) **Concluding the interview:**

Thank you for sharing with me your experiences, to finish the interview…

- Is there anything that we have not spoken about that you would like to comment or share your opinion on?
- Do you have any questions about your participation in this study?

Thank you again for you time and participation in my research.

**Questions added in the second set of interviews:**

Following events from last year and given the recent changes (e.g., restrictions on work to release etc.) within Corrections and CoSA, do you feel that you can still provide meaningful support to your core member?

Any thoughts on the changes and how CoSA is running would be great.
Appendix E: Study Three Anonymous Online Questionnaire

Thank you for participating in this research investigating volunteers’ experiences of CoSA.

As you would have read in the invitation letter, volunteers are vital to CoSA; However, little is known about volunteers’ reasons for participating in CoSA or their experiences of CoSA. Findings from this research will help inform future recruitment of volunteers as well as the training and support needs of volunteers involved with CoSA.

The following questionnaire looks at your motivation to volunteer with CoSA and your satisfaction with the training and support you have received.

The survey will take approximately 10 – 15 minutes to complete. All information collected in the questionnaire will remain anonymous (you will be not asked for your name or any other identifying information).

You have the right to withdraw from this research at any time. This includes withdrawal of any information provided (excluding submitted questionnaire responses which cannot be retrieved because they can’t be traced to you) up until the date that all data are collated and analysed (approx. date August 2014).

This research has been APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 5 May 2014 for three years from 5 May 2014 to 5 May 2017, Reference Number: 011398

To proceed to the questionnaire, please click "next," which indicates you understand the information on this screen and agree to respond to the questionnaire.

Thank you again for your participation in this research!
Demographic information:

What is your gender?
- Female
- Male

What is the date of your birth?
DD/MM/YYYY

What is your ethnicity?
- NZ European
- Maori
- Samoan
- Cook Island
- Tongan
- Niuean
- Chinese
- Indian
- Other
  - Please specify ____________________

What is the highest level of education you have completed?
- Form 3 or 4 / Year 9 or 10
- School certificate / NCEA level 1
- Sixth form certificate / NCEA level 2
- Bursary / University entrance / NCEA level 3
- Tertiary (post-school) certificate or diploma
- Bachelor’s degree
- Bachelor’s degree with Honours
- Masters or Doctoral degree
In what area if your current occupation?

- Beneficiary (public assistance)
- Student
- Administration / Sales
- Education
- Health
- Hospitality or Tourism
- Human Resources / Recruitment
- Other Professional
- Sport / Recreation
- Tradesperson
- Retiree
- Other
  - Please specify ________________

The next section will ask you about your attitudes towards people who sexually offend
COMMUNITY ATTITUDES TOWARDS SEX OFFENDERS SCALE (CATSO)

For each of the statements below please select the number that indicates the extent to which you agree with the statement. The more you agree with a statement the higher the number you should circle. Please concentrate your opinions on released child sex offenders (i.e., adult men with convictions for sexual offending against children).

1. With support and therapy, someone who committed a sexual offence can learn to change their behaviour.
   1 strongly disagree 2 probably disagree 3 probably agree 4 agree 5 strongly agree

2. People who commit sex offences should lose their civil rights (e.g., voting and privacy).
   1 strongly disagree 2 probably disagree 3 probably agree 4 agree 5 strongly agree

3. People who commit sex offences want to have sex more often than the average person.
   1 strongly disagree 2 probably disagree 3 probably agree 4 agree 5 strongly agree

4. Male sex offenders should be punished more severely than female sex offenders.
   1 strongly disagree 2 probably disagree 3 probably agree 4 agree 5 strongly agree

5. Sexual fondling (inappropriate unwarranted touch) is not as bad as rape.
   1 strongly disagree 2 probably disagree 3 probably agree 4 agree 5 strongly agree

6. Sex offenders prefer to stay home alone rather than be around lots of people.
   1 strongly disagree 2 probably disagree 3 probably agree 4 agree 5 strongly agree

7. Most sex offenders do not have close friends.
   1 strongly disagree 2 probably disagree 3 probably agree 4 agree 5 strongly agree

8. Sex offenders have difficulty making friends even if they try real hard.
   1 strongly disagree 2 probably disagree 3 probably agree 4 agree 5 strongly agree
9. The prison sentences sex offenders receive are much too long when compared to the sentence lengths for other crimes.

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10. Sex offenders have high rates of sexual activity.

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<td>probably disagree</td>
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11. Trying to rehabilitate a sex offender is a waste of time.

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12. Sex offenders should wear tracking devices so their location can be pinpointed at any time.

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13. Only a few sex offenders are dangerous.

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14. Most sex offenders are unmarried men.

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15. Someone who uses emotional control when committing a sex offence is not as bad as someone who uses physical control when committing a sex offence.

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16. Most sex offenders keep to themselves.

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17. A sex offence committed against someone the perpetrator knows is less serious than a sex offence committed against a stranger.

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<td>probably disagree</td>
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18. Convicted sex offenders should never be released from prison.

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The next section will ask you some questions about your motivation to join CoSA and your experience of training and support.
To what extent was your decision to become a volunteer with CoSA influenced by:

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<td>The fact that I was helping to keep the community safe.</td>
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<td>I felt I was doing something useful to help someone who would otherwise have no or little help.</td>
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<td>The fact that I got on well with the core member.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>I loved the mutual support aspect of the circle and the fact that we all got along so well.</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>I felt called to this kind of thing.</td>
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<td>I became involved because of my academic interest in this and related areas.</td>
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*I’m interested in the level of support you received from specific people after your core member was released.*

Please indicate the level of support you received from the following people:

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<td>The trainers and Te Piriti staff</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Probation officers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>Family or friends of the core members who were not part of the circle</td>
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<td>The police</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other circle volunteers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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Overall, how would you rate your satisfaction with the training and support received?

Not at all satisfactory — 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 – Highly satisfactory
Finally, I’m interested in your intent to continue volunteering with CoSA.

How likely is it that you will quit your work as a volunteer with CoSA within the next 6 months?

Highly likely – 1   2   3   4   5 – Highly unlikely

How likely is it that you will continue your work as a volunteer with CoSA for the next 2 years?

Highly likely – 1   2   3   4   5 – Highly unlikely

You have completed the questionnaire

If you have any questions or would like further information, please contact Giulia (glow024@aucklanduni.ac.nz)

Thank you for participating in this research
Appendix F: Study Four Social Media Advertisement:

Attitude Study

Participants Needed

You are invited to take part in research investigating attitudes toward different prisoner groups, specifically people who have been convicted for sex offences.

Participation will involve a 15-minute questionnaire and a chance to win one of five $100 Westfield vouchers

Please follow the link to the questionnaire:
https://auckland.au1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_5iONv5vkFum4jSR

Contact Giulia Lowe at glow024@aucklanduni.ac.nz for further information

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE on 15 December 2015 for 3 years. Reference number: 015005
Understanding attitudes toward offender populations in New Zealand

**Introduction to research team:** Thank you for participating in this research investigating attitudes toward different prison groups, and specifically people who have been convicted for sex offences. This research is being conducted by Giulia Lowe for her Doctoral Thesis under the supervision of Dr. Gwenda Willis and Dr. Kerry Gibson, both Clinical Psychologists and Senior Lecturers and the University of Auckland.

**Research aims and description:** This study is investigating attitudes toward different prisoner groups, focusing on people that have committed sex offences. Findings from this research will help inform future recruitment of volunteers for the reintegration framework Circles of Support and Accountability.

This questionnaire will take approximately 10 – 15 minutes to complete and all participants will have the chance to go into the draw to win one of four $100 Westfield vouchers.

**Anonymity and confidentiality:** All information collected in the questionnaire will remain anonymous (you will be not asked for your name or any other identifying information) and there are no consequences for not taking part. To protect your anonymity, please do not include any identifying information about yourself in the open-ended questions. There are no consequences for not taking part in this study.

You have the right to withdraw from this research up until you submit this survey; This is because the questionnaires cannot be retrieved as no identifying information is collected.

**Risks and benefits:** There are no anticipated risks to participating in this research.
**Research findings:** The findings from this research will be published as a Doctoral thesis and may be published in academic journals and presented at national and international conferences. A summary of results will be posted on the Advancing Sexual Abuse Prevention (ASAP) Research Group website (www.asap.auckland.ac.nz).

If you have further questions, please do not hesitate to get in contact with Giulia (email: glow024@aucklanduni.ac.nz).

For any concerns regarding ethical issues you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Research Office, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 ext. 83711. Email: ro-ethics@auckland.ac.nz

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE on 15 December 2015 for 3 years. Reference number: 015005

Thank you again for your participation in this research. If you would like to proceed, please click the “consent and proceed” button below, this indicates that you have read and understood the information on this screen and consent to taking part in this research. The survey will begin on the following screen.

[Consent and Proceed]
Demographic Information:

What is your gender?

- Female
- Male

What is the date of your birth?

DD/MM/YYYY

What is your ethnicity?

- NZ European
- Maori
- Samoan
- Cook Island
- Tongan
- Niuean
- Chinese
- Indian
- Other
  - Please specify _________________

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- Form 3 or 4 / Year 9 or 10
- School certificate / NCEA level 1
- Sixth form certificate / NCEA level 2
- Bursary / University entrance / NCEA level 3
- Tertiary (post-school) certificate or diploma
- Bachelor’s degree
- Bachelor’s degree with Honours
- Masters or Doctoral degree
In what area if your current occupation?

- Beneficiary (public assistance)
- Student
- Administration / Sales
- Education
- Health
- Hospitality or Tourism
- Human Resources / Recruitment
- Other Professional
- Sport / Recreation
- Tradesperson
- Retiree
- Other
  - Please specify ________________

The next section will ask you about your attitudes towards sex offenders
COMMUNITY ATTITUDES TOWARDS SEX OFFENDERS SCALE (CATSO)

For each of the statements below please select the number that indicates the extent to which you agree with the statement. The more you agree with a statement the higher the number you should circle. Please concentrate your opinions on released child sex offenders (i.e., adult men with convictions for sexual offending against children).

1. With support and therapy, sex offenders can learn to change their behaviour.
   1. With support and therapy, sex offenders can learn to change their behaviour.
   1. With support and therapy, sex offenders can learn to change their behaviour.
   1. With support and therapy, sex offenders can learn to change their behaviour.
   1. With support and therapy, sex offenders can learn to change their behaviour.
   1. With support and therapy, sex offenders can learn to change their behaviour.

2. Sex offenders should lose their civil rights (e.g., voting and privacy).
   1. Sex offenders should lose their civil rights (e.g., voting and privacy).
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   1. Sex offenders should lose their civil rights (e.g., voting and privacy).
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3. Sex offenders want to have sex more often than the average person.
   1. Sex offenders want to have sex more often than the average person.
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   1. Sex offenders want to have sex more often than the average person.
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   1. Sex offenders want to have sex more often than the average person.

4. Male sex offenders should be punished more severely than female sex offenders.
   1. Male sex offenders should be punished more severely than female sex offenders.
   1. Male sex offenders should be punished more severely than female sex offenders.
   1. Male sex offenders should be punished more severely than female sex offenders.
   1. Male sex offenders should be punished more severely than female sex offenders.
   1. Male sex offenders should be punished more severely than female sex offenders.

5. Sexual fondling (inappropriate unwarranted touch) is not as bad as rape.
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6. Sex offenders prefer to stay home alone rather than be around lots of people.
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   1. Sex offenders prefer to stay home alone rather than be around lots of people.
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7. Most sex offenders do not have close friends.
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8. Sex offenders have difficulty making friends even if they try real hard.
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   1. Sex offenders have difficulty making friends even if they try real hard.
   1. Sex offenders have difficulty making friends even if they try real hard.
9. The prison sentences sex offenders receive are much too long when compared to the sentence lengths for other crimes.  

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10. Sex offenders have high rates of sexual activity.  

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11. Trying to rehabilitate a sex offender is a waste of time.  

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12. Sex offenders should wear tracking devices so their location can be pinpointed at any time.  

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13. Only a few sex offenders are dangerous.  

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14. Most sex offenders are unmarried men.  

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16. Most sex offenders keep to themselves.  

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17. A sex offence committed against someone the perpetrator knows is less serious than a sex offence committed against a stranger.  

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18. Convicted sex offenders should never be released from prison.

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The next section will ask you some questions about your whether you would consider volunteering with different offenders in volunteer programs offered in prison (e.g., prison fellowship, tutoring etc.)
Using the 7-point Likert scale below, please indicate how likely or unlikely each of the following questions are:

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<th>7 - Highly unlikely/ Would not consider at all</th>
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<td>Would you consider volunteering with female offenders?</td>
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<td>Would you consider volunteering with male offenders?</td>
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<td>Would you consider volunteering with theft convicts?</td>
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<td>Would you consider volunteering with child sex offender?</td>
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Please briefly explain your answer to the previous question (How likely or unlikely you are to volunteer with different prisoner groups)

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) are groups of volunteers that act as a support group for sex offenders. CoSA was developed to strengthen the pro-social support networks of high-risk sex offenders and assist with their reintegration. A CoSA consists of a sex offender (known as the “core member”) and a group of volunteers who support the offender during their transition from prison to the community. A CoSA circle supports the sex offender for about a year following release. The volunteers are trained and supported by professional members such as psychologists or probation officers. CoSA has shown to be effective, reducing re-offending by 70% when compared to matched cases or predicted reoffending risk (Wilson, Cortoni, & McWhinnie, 2009; Wilson, Picheca, & Prinzo, 2005).

Would you consider volunteering as a member of Circles of Support and Accountability?

*Please note that your answer does not in any way obligate you to volunteer for CoSA. The research is anonymous and you will not be contacted after the questionnaire.*

☐ Yes  ☐ No

Please briefly explain

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

Prize draw:

If you wish to go into the draw for one of the five $100 Countdown vouchers, please provide a contact email. *Please note that this information will not be associated with your data.*

____________________________________________________________________

You have completed the questionnaire

If you have any questions or would like further information, please contact Giulia (glow024@aucklanduni.ac.nz)

Thank you for participating in this research
Appendix H: Study Four Questionnaire Using Neutral Descriptors

Understanding attitudes toward people who have offended in New Zealand

Introduction to research team: Thank you for participating in this research investigating attitudes toward people with different convictions, and specifically people who have been convicted for sex offences. This research is being conducted by Giulia Lowe for her Doctoral Thesis under the supervision of Dr. Gwenda Willis and Dr. Kerry Gibson, both Clinical Psychologists and Senior Lecturers at the University of Auckland.

Research aims and description: This study is investigating attitudes toward people with different convictions, focusing on people that have committed sex offences. Findings from this research will help inform future recruitment of volunteers for the reintegration framework Circles of Support and Accountability.

This questionnaire will take approximately 10 – 15 minutes to complete and all participants will have the chance to go into the draw to win one of five $100 Countdown vouchers.

Anonymity and confidentiality: All information collected in the questionnaire will remain anonymous (you will be not asked for your name or any other identifying information) and there are no consequences for not taking part. To protect your anonymity, please do not include any identifying information about yourself in the open-ended questions. There are no consequences for not taking part in this study.

You have the right to withdraw from this research up until you submit this survey; This is because the questionnaires cannot be retrieved as no identifying information is collected.

Risks and benefits: There are no anticipated risks to participating in this research.
Research findings: The findings from this research will be published as a Doctoral thesis, and may be published in academic journals and presented at national and international conferences. A summary of results will be posted on the Advancing Sexual Abuse Prevention (ASAP) Research Group website (www.asap.auckland.ac.nz).

If you have further questions, please do not hesitate to get in contact with Giulia (email: glow024@aucklanduni.ac.nz).

For any concerns regarding ethical issues you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Research Office, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 ext. 83711. Email: ro-ethics@auckland.ac.nz

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE on 15 December 2015 for 3 years. Reference number: 015005

Thank you again for your participation in this research. If you would like to proceed, please click the “consent and proceed” button below, this indicates that you have read and understood the information on this screen and consent to taking part in this research. The survey will begin on the following screen.

Consent and Proceed
Demographic Information:

What is your gender?
- [ ] Female
- [ ] Male

What is the date of your birth?
DD/MM/YYYY

What is your ethnicity?
- [ ] NZ European
- [ ] Maori
- [ ] Samoan
- [ ] Cook Island
- [ ] Tongan
- [ ] Niuean
- [ ] Chinese
- [ ] Indian
- [ ] Other
  - Please specify _________________

What is the highest level of education you have completed?
- [ ] Form 3 or 4 / Year 9 or 10
- [ ] School certificate / NCEA level 1
- [ ] Sixth form certificate / NCEA level 2
- [ ] Bursary / University entrance / NCEA level 3
- [ ] Tertiary (post-school) certificate or diploma
- [ ] Bachelor’s degree
- [ ] Bachelor’s degree with Honours
- [ ] Masters or Doctoral degree
In what area if your current occupation?

- Beneficiary (public assistance)
- Student
- Administration / Sales
- Education
- Health
- Hospitality or Tourism
- Human Resources / Recruitment
- Other Professional
- Sport / Recreation
- Tradesperson
- Retiree
- Other
  - Please specify ________________

The next section will ask you about your attitudes towards people who have been convicted for sexual offences
### ATTITUDES TOWARDS INDIVIDUALS CONVICTED FOR SEX OFFENCES

For each of the statements below please select the number that indicates the extent to which you agree with the statement. The more you agree with a statement the higher the number you should circle. Please concentrate your opinions on individuals who have committed sexual offences against children (i.e., adult men with convictions for sexual offending against children).

1. With support and therapy, someone who committed a sexual offence can learn to change their behaviour.

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2. People who commit sex offences should lose their civil rights (e.g., voting and privacy).

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3. People who commit sex offences want to have sex more often than the average person.

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4. Males who commit crimes of a sexual nature sex offenders should be punished more severely than females who commit crimes of a sexual nature.

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5. Sexual fondling (inappropriate unwarranted touch) is not as bad as rape.

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6. People who commit crimes of a sexual nature prefer to stay home alone rather than be around lots of people.

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7. Most people who commit crimes of a sexual nature do not have close friends.

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8. Most people who commit crimes of a sexual nature have difficulty making friends even if they try real hard.

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9. The prison sentences for people who commit crimes of a sexual nature are much too long when compared to the sentence lengths for other crimes.

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<td>strongly disagree</td>
<td>probably disagree</td>
<td>probably agree</td>
<td>agree</td>
<td>strongly agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17. A sex offence committed against someone the individual knows is less serious than a sex offence committed against a stranger.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>strongly disagree</td>
<td>strongly disagree</td>
<td>probably disagree</td>
<td>probably agree</td>
<td>agree</td>
<td>strongly agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
18. People who have been convicted for crimes of a sexual nature should never be released from prison.

1 strongly disagree 2 disagree 3 probably disagree 4 probably agree 5 agree 6 strongly agree

The next section will ask you some questions about your whether you would consider volunteering in volunteer programs offered in prison (e.g., prison fellowship, tutoring etc.)
Using the 7-point Likert scale below, please indicate how likely or unlikely each of the following questions are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Would you consider volunteering with females who have offended?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you consider volunteering with males who have offended?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you consider volunteering with someone convicted for theft?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you consider volunteering with someone convicted for assault?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you consider volunteering with someone convicted for murder?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you consider volunteering with someone who has sexually offended?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you consider volunteering with someone who has sexually offended against children?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please briefly explain your answer to the previous question (How likely or unlikely you are to volunteer with different prisoner groups)

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________
Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) are groups of volunteers that act as a support group for individuals convicted for sex offences. CoSA was developed to strengthen the pro-social support networks and assist with the reintegration of individuals who have committed sexual offences and are rated as high risk. A CoSA consists of a core member (the individual convicted for sexual offences) and a group of volunteers who support the individual during their transition from prison to the community. A CoSA circle supports the sex offender for about a year following release. The volunteers are trained and supported by professional members such as psychologists or probation officers. CoSA has shown to be effective, reducing re-offending by 70% when compared to matched cases or predicted reoffending risk (Wilson, Cortoni, & McWhinnie, 2009; Wilson, Picheca, & Prinzo, 2005).

Would you consider volunteering as a member of Circles of Support and Accountability?

*Please note that your answer does not in any way obligate you to volunteer for CoSA. The research is anonymous and you will not be contacted after the questionnaire.*

☐ Yes
☐ No

Please briefly explain
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________

Prize draw:

If you wish to go into the draw for one of the five $100 Countdown vouchers, please provide a contact email. *Please note that this information will not be associated with your data.*

You have completed the questionnaire

If you have any questions or would like further information, please contact Giulia (glow024@aucklanduni.ac.nz)

Thank you for participating in this research