

CoSA at OCRIC: Evaluating Support Groups as Reentry Tools for Formerly Incarcerated Individuals

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Literature Review

Millions of American adults are incarcerated in local jails and state and federal prisons. Another several million are under criminal justice supervision in the community (Martin and Garcia 2022). During the final quarter of the 20th century, the per capita rate of imprisonment increased fourfold, climbing from 110 per 100,000 in 1973 to 470 per 100,000 individuals in 2003 (Sawyer 2019). In the United States, time and effort has been dedicated to developing effective restorative justice programs in order to rehabilitate formerly incarcerated individuals and bring them back into their communities. But what benefit do these programs truly provide? To determine the effects of restorative justice programs on life satisfaction and sense of community in formerly incarcerated individuals, we conducted a literature review.

Reentry is a critical transition for individuals returning to their communities; however, the unique needs of these individuals—such as mental health services—can complicate this transition. Thus, the reentry process is highly individualized. Relatedly, it is difficult to measure individuals' pathways to community reintegration. Previous literature has consistently highlighted that neighborhood factors, employment, and social support are vital to post-release success. Structural and social features of neighborhoods affect a variety of individual postrelease outcomes including housing availability, proximity to jobs, and access to healthcare services (Visher and Travis 2003). The Boston Reentry Survey found that employment correlated significantly with well-being for formerly incarcerated individuals, as it provides a source of income and helps build pride, social status, and routine (Western et al. 2015). Perceived social support, such as from family and romantic partners, has been shown to be inversely associated with both anxiety and depression for formerly incarcerated individuals (Muñoz-Laboy et al. 2013; Heidemann 2014). In sum, definitive evidence from previous studies shows that post-release success is, in general, highly positively correlated to housing security, employment, mental and physical health treatment, and social support.

Reentry or restorative justice programs often provide the support and structure needed for formerly incarcerated individuals to adequately adjust and reintegrate into their communities. Participation alone in these programs has often been linked to significant reductions in recidivism rates (Braga, Piehl, and Hureau 2009; Zhang, Roberts, and Callanan 2006). In 2009, the results of the Boston Reentry Initiative were published, a program dedicated to increasing public safety by aiding individuals formerly incarcerated for violent offenses in their transitions out of prison. The study found that participation in the program alone, which consisted of panel discussions and counseling sessions, resulted in a 30% lower recidivism rate as compared to individuals formerly incarcerated for violent offenses who were not enrolled in the reentry initiative (Braga, Piehl, and Hureau 2009). Zhang, Roberts, and Callanan (2006) conducted a similar study in California, with the goal of determining whether or not state run reentry programs were cost effective investments for the state. In addition to deducing that state-run reentry programs would be both beneficial and cost effective, it was discovered that increased participation in reentry programs led to “monotonic incremental benefits,” such that

participants who attended more program meetings, whether through a longer period of engagement or a higher rate of attendance, were less likely to recidivate (Zhang, Roberts, and Callanan 2006). Overall, the literature clearly demonstrates that participation in reentry programs improves life outcomes, primarily by significantly reducing recidivism rates in formerly incarcerated individuals.

Prior work has shown that the attitudes of formerly incarcerated individuals can greatly influence their outcomes and the effectiveness of their reintegration (Mathlin, Freestone, and Jones 2022; Graffam et al. 2004). Having a positive attitude about reintegrating into one's community, as well as feeling ready for reentry and change, are both important factors throughout the process of reintegration. Mathlin, Freestone, and Jones (2022) concluded, from a systematic review, that individuals with a poor "recovery perception," or pessimistic belief about their ability to avoid recidivating, were, in fact, more likely to recidivate. On the other hand, those who believe they can make change in their life and reintegrate are more likely to, most likely because of perceived control over life outcomes (Mathlin, Freestone, and Jones 2022). In an interview-based study conducted by Graffam in 2004, many formerly incarcerated individuals identified "readiness to change" as a major factor in their ability to successfully reenter society. In addition, multiple types of fear, including fear of change, failure, society, and humiliation, proved to impede the reintegration process, implying the influence of attitude on likelihood of successful reentry (Graffam et al. 2004). With attitude playing such an integral role in the reentry of formerly incarcerated individuals, it is believed to be a mediator in the reintegration process, arising from participation in reentry programs and ultimately impacting life satisfaction and outcomes.

While CoSA program participation and buy-in influence community integration and life satisfaction, it is important to take into account an individual's circumstances before and during incarceration (Visher and Travis 2003). For example, results from a series of studies conducted by the Texas Criminal Justice Policy Council showed that formerly incarcerated individuals with higher education levels were more likely to obtain employment, have higher wages, and experience lower barriers to community reintegration following release from prison (Fabelo 2002). Similarly, longer prison sentences are shown to further isolate formerly incarcerated individuals from the labor force, potentially influencing the difficulty of their community reintegration process (Roach and Schanzenbach 2015). Orange County is predominantly Caucasian and aging; nearly a quarter (23%) of their 30,000 residents are over 65 and 97% is white (U.S. Census Bureau 2022). Previous research suggests that demographic characteristics, such as race and age, influence the level of support experienced post incarceration. (Maschi et al. 2014). Finally, women make up a growing share of incarcerated populations, and have different needs in reentry as compared to formerly incarcerated men (Sawyer 2019). For these reasons, time in prison, educational level, age, gender, and race all influence life satisfaction and community reintegration to varying degrees for individuals.

Though most research regarding formerly incarcerated individuals focuses on preventing and analyzing recidivism, not a lot of studies have been conducted to investigate alternative variables corresponding to life outcomes. Therefore, the present study is concerned with how formerly incarcerated individuals both reintegrate into their community and experience life satisfaction through participation in a reentry program. In studying this, it is hoped that reentry programming can be optimized to best serve the needs of formerly incarcerated individuals. In addition, there is a substantial lack of longitudinal data on both life satisfaction and community reintegration in formerly incarcerated individuals. With previous studies employing cross-sectional study designs, the changes in life satisfaction over time in formerly incarcerated individuals have not been able to be studied. Recent studies have even called for more longitudinal research, as there is a need to track the reintegration of formerly incarcerated individuals across timepoints. With a community partner selected, the Orange County Restorative Justice Center (OCRJC), this study aimed at answering the question: How does participation in the OCRJC's Circles of

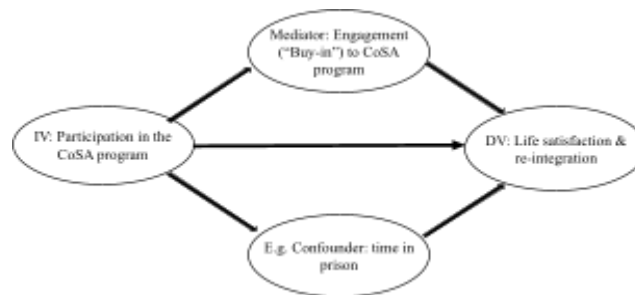
Support and Accountability (CoSA) program correlate with life satisfaction and sense of community in formerly incarcerated individuals?

Methods

The goal of this study is to examine the relationship between participation in support groups in relation to life satisfaction and reintegration for formerly incarcerated individuals. Because this study is being designed for the Orange County Restorative Justice Center (OCRJC), the specific support group that will be evaluated in relation to research participant outcomes is the Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) program offered by the OCRJC. The subjects of the study are thus the formerly incarcerated individuals enrolled in the CoSA program, who are known within the CoSA program as core members. Core member outcomes will be assessed via longitudinal survey data collected at specified intervals during subject enrollment in CoSA. Subject engagement with their CoSA program will be assessed in the same fashion. The relationship between the outcomes and the participation is explained—or mediated—by the engagement in our model.

As alluded to in the above paragraph, the target population in our study model are the CoSA program core members. At the OCRJC, there are roughly 5 core members participating in CoSA at any given time. Given this constraint, our model does not include sampling, and recommends the OCRJC administer the study to as many core members as possible in order to build a sufficient sample size. However, given the sensitivity concerns relative to certain aspects of the study, our model recommends that OCRJC reserve the right to exclude certain core members from the study (e.g. If the OCRJC has identified a core member to be struggling with suicidality and deems the risk of administering survey questions relating to life satisfaction to outweigh the benefit of that core member’s participation in the study). Given the constraints and related concerns of accruing a sufficient sample size in this study, we also recommend that the OCRJC share our model with other restorative justice centers in Vermont and New Hampshire that employ CoSA programs in order to construct a larger sample population in a shorter time frame.

Our model recommends a quantitative research method as the optimal way to assess data in relation to CoSA programs and core member outcomes. One advantage of quantitative data for the OCRJC is to identify data-based patterns in outcomes and/or program engagement that will allow for more efficient and effective program improvement than would qualitative data. The conceptual model for this quantitative is as follows:



In this model, we use participation—as measured by time—in the CoSA program as our independent variable. Our dependent variables are life satisfaction and reintegration, the latter of which is further broken down into two separate variables: personal relationship success and community reintegration success. The core mediator in our model is core member engagement (and ‘buy-in’) to the CoSA program. Potential confounders, such as the duration of a core member’s term of incarceration are also identified in the model. The model’s variables are named as follows:

Independent Variable (1): “CTIME”

Dependent Variables (3): “LIFESAT” “RELSUCC” “COMMSUCC”

Mediator (1): "COSAENG"

The independent variable, "CTIME" is operationalized as the time (measured to the nearest month, inclusive of zero) since a core member began their CoSA program. The three dependent variables, as well as the mediators, are measured via survey data, and a 'score' for each variable can be derived from survey data. This operationalization process will become clear later in the method section, when analyzing the survey data is discussed.

We recommend OCRJC use pen-and-paper surveys to collect data from core members, and have designed surveys fitting that recommendation. Our surveys include:

1. A 14-question baseline survey, in which only dependent variable (outcome) data is collected, with the exception of Q14. (see APPENDIX B)
2. A 20-question follow-up survey, in which dependent variable AND mediator ("COSAENG") data is collected. The first 14 questions are identical to the baseline. (see APPENDIX C)
3. A 25-question final survey, where 5 demographic and confounder-related questions are asked following an identical first 20 questions to the follow-up survey. (see APPENDIX D)

All surveys are expected to take no more than 15 minutes to complete. All questions in our surveys are written at a high-school or below reading level to avoid accessibility concerns relating to reading comprehension of core members. With the exception of the 5 demographic questions on the final survey (which collect optional, close-ended written answers) all questions are answered by core members on an integer scale of 1 to 6 based on how accurately a statement reflects their opinions, emotions, or experiences. We recommend OCRJC administer the baseline survey to core member study participants within 2 weeks of entering the CoSA program, and the follow-up surveys at 3-month intervals from that date. Core members typically participate in CoSA for either 12 or 15 months, so the final survey should be administered at a "CTIME" value of either '12' or '15,' depending on the participants' circumstance. Consent and confidentiality for "core member" study participants during their enrollment in a CoSA are of paramount importance in this study. For this reason, our model recommends that OCRJC ensures consent at every instance a core member responds to a survey (see APPENDIX A and APPENDIX B). Further, our surveys never ask for names: core members choose a 3-digit code to sign as a marker of consent, and that code also allows for OCRJC to track their survey data across different "CTIME" values. These measures combine to incentivize dishonest and assuage participant concern over their data being identifiable.

This data collected model has several advantages for the OCRJC. First, variable 'scores' can be in relation to "CTIME" values, allowing for cross-participant patterns and correlations to be identified. Secondly, because 'scores' are composites spanning multiple questions, the model is more resistant to negative effects on data caused by core members who skip questions while taking the survey. Third, the "COSAENG" mediator contains several components that can illuminate CoSA program successes and shortcomings for the OCRJC, thus informing data-driven internal improvement at the OCRJC. With a full understanding of our model, we hypothesize that (a) "COSAENG" 'scores' will be positively correlated with "LIFESAT", "RELSUCC" and "COMMSUCC" scores, and (b) "COSAENG" 'scores' will typically rise as "CTIME" values increase. While our model does not prove causality, data can certainly be used to support or detract from these hypotheses. In all, we are confident that this model offers to OCRJC a safe, beneficial, and scalable tool that can help the center improve their program over time, thus improving life outcomes for their clientele.

Ethical Considerations

The ethical considerations outlined in the Belmont principles that are mediated in our study are:

Respect of Persons: Formerly incarcerated individuals may feel decreased autonomy, especially with disclosing sensitive information. We included a clause in the consent form stating that “the participant can refuse to participate” to increase autonomy. According to the consent form, participants have the choice to decide whether or not they want to answer any questions on the survey. To avoid participant coercion, we have mentioned in our form of consent that the research study is voluntary and independent of the restorative justice process, as the OCRJC programs are legally mandatory for participants.

Beneficence: We have determined that the benefits far outweigh the risks for our study. Risks and benefits of the study have been made clear in the informed consent form. We have avoided potentially triggering language to minimize the risk of mental harm, which was mentioned in the consent form. Confidentiality has been maintained through asking the study participants not-easily identifiable questions in the survey. Those vulnerable to potentially upsetting questions will be omitted from the studied sample; this is up to the discretion of the OCRJC. Data will be withheld from study researchers until after the CoSA program ends for survey participants. The data will only be withheld in the study database, which will be erased 10 years after publication.

Justice: In our consent form, we have outlined the benefits of the study “to suggest/create improvements” to increase formerly incarcerated individuals’ community and life satisfaction in restorative justice programs. By attempting to sample the whole population of CoSA participants, we can obtain a representative sample that may ultimately improve the accuracy/reliability of conclusions with regards to the sampled group (rural restorative justice program participants). By ensuring that our research questions are not exploitative/manipulative in any way or internally stigmatizing the participants while conducting our research we are maintaining justice. We have also made sure that the survey and research process is made clear in the consent form.

Feasibility & Significance

The organizational structure of the OCRJC varies by program, however, we know that there are five permanent full time employees supported by volunteers and a Board of Trustees. They have been incredibly responsive to us about our project to see how our interests may intersect with their needs. Our communication has been with Kym Anderson, the Director of Reentry and Community Justice Programs, who has facilitation conversations with the center and participants. Kym has stated that one of their goals is evaluating the effectiveness of the CoSA program in facilitating community reintegration for formerly incarcerated individuals.

Our study consists of longitudinal handwritten surveys that meet the goals of the OCRJC and have been confirmed as doable by Kym and correlate to the CoSA program schedule. Because the program can only accommodate a small number of participants, multiple years worth of surveys may be needed to collect enough samples for accurate data analysis. The surveys are on pen and paper, and given to the participants to fill out at the end of one of their weekly meetings, making it easy to replicate. The survey questions are written at an early high school reading level and are modeled off the Good Lives Model of the Offender Rehabilitation framework, which the CoSA program follows. We hope that the continuous consent process will allow these individuals to reflect on their experiences in an honest and open manner.

We hope that through this proposal, we will be able to provide OCRJC with a research design that fulfills their needs and gives them the tools to successfully evaluate their program as well as make any changes necessary to best support the local Vermont community. We may contribute to academia by providing a rural perspective to existing literature on community reintegration for recently incarcerated individuals, which currently emphasizes urban settings.

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Appendix A: Baseline Consent Form

We are asking you to participate in a research study titled “**CoSA Outcomes and Program Success**”. We will describe this study to you and answer any of your questions.

What the study is about

The research looks at the impact of the Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) on life satisfaction and sense of community. The research will be used to evaluate the success of such programs and to suggest improvements in the future.

What we will ask you to do

We will ask you to complete 5 handwritten surveys relating to your life satisfaction, community experiences, and some background information. Surveys will be given every 3 months and will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Sharing De-identified Data Collected in this Research

We will remove any personal information that could identify you before the data is analyzed. We will also erase the data of the study 10 years after publication. Despite these measures, we cannot guarantee anonymity of your survey responses, but your confidentiality will be maintained while you are a participant in a CoSA.

Risks and discomforts

By participation in the study, you are willing to accept the following risks:

- Legal risks: activities that may require reporting to authorities
- Emotional risks: potentially triggering questions and recall of unfavorable memories

Taking part is voluntary

Filling surveys associated with the study are entirely voluntary and are **not** required for participation in CoSA or other programs conducted by the OCRJC. You may refuse to participate before the study begins, stop at any time, or skip any questions/steps that may make you feel uncomfortable, with no penalty to you, and no effect on your record or relationship with the OCRJC.

If you have questions

The main researcher conducting this study is Kym Anderson, the Director of Reentry & Community Justice Programs at the OCRJC. If you have questions, you may contact Kym at kym@ocrjvt.org or at 802-636-7104.

Statement of Consent

I have read the above information, and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in the study.

Your Signature _____ Date _____

Your Name (printed) _____

Appendix B: Baseline Survey

Today's Date: _____

The following survey was developed to help OCRJC assess the CoSA program. The goal of this study is to measure the effects of CoSA in the lives of the "core members." Your participation in this study is voluntary. Please note that your answers are anonymous. Your answers will not influence your standing in the CoSA program, and they will not be analyzed until you have finished your CoSA.

We encourage you to answer all questions honestly, even if your answers indicate that you are struggling and/or not enjoying CoSA. Your honesty will help us improve the CoSA program for future core members. If any of the questions in the survey upset you, please use the following resources:

Resource 1 (added by OCRJC)

Resource 2 (added by OCRJC)

Resource 3 (added by OCRJC)

We encourage you to answer all questions, but if a question is too upsetting or you do not have an answer then you may skip it. Surveys will be given to you roughly every 3 months. If you have any questions about this survey or study, please contact Kym Anderson at kym@ocrjvt.org or 802-636-7104.

Thank you for participating in our survey! YOUR PARTICIPATION IS THIS STUDY IS VOLUNTARY, AND YOU CAN STOP AT ANY TIME.

If you consent to participate, please think of and write a personalized 3 digit code here:

REMEMBER YOUR CODE!

Instructions: For each question, please CIRCLE THE NUMBER/LETTER that best describes how accurate the statement is in your life.

Q1: Most days, I feel more satisfied with my life than not.

1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = slightly disagree 4 = slightly agree 5 = agree 6 = strongly agree

Q2: Most days, I feel that the conditions of my life are okay.

1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = slightly disagree 4 = slightly agree 5 = agree 6 = strongly agree

Q3: Most days, I feel I am making progress towards getting the important things I want in life.

1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = slightly disagree 4 = slightly agree 5 = agree 6 = strongly agree

Q4: Most days, I feel better about my life than I used to.

1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = slightly disagree 4 = slightly agree 5 = agree 6 = strongly agree

Q5: I have enough people in my life to reach out to if I am struggling.

1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = slightly disagree 4 = slightly agree 5 = agree 6 = strongly agree

Q6: I have the ideal amount of close friends for me.

1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = slightly disagree 4 = slightly agree 5 = agree 6 = strongly agree

Q7: I am as close to my family as I want to be.

1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = slightly disagree 4 = slightly agree 5 = agree 6 = strongly agree

Instructions: For each question, please CIRCLE THE NUMBER/LETTER that best describes how accurate the statement is in your life. To remind you, your answers are anonymous!

Q8: I would feel comfortable pursuing a romantic relationship.

0 = I am in a relationship
1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = slightly disagree 4 = slightly agree 5 = agree 6 = strongly agree

Q9: Most days, I feel lonely or isolated.

1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = slightly disagree 4 = slightly agree 5 = agree 6 = strongly agree

Q10: Most days, I feel accepted by the local community.

1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = slightly disagree 4 = slightly agree 5 = agree 6 = strongly agree

Q11: Most days, I feel comfortable talking to people I don't know well.

1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = slightly disagree 4 = slightly agree 5 = agree 6 = strongly agree

Q12: Most days, I am nervous that I will be judged in the local community.

1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = slightly disagree 4 = slightly agree 5 = agree 6 = strongly agree

Q13: Most days, I am comfortable leaving my house and engaging with the local community.

1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = slightly disagree 4 = slightly agree 5 = agree 6 = strongly agree

Q14: I believe the CoSA program will help me make progress in my life.

1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = slightly disagree 4 = slightly agree 5 = agree 6 = strongly agree

YOU HAVE REACHED THE END OF THIS SURVEY. THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING!

Appendix C: Follow Up Survey

Today's Date: _____

The following survey was developed to help OCRJC assess the CoSA program. The goal of this study is to measure the effects of CoSA in the lives of the "core members." Your participation in this study is voluntary. Please note that your answers are anonymous. Your answers will not influence your standing in the CoSA program, and they will not be analyzed until you have finished your CoSa.

We encourage you to answer all questions honestly, even if your answers indicate that you are struggling and/or not enjoying CoSA. Your honesty will help us improve the CoSA program for future core members. If any of the questions in the survey upset you, please use the following resources:

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We encourage you to answer all questions, but if a question is too upsetting or you do not have an answer then you may skip it. Surveys will be given to you roughly every 3 months. If you have any questions about this survey or study, please contact Kym Anderson at kym@ocrjvt.org or at 802-636-7104.

Thank you for participating in our survey! YOUR PARTICIPATION IS THIS STUDY IS VOLUNTARY, AND YOU CAN STOP AT ANY TIME.

If you consent to participate, please write your personalized 3 digit code here:

REMEMBER YOUR CODE!

Instructions: For each question, please CIRCLE THE NUMBER/LETTER that best describes how accurate the statement is in your life. If you do not understand a question, you can ask for clarification!

Q1: Most days, I feel more satisfied with my life than not.

1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = slightly disagree 4 = slightly agree 5 = agree 6 = strongly agree

Q2: Most days, I feel that the conditions of my life are okay.

1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = slightly disagree 4 = slightly agree 5 = agree 6 = strongly agree

Q3: Most days, I feel I am making progress towards getting the important things I want in life.

1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = slightly disagree 4 = slightly agree 5 = agree 6 = strongly agree

Q4: Most days, I feel better about my life than I used to.

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Q5: I have enough people in my life to reach out to if I am struggling.

1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = slightly disagree 4 = slightly agree 5 = agree 6 = strongly agree

Q6: I have the ideal amount of close friends for me.

1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = slightly disagree 4 = slightly agree 5 = agree 6 = strongly agree

Q7: I am as close to my family as I want to be.

1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = slightly disagree 4 = slightly agree 5 = agree 6 = strongly agree

Instructions: For each question, please CIRCLE THE NUMBER/LETTER that best describes how accurate the statement is in your life. To remind you, your answers are ^{confidential} anonymous! If you do not understand a question, you can ask for clarification.

Q8: I would feel comfortable pursuing a romantic relationship.

0 = I am in a relationship
1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = slightly disagree 4 = slightly agree 5 = agree 6 = strongly agree

Q9: Most days, I feel lonely or isolated.

1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = slightly disagree 4 = slightly agree 5 = agree 6 = strongly agree

Q10: Most days, I feel accepted by the local community.

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Q12: Most days, I am nervous that I will be judged in the local community.

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Q13: Most days, I am comfortable leaving my house and engaging with the local community.

1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = slightly disagree 4 = slightly agree 5 = agree 6 = strongly agree

Q14: I believe the CoSA program will help me make progress in my life.

1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = slightly disagree 4 = slightly agree 5 = agree 6 = strongly agree

Instructions: For each question, please CIRCLE THE NUMBER/LETTER that best describes how accurate the statement is in your life. To remind you, your answers are ^{confidential} anonymous! If you do not understand a question, you can ask for clarification.

Q15: Most days, I look forward to my CoSA meetings.

1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = slightly disagree 4 = slightly agree 5 = agree 6 = strongly agree

Q16: The volunteers in my CoSA team inspire me to work hard in my life.

1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = slightly disagree 4 = slightly agree 5 = agree 6 = strongly agree

Q17: I believe that my CoSA team wants the best for me.

1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = slightly disagree 4 = slightly agree 5 = agree 6 = strongly agree

Q18: I trust the members of my CoSA team.

1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = slightly disagree 4 = slightly agree 5 = agree 6 = strongly agree

Q19: My CoSA meetings prepare me for challenges I face in life.

1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = slightly disagree 4 = slightly agree 5 = agree 6 = strongly agree

Q20: The members of my CoSA team help motivate me to be accountable for my choices.

1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = slightly disagree 4 = slightly agree 5 = agree 6 = strongly agree

YOU HAVE REACHED THE END OF THIS SURVEY. THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING!

Appendix D: Additional Questions for Final Survey

Before you graduate from CoSA, we have one more section of questions.

Instructions: These questions are demographic in nature. This means we'd like to know a few things about you when we are analyzing your responses in this study. THIS SECTION IS OPTIONAL, AND YOU DO NOT HAVE TO ANSWER ANY QUESTION IF YOU ARE UNCOMFORTABLE.

Q21. What is your gender? (example answer: "I am a man")

Q22. What is your race?

Q23. What year were you born? (example answer: "I was born in 1981")

Q24. What is the highest level of education you had before entering prison?
(example answer: "I finished one year of college")

Q25. Approximately how long have you spent in prison?
(example answer: "I was in prison for about 1 year and 5 months")

YOU HAVE REACHED THE END OF THIS SURVEY. THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING!

Appendix E: Analyzing Answers

As mentioned in the methods section of this proposal, dependent variable and mediator ‘scores’ can be derived from the survey data of core members. Using the follow-up survey (APPENDIX C) as our example (because it assesses all three DVs and the mediator), we show how each question relates to a variable:

“LIFESAT”: Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4

“RELSUCC”: Q5, Q6, Q7, Q8, Q9

“COMMSUCC”: Q9, Q10, Q11, Q12, Q13

“COAENG”: Q14, Q15, Q16, Q17, Q18, Q19, Q20

Because all questions are assessed on a uniform 1 to 6 ‘agreement’ scale, a variable score is derived by simply averaging the data response of all questions relating to that variable. Variables are thus scored on a 1-6 scale, with 1 indicating the most negative outcome and 6 indicating the most positive. However, there exist some finer details that slightly complicate this process:

- different variables have a differing number of associated questions
- Q9 applies to both “RELSUCC” and “COMMSUCC”
- Q9 and Q12 are negatively framed, and thus their responses must be inverted before the averaging to accurately influence a variable ‘score’ (i.e. 1 become 6, 2 becomes 5, 3 becomes 4, and vice versa)
- a “0” answer to Q8 must be omitted from variable scoring entirely

Let’s look at a sample data set.

	BASELINE CTIME 0	FU CTIME 3	FU CTIME6	FU CTIME9	FINAL CTIME12
q1	2	2	2	4	4
q2	3	3	3	4	3
q3	3	4	2	3	4
q4	4	2	1	5	6
q5	1	4	4	2	4
q6	1	5	2	6	3
q7	2	4	5	2	2
q8*	4	3	6	0	0
q9**	6>1	2>5	4>3	1>6	1>6
q10	3	1	2 X		4
q11	2	2	3	4	3
q12*	1>6	3>4	4>3	2>5	X
q13	4	4	5	3	3
q14	3	2	1	1	2
q15		3	2	6	4
q16		4	4	6	5
q17		4	5 X		3
q18		5	6	5	5
q19		5	4	4	2
q20		6	3	3	5
		PARTICIPANT: 999			

We see two things of note in the raw data:

The participant indicates they are in a relationship starting in “CTIME” = 9. Those answers must be omitted from scoring.

Several questions were left blank in the “CTIME” = 9 and “CTIME” = 12 surveys.

Scoring: (sum of response values in variables’ section)/ (# of questions answered in section)

$$\begin{aligned} \text{BASE “LIFESAT”}: (2+3+3+4)/4 &= 3.0 \\ \text{BASE “RELSUCC”}: (1+1+2+4+1)/5 &= 1.8 \\ \text{BASE “COMMSUCC”}: (1+3+2+6+4)/5 &= 3.2 \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} 3 \text{ Mo. “LIFESAT”}: (2+3+2+1)/4 &= 2.0 \\ 3 \text{ Mo. “RELSUCC”}: (4+5+4+3+5)/5 &= 4.2 \\ 3 \text{ Mo. “COMMSUCC”}: (5+1+2+4+4)/5 &= 3.2 \\ 3 \text{ Mo. “COSAENG”}: (2+3+4+4+5+5+6)/7 &= 4.14 \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} 6 \text{ Mo. “LIFESAT”}: (2+3+2+1)/4 &= 2.0 \\ 6 \text{ Mo. “RELSUCC”}: (4+2+5+6+3)/5 &= 4.0 \\ 6 \text{ Mo. “COMMSUCC”}: (3+2+3+3+5)/5 &= 3.2 \\ 6 \text{ Mo. “COSAENG”}: (1+2+4+5+6+4+3)/7 &= 3.57 \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} 9 \text{ Mo. “LIFESAT”}: (4+4+3+5)/4 &= 4.0 \\ 9 \text{ Mo. “RELSUCC”}: (2+6+2+0+6)/4^{**} &= 4.0 \\ 9 \text{ Mo. “COMMSUCC”}: (6+X+4+5+3)/4^{**} &= 4.5 \\ 9 \text{ Mo. “COSAENG”}: (1+6+6+X+5+4+3)/6^{**} &= 4.17 \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} 12 \text{ Mo. “LIFESAT”}: (4+3+4+6)/4 &= 4.25 \\ 12 \text{ Mo. “RELSUCC”}: (4+3+2+0+6)/4^{**} &= 3.75 \\ 12 \text{ Mo. “COMMSUCC”}: (6+4+3+X+3)/4^{**} &= 4.0 \\ 12 \text{ Mo. “COSAENG”}: (2+4+5+3+5+2+5)/7 &= 3.71 \end{aligned}$$

**# of questions less than default due to skipped questions or Q8 responses.

In this (randomly generated) data set, we see that our participant scored consistently above a ‘neutral’ position for “COSAENG”. The average score was 3.90, despite the participant initially indicating that they “slightly disagree” that the CoSA program would help them. Furthermore, this participant indicates a positive outcome with regard to “LIFESAT” after a baseline 3.0, 2.0 scores at three and six months, and 4.0 and 4.25 scores at nine and twelve months, respectively. This example data demonstrates how the data collected from our survey can be manipulated and analyzed, a process which would be aided by a large sample size and an individual proficient in STATA and/or excel.