

# Beyond exclusion: child rights advocacy within the criminal justice system among parents of youth who sexually offend



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## INTRODUCTION

Research pertaining to young people who sexually offend is limited within mainstream criminology.

- Limited research on youth who sexually offend, because criminal justice system (CJS) focuses on adults
  - North America: focus on creating specialized treatment for youth (Worling, 2013)
  - United Kingdom & Australia: the effects on parents and caregivers (Hackett et al. 2014; Thornton et al. 2008).
- Canadian criminological literature still lacks understanding of the role and impact of parents and caregivers
  - Professors Christine Gervais (CRM) and Elisa Romano (PSY) sought to fill the gap with their study

This project builds on their research by assessing the needs of all those affected by youth who sexually offend and proposing solutions that will ultimately increase their agency.

## RESEARCH QUESTION

How do parents of young people who sexually offend navigate the criminal justice and child welfare sectors as they uphold the rights of all children affected by sexual harm?

## METHOD

This project was based on 10 interviews conducted by Professors Christine Gervais and Elisa Romano from 2011-2017. Gervais and Romano used mixed methods in their study, but this project engaged in a qualitative analysis.

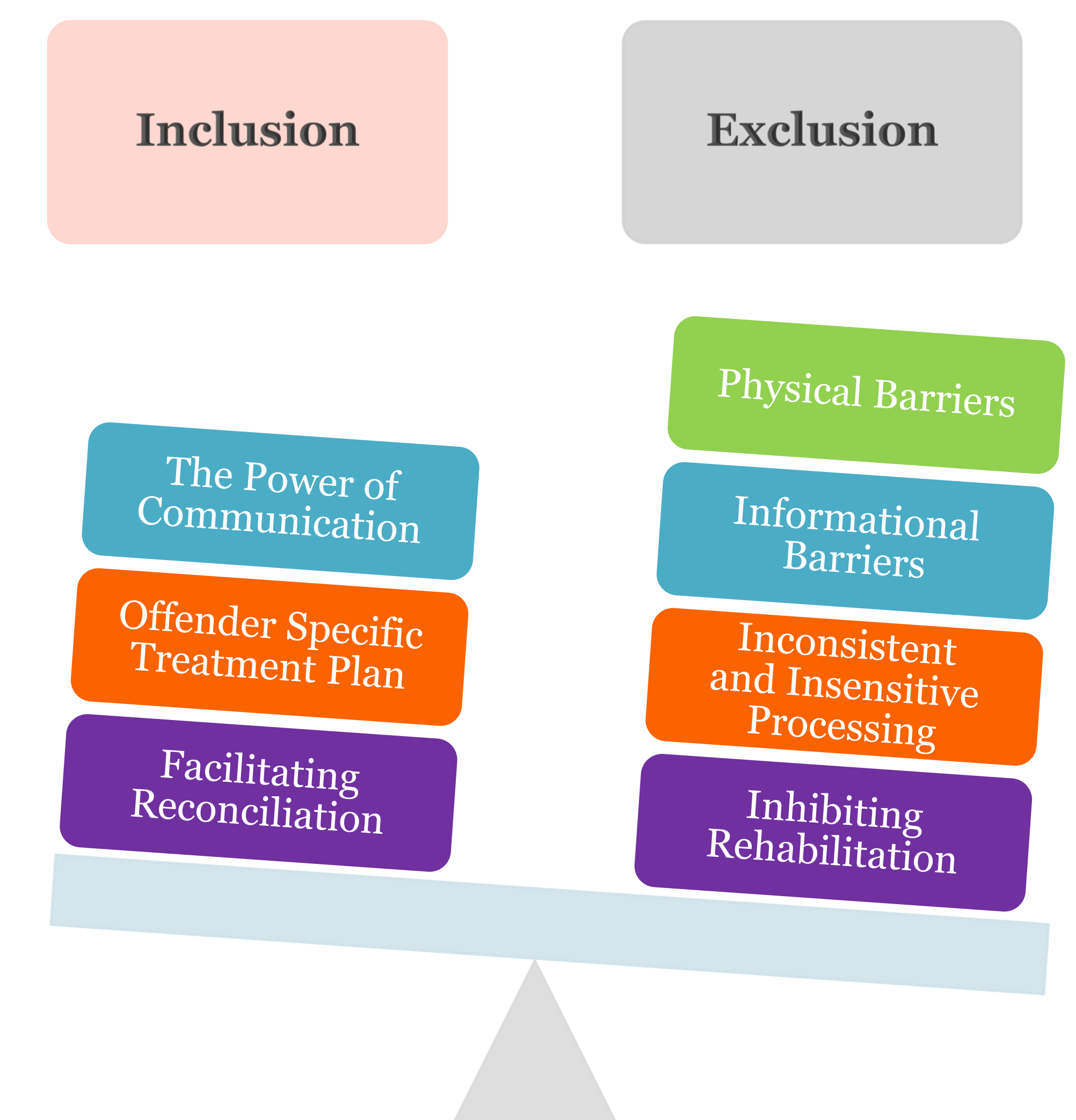
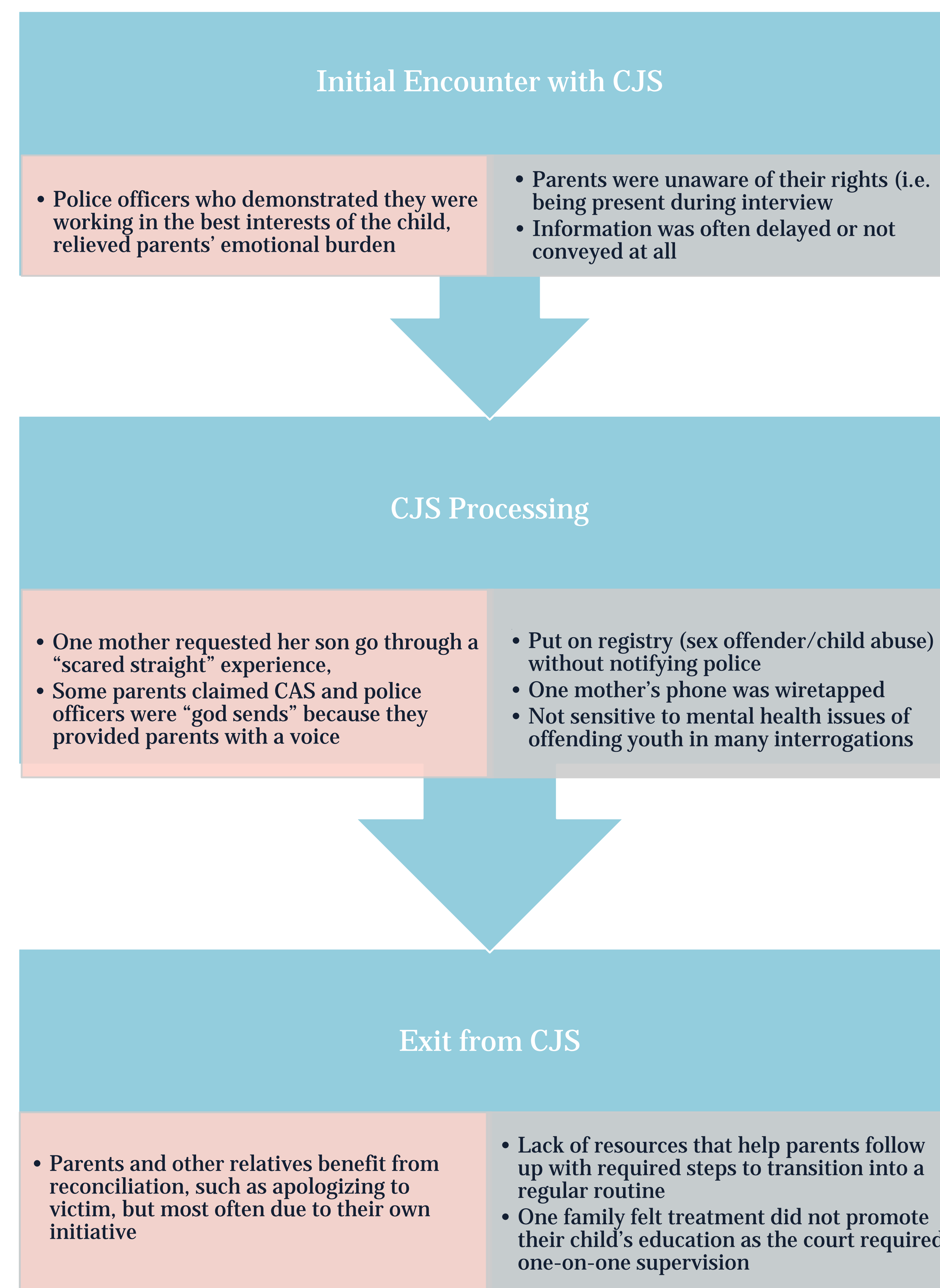
### Demographic details:

- 16 caregivers from 10 families
  - Age range: 34 years old to -50 years old
  - Income: CAD \$55, 000-\$200,000
- Adolescents who sexually offended:
  - Age range: 10 years old to 15 years old
  - All were male
- Victims:
  - Age range: 3 years old to 11 years old
  - 8 were female, 5 were male
  - 7 were primary relatives, 6 were neighbours
- Sexually offending behaviour ranged in invasiveness
  - Suggesting behaviour
  - Sexual touching
  - Penetration

### Interviews were coded for:

- administrative procedures that led to the exclusion of the offending child and their parents
- positive and negative experiences with criminal justice system (CJS) and children's aid society (CAS)
- parents negotiating for alternative methods that draw on principles of restorative justice

## RESULTS



### Notable Quotes



## CONCLUSION

- Both parents and young offenders often face exclusion
  - Due to security being the main concern of CJS and CAS
  - This is a concern, because it indicated that their needs come second
- Parents' interactions with CJS and CAS can have lasting effects on both parents and children
- Although, parents did not necessarily name restorative justice as the solution there is a need to investigate this further
  - The current Canadian systems are not providing parents with the tools they need to raise a happy and secure child after this ordeal, which ultimately prevents recidivism

Overall, this project hopes to contribute to the generation of resources for all those affected by youth who sexually offend.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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