

If You Build It, Will Vets Come? An Identity Theory Approach to Expanding Veterans' Treatment Court Participation

Eileen M. Ahlin, Ph.D.
School of Public Affairs
Penn State Harrisburg
777 W. Harrisburg Pike
Middletown, PA 17057
ema105@psu.edu

Anne S. Douds, J.D., Ph.D.*
Gettysburg College
Public Policy Program
300 Washington Street
Gettysburg, PA 17325
adouds@gettysburg.edu

Publication Citation:

Ahlin, E. M., & Douds, A. S. (2020). If You Build It, Will Vets Come? An Identity Theory Approach to Expanding Veterans' Treatment Court Participation. *Criminal Justice Review*, 45(3), 319-336.

Since the mid-2000s, veterans' treatment courts (VTCs), which blend traditional criminal court procedures with mental health and substance abuse treatment, have proliferated across the country with relatively little critical consideration of whether veterans want or need the veteran-centric support provided by VTCs. Criminal justice professionals and veterans advocates celebrate the benefits of VTCs while VTC judges and court personnel regularly tout their positive, panacea-like effects (Yerramsetti, Simmons, Coonan, & Stolar, 2017). However, evidence of desirable outcomes is more nuanced, and most studies have only focused on processes and outcomes related to VTC participation (Hartley & Baldwin, 2019; Johnson, Stolar, Wu, Coonan, & Graham, 2015; Knudsen & Wingefeld, 2016; Tsai, Flatley, Kaspro, Clark, & Finlay, 2016). More recent research has redirected attention upon fundamental principles and critical assessment of the propriety of these courts as well as their culture (Baldwin & Brooke, 2019; Douds & Ahlin, 2019; Stacer & Solinas-Saunders, 2020). While this research is informative, up to now, far too little practical attention has been paid to how veterans view these specialty courts and how they come to understand VTC as a viable option.

It previously has been observed that military socialization is a motivating factor for enrolling in VTC, as they are partly founded on the military ethos of "leave no one behind" prominent in military culture (Ahlin & Douds, 2016; Douds & Ahlin, 2019). Beyond the unifying concept of military culture to spur participation, there has been no detailed investigation of what veterans consider when making the decision to opt-in to VTC. Further, there is very little known about what identity contemplation process, if any, veterans go through before opting to enroll in VTC and how identity formation is shaped by the VTC experience. From a practical standpoint, if practitioners take steps to understand the veteran decision-making process, they can capitalize on it to expand participation in VTCs.

Whether veterans experience a decision-making process underscores the notion of choice in VTCs. Veterans can be diverted from a traditional court to the therapeutic VTC environment where they receive culturally competent programming. Pursuant to most VTC models, veterans may be recommended for VTC participation, or they can self-identify as veterans and request that they be considered for VTC eligibility (see Baldwin, Hartley, & Brooke, 2019). Thus, there are at least two means for veterans to contemplate VTCs and consider their veteran identity as it relates to the criminal justice system. Veterans are already at risk of struggling with cognitive dissonance among identities when they are arrested (Murray, 2013). They often find themselves aghast at their actions and the labels that come with such behavior, having moved from being a contributing member of a highly functional military unit to a “dirtbag” (cf. Douds & Ahlin, 2019). When VTCs become an option, veterans are forced to consider whether they wish for their veteran status to become inextricably intertwined with their criminal justice status, which, in turn, may cause additional cognitive dissonance and psychological stress (Murray, 2013). Their identity as a person involved with the criminal justice system implicitly becomes muddled with their identity as a veteran. It is at this juncture veterans need to contemplate their desire and willingness to adopt a dual identity of justice-involved veteran; one that is visibly on display as a VTC participant.

Currently there is little discussion on whether veteran identity has a role in veterans’ decision-making processes and eventual choice to enroll in VTC. Relatedly, present VTC outreach and enrollment practices do not account for several things, most notably cultural issues concerning whether veterans even want to pursue VTCs and if there is a demand for their veteran-centric services. Examining veteran identity as a catalyst behind the decision to enroll in VTCs is important if VTCs are indeed based on cultural identity. To understand veteran

decision-making processes, we conducted a qualitative study of veterans given the option to enroll in VTC and apply identity theory to explain why veterans exercise their choice to enroll in VTC. We selected identity theory as the lens through which we explore this topic because it emphasizes role-related behaviors and contextualizes how veteran identity informs veterans' views of VTCs.

The article is structured as follows. First, we examine the current demand for VTCs by considering how veterans are identified as potential participants. Second, we explore identity theory to frame the discussion on how veterans reconcile the dual identities of veteran and person involved with the criminal justice system. In the third section, we describe the data and methods of the current study. In the fourth section, the study results are presented, and four themes related to veteran identity formulation during the VTC decision-making process are described. We conclude the paper with a discussion on practical application of the findings to expand VTC participation.

Current Demand for Veterans Treatment Courts (VTCs)

VTCs continue to spread across the United States despite uncertainty about national demand for veteran-centric support offered by VTCs; 461 were operational as of mid-year 2016 (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2017). It is unclear how many veterans are involved in the criminal justice system and the number of individuals who go unidentified as prior service members is difficult to calculate. Individuals who are stopped by police, appear before judges, or are processed through corrections systems are not required to self-identify as veterans, and some prefer not to divulge this information. Some approximations exist, however. According to Finlay and colleagues (2018), about 3% of veterans residing in rural areas and 4% of veterans living in urban areas are involved with the criminal justice system. White and colleagues (2012) found

that 6.3% of the 2,102 persons arrested in 2009 in Maricopa County, Arizona, were veterans, and national estimates suggest about 8% of inmates (or 181,500 individuals) in state and federal correctional facilities served in the Armed Forces; a number that has been decreasing in recent years (Bronson, Carson, & Noonan, 2015). These approximations suffer from a variety of methodological issues including selection bias and valid estimates of the volume of veterans at risk for involvement with the criminal justice system, and accurate quantifications of veteran populations in criminal justice settings, remain elusive.

The lack of reliable veteran identification procedures in the criminal justice system results in a piecemeal approach to VTC outreach, recruitment, and enrollment. As such, VTCs connect with veterans on an ad hoc basis rather than a streamlined referral process through the various entry points to the criminal justice system. Some states allow veterans to elect a veteran designation on their drivers' license, which can help with identification if veterans run afoul of the law, but that practice engenders legal and ethical objections among certain communities (Douds & Ahlin, 2019). Some jurisdictions provide police training on how to identify veterans early in the arrest process (Weaver, Joseph, Dongon, Fairweather, & Ruzek, 2013). Other communities have adopted policies for veteran screening at booking or intake (see e.g., Barrett, 2017), though fewer than half of VTCs as they are presently conceived have formal procedures connecting arrested veterans to the program (Baldwin, 2017; Baldwin et al., 2019; Douds & Ahlin, 2019; Douds, Ahlin, Howard, & Stigerwalt, 2017). But these administrative tools for identifying veterans for VTC consideration miss the larger problem of what to do if veterans do not want to be identified, and do not want to be recognized as former military when they break the law. Because of these circumstances, an accurate understanding of the potential pool of VTC participants and whether VTCs are a desirable alternative to traditional court case processing

remain major issues.

Identity Theory

Based in sociology, identity theory explains how individuals' actions are related to adoption of role-based identities (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995). Howard (2000, p. 371) aptly notes: "Role identities are organized hierarchically, on the basis of their salience to the self and the degree to which we are committed to them, which in turn depends on the extent to which these identities are premised on our ties to particular other people." For justice-involved veterans, the salience of the "veteran" identity may be threatened or compromised by the "arrestee" or "offender" identity. The presentation of a dual identity when veterans become involved in the criminal justice system is an opportunity for veteran identity reformulation or recommitment. Justice-involved veterans must decide how to reconcile the two identities when faced with the option of VTC.

Unlike other problem-solving courts, VTCs focus on the occupation identity rather than offending identity (Ahlin & Douds, 2019; Murray, 2013). VTCs encompass both veteran and offender identities and displays them in open court. Understanding how potential VTC participants view themselves and with which groups they identify can inform culturally competent program delivery and program expansion (see Carrola & Corbin-Burdick, 2015). Conflicting identities are possible, and adherence to a particular identity may reinforce or detract from one's status related to the other identity (Hogg et al., 1995; Howard, 2000). Smith and True (2014) use the term "warring identities" to describe the inherent identity reconciliation process veterans endure when they return to civilian society. Identity formation is a continuous process (Flower, 2018) that can become more complicated with the introduction of a new identity. A

person charged with a crime who identifies as a veteran must grapple with the ensuing new or additional identity as an alleged offender. Arguably, justice-involved veterans who choose VTC reinforce their veteran identity while opting out of VTC serves to separate and distance veterans from the group. Whether veterans can reconcile their veteran identity and offender identity could inform their decision to enroll in VTC.

Veterans in the modern era generally enjoy high levels of public support and have relatively high favorability ratings in public opinion polls (see e.g., Kleykamp, Hipes, & MacLean, 2018; Schreger & Kimble, 2017). Once veterans become “offenders,” they must contemplate an identity that is societally stigmatized (Murray, 2013). People are more likely to adopt identities that will lead to positive valuation of identity and eschew those identities that negatively influence self-perceptions as the selection of a group identity reinforces master identity of self and a positive perception of the group to which they belong (Howard, 2000; Sampson, 1978; Stets & Burke, 2000). Veteran status may be prominent for some, though not all, as identity salience may be influenced by commitment to the role (see Hogg et al., 1995). These are important operational considerations for VTCs.

Current Study

Premise

VTC teams in general perceive themselves to be beneficently focused on veterans’ care, and maintain veterans should, and should want to, participate in VTCs (Baldwin, 2013; Douds & Ahlin, 2019). Based on referrals or self-identifications, VTC teams screen veterans for inclusion in their programs with the underlying assumption that veterans want to participate. The most obvious motivations to pursue VTCs are avoidance of legal punishment or reduction in sentence

severity. Other reasons include the myriad services such as disability and health care support available through joint collaboration with the benefits provided by the Veterans Administration (Yerramsetti et al., 2017). Criminal defendants can avoid lengthy trials, conviction records, and potential prison time by pursuing diversionary courts such as VTCs (Klag, O’Callaghan, & Creed, 2005; Miller & Flaherty, 2000). Legal coercion as a motivator has been researched extensively in the context of drug courts, and that research logically extends to VTC participation. Our prior study found that military socialization also motivates VTC participation for some veterans (Ahlin & Douds, 2016). During our earlier research, hints of misgivings or reservations about pursuing VTCs percolated throughout the interviews. Veterans described being “not sure at first.” Veterans recounted being reluctant, self-conscious, or unconvinced at the beginning of the program because of what their participation would mean to their identity. In this study, we directly address these exchanges on identity to focus on why veterans choose to “opt-in” to VTC rather than pursuing drug court or another avenue of criminal justice processing. Using identity theory as a framework, we test our hypothesis that the adoption and retention of a military identity drives this choice.

Sample and Methods

Data were collected using semi-structured interviews with 24 VTC mentees, 13 VTC mentors, and three VTC-decliners in one urban Pennsylvania VTC between 2013 and 2017. This VTC, with a minimum 1-year program, has been in operation since 2012 in an urban-rural county that includes a city with a population just under 50,000. Participants in this study were self-selected in the VTC as a mentee, a mentor to mentees, or a VTC-decliner who ultimately chose another court processing option after initially pursuing VTC as an option. It should be

noted that we were not able to interview any veterans who declined to participate outright. According to the study site's data coordinator, approximately half of all VTC applicants are denied admission to the program, and 27% declined an offer to participate in VTC during the study period. We had no way of contacting those who declined or who were denied admission to this VTC. Although we were not able to interview those who declined, the data coordinator reports that those who declined did so either because they thought the required plea and sentence were too harsh, or they thought the program would be too rigorous.

Study participants were recruited during weekly mentee-mentor meetings prior to the VTC docket. In this VTC, prospective VTC mentees may attend weekly meetings before formally enrolling in the program. One female mentee declined to be interviewed. All other mentees, mentors, and VTC-decliners who were approached consented to interviews.

Sixteen mentees were actively engaged in VTC at the time of the interviews and eight had completed the program and remained actively engaged with the VTC returning for meetings to support fellow VTC mentees. The thirteen mentors were all volunteers aligned with the court to offer ongoing support to VTC program participants. Two veterans who had commenced interviews ultimately chose not to pursue VTC and instead opted to enroll in specialized courts closer to their places of residence, and one veteran moved to traditional criminal case processing for reasons related to his charge and inability to complete the VTC program.

All mentees and VTC-decliners identified as male. Not all participants disclosed their age, but their eras of service suggest age ranges: Two served in Vietnam, the rest served in what they called the "post-9/11 era." Three had recently returned from Afghanistan. The rest served in combat operations across the globe, including the Horn of Africa and Iraq. The participants' criminal charges included assault, robbery, driving under the influence, narcotics charges, and

stalking. Some of the participants declined to describe their charges. Most of the participants served in the United States Army, which is the largest branch of the Armed Forces. Three served in the Marine Corps, and one said he was a Reservist. A few did not want to identify their branch of service for fear of bringing shame upon the institutions, as discussed further below.

All except one of the mentors in this study identified as male; one identified as female. The ages of the mentors ranged from 45 to 78. One of the mentors previously completed the VTC program as a participant. All the mentors were military veterans, and many of them had served enough time to retire from the Armed Forces. All veterans who enroll in this VTC are assigned a mentor, matched to the greatest extent possible on age and branch of service.

Based on prior studies, the researchers had developed nascent theories on perceptions and beliefs that influence veterans' decisions to enroll in VTCs (see Ahlin & Douds, 2016; Douds & Ahlin, 2019). The researchers developed a semi-structured interview guide based on those grounded theories that focused on justice-involved veterans' personal histories and their thought processes as they contemplated whether to pursue VTC enrollment. Mentees and VTC-decliners first were asked general questions about several subject matters, including military service history, criminal history, reintegration experience, perceptions of the VTC, and their feelings about joining the specialty court program. Then the researchers either introduced or circled back on five areas of inquiry using a semi-structured interview guide with prompts for anticipated topics: (1) how justice-involved veterans became aware of this VTC and their initial impressions of it; (2) what factors/ideas/concerns they weighed as they thought about whether they wanted to seek inclusion in this VTC; (3) which of those factors/ideas/concerns positively influenced their decision and why (including prompts as to which factor(s) most influenced their decision); (4) which of those factors/ideas/concerns negatively influenced their decision and why (including

prompts as to which factor(s) most influenced their decision); and (5) what factors/concerns did they think influenced other veteran offenders as they decided how to handle their criminal charges.

Mentors were asked about their experiences as part of the VTC team and interactions with justice-involved veterans during intake and throughout the program to graduation. All 24 mentees and three VTC-decliners in the study were interviewed in-person while nine mentors participated in person and four were interviewed by telephone. Each in-person interview lasted approximately one hour, while the telephone interviews ranged from 15 to 90 minutes. All in-person interviews were conducted in the “Lounge,” the room where people congregated for coffee and conversation prior to court. In the early stages of the interviews, respondents chose a table in the back of the room that was relatively segregated from the casual sitting areas where most convened. Depending upon the wishes of the respondents, interviews were primarily conducted individually or in groups of two or three. These early interviews were conducted with relative privacy. Toward the end of the data collection period, respondents frequently migrated to tables in the more social section of the Lounge where interviews could be overheard. During these sessions, curious mentees and VTC-decliners often would sit in close proximity to the interviews and interject audible affirmations to what was being said. At times, the conversations became group discussions as participants would engage others in the dialogue. On occasion, someone who had been interviewed previously but who was not part of a given interview session would wander into the group and interject comments or observations about what was being discussed. The researchers did not discourage involvement of mentees who had previously been interviewed in order to collect additional meaningful data and to encourage collegiality and comfort among mentees.

Data Collection and Analytic Techniques

For the first two years of interviews, at least two researchers attended each session. On occasion, a student researcher would attend, as well. One researcher would ask questions and take contemporaneous notes. The other researcher(s) would transcribe the conversations to the fullest extent possible. Recording devices were not permitted; in fact, no recording devices are allowed in any Pennsylvania court proceedings or chambers/conference room areas. The researchers retyped their notes hewing as precisely as possible to exactly what was said. The researchers compared transcripts in Word.

A traditional means of coding and comparing content codes was employed (Strauss, 1987). The researchers analyzed 70-plus hours of interview data for themes and frequency using open and axial coding strategies consistent with the principles of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014). To ensure reliability in coding, the authors read the transcripts independently to identify relevant themes and then conferred about those themes and achieved consensus on a list of themes that recurred in meaningful fashions. This included an inductive and comparative approach to transcript review using constructivist methods. The constructivist method supports open-ended and contextualized data collection to gather authentic data from the perspective of those who experience a phenomenon (see Creswell & Miller, 2000; Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006).

Results

All mentees expressed varying degrees of initial reluctance prior to joining the VTC program. Many said that they were leary of the unknown, that they did not understand exactly

“what they were getting into.” Reasons for ultimately joining the VTC included belief that the benefits of the program outweighed the difficulties of engaging with the program; a desire to successfully complete the program, to “prove” themselves after their involvement with the criminal justice system; and feeling heard, seen, and understood by the VTC team and other participants (see Ahlin & Douds, 2016; Douds & Ahlin, 2019). VTC-decliners voiced concerns about the difficulty of the program compared to traditional court case processing and feelings of defensiveness when pressed for accountability by the team.

Four broad themes emerged from the analysis depicting factors veterans consider when joining a VTC or choosing an alternative court processing option. During the VTC enrollment decision-making process, veterans considered: (1) personal shame; (2) concerns about increased punitiveness by law enforcement; (3) perceived stigmatization/retaliation by society; and (4) fear of dishonoring their military branch of service. Many of the participants identified one of these themes as the predominant reason for their hesitancy or choice to decline VTC, though most endorsed more than one of these concerns at various points in their participation in VTC (e.g., before, during, and after). Mentor interview data triangulated the information gleaned from participant respondents; one mentor who was previously a VTC participant proffered a unique perspective.

Personal Shame

Perhaps not surprisingly, respondents expressed personal guilt, shame, and embarrassment at what they had done and the situation they were now facing in the criminal justice system. None of them denied that they had committed crimes, and there was a notable sense that most, if not all, of them had internalized their guilt and sense of responsibility for the

event that brought them into contact with the criminal justice system. Many of the mentees complained about the rigors of the VTC program, but none of them suggested that they should not be there or that they did not deserve to be punished. They were ashamed of their crime; they were ashamed of being caught; and they were ashamed of finding themselves in jail with the “rest of the dirt bags.” But in addition to the guilt or shame one might expect arrestees to experience, the veterans in the sample seemed to have an additional layer of perceived accountability. Individual-level shame becomes compounded for many veterans because they have been trained “to be problem solvers, not problem creators” as Richard (mentee) explained and Adam (mentor) affirmed. They reported that they knew they “were better than this” and that they “weren’t knuckleheads.” If anything, they seemed to feel guilty that VTC personnel were taking extra time to create this program, which entails significantly more work on behalf of the courtroom workgroup. They did not like the sense that they “stand out” or that they were “making more work for people.” As Chip (mentee) explained, if “you get lost in the sauce, you’re not pulling your weight, nobody respects you,” which in context conveyed that he felt that he had failed to pull his weight, or that he had gotten “lost in the sauce” when he landed in VTC after his crime.

The aversion to “creating more trouble” or drawing attention to themselves persists in the VTC experience and can also impede progress through the multi-phased program. The military culture is shaped by a strictly defined code of behavior, and participants perceived themselves as having violated that code at a more macro-level. For example, Richard (mentee) was not supposed to drive because the instant offense making him eligible for VTC was driving under the influence. His license was suspended because of that offense. He knew he did not have a driver’s license, and he knew from a prior arrest that it was a crime to drive without one. He also knew

that, if he was arrested again, it could jeopardize his progress through VTC and even possibly result in dismissal from the program and license revocation. Nevertheless, he chose to drive to a laundromat. He needed clean clothes for work, and it would be unfathomable to this former military senior enlisted man to go to work or to court in dirty clothes. He got pulled over leaving the laundromat, and he got a ticket for driving under suspension. When Adam (mentor) asked Richard why he did not ask him for a ride or contact his sister, who usually drove him places, he explained that the sister “couldn’t do it” and “[he] didn’t want to bother anyone.” Adam, quoting his mentee Richard, explained that Richard already felt “guilty enough” and felt like he was “wearing out his welcome” because he had been “hitching rides” to “get to the VA almost every day, plus urine check two times each week, and [he] didn’t want to impose any more.” He not only expressed feelings of shame, he also felt guilty by the burden he sensed he was creating to others. Another mentee shared similar sentiment in more colorful language. When asked why he did not reach out to his mentor for a last-minute ride rather than miss court and risk a legal violation, he said with a snicker “I ain’t no bravo foxtrot.” The researchers discerned that was a euphemism for “buddy fucker,” or someone who disappoints their friends by relying on them to manage their life after becoming involved in the criminal justice system.

As Adam (mentor) stated, “Richard was mad at himself, no one else.” Some participants did not welcome unwanted attention during VTC proceedings, either. Accolades for a job well done as a service member are very different from congratulations for “just doing what [they] are supposed to do.” Some mentees appreciated affirmations from the judge for hitting program milestones or obtaining a new job. Many wore big smiles as the judge gave Marines an “ooh rah” and others a “huh yuh” (two common, positive greetings unique to certain branches of service). But others felt uncomfortable and a bit patronized. Joe (mentee) declared, I “don’t like all them

looking at me,” with the “them” being the VTC team and courtroom observers, while another mentee echoed, “I don’t need pity” and a third mentee derided the judge’s praise as equivalent to giving a school child “a sticker.” Shame seemed to underlie all of these objections to attention and perceived need for outside encouragement rather than self-reliance. They did not want to be congratulated for being in the VTC; they did not want to be dependent on the support system provided by VTC; and there was a sense of personal shame related to a lack of self-reliance.

Finally, Louis (mentor) observed that many participants suffer from pronounced self-loathing. He struggled to convince many mentees that they deserved the second chance that VTC offers. Louis described this mentality in the following way:

[The] first person they need to convince is themselves. First [they] have to like themselves, think they are worthwhile and have something to offer. Once they get there, [we] reinforce the best we can; not criticize; suggest alternatives; and remind them of consequences. Similar to what your platoon sergeant or XO [executive officer] would do for all members of a unit.

Concerns of Increased Punitiveness by Law Enforcement

Another dimension expressed by several participants was concern that their status as a veteran would disadvantage them in the criminal justice system. As one mentee said, if the “cops know” he is a veteran then “things would be tougher for me, you know what I mean?” This theme took two forms. Some participants, a mix of mentees and VTC-decliners, feared being stigmatized as some variation of crazy, heartless, cruel, or a “trained killer.” Others believed that society expects more from veterans than average citizens. As such, there was a perception that criminal justice actors were tougher on participants because veterans were held to a higher standard because veterans should “know better.” This reflects the notion that veterans should not have offended because they are highly trained, disciplined, and should be above this kind of behavior.

Mentors echoed and affirmed these perspectives. One mentor, who has been with this VTC program almost since its inception, noted that he “sometimes” and “maybe even regularly met cops” who expressed disappointment in veterans who run afoul of the law. He described it as “an unwritten code” that police and military service members share and that violations of the code were offensive. Other mentors, however, had either never observed this phenomenon or thought it was “more in their [mentees’] heads.”

Participants also expressed suspicions that law enforcement are more punitive towards veterans than non-veterans. One VTC-decliner proposed that police expressed this punitiveness during arrest and booking. He sensed that, once police find out they are veterans, the police are harder on them. He said it was “like I had betrayed them [the police] or something.”

On the other hand, at least one respondent perceived that “labeling is a good thing in this context.” Brad (mentee) contended that the general public understands that veterans “struggle with things normal drug abusers haven’t experienced.” He said that veterans “get a pass” for things that are otherwise stigmatizing. Substance abuse and addiction are viewed as an adverse consequence of military service rather than a moral failing, as is often the case with non-veteran drug users. Although Brad was in the minority, others who were listening nodded in assent, as if to say, “I see your point.” Brad described unspecified movies in which veterans who are drunk or on drugs “go on a rampage” and audiences are expected to excuse the behavior, even have sympathy for the rampaging veterans, because those veterans are “damaged goods.” That damage arose through no fault of their own, so Brad thinks that veterans are labeled as victims of circumstance, deserving of leniency and pity.

Brad is a strong personality who often dominates conversation, and the researchers perceived that others waited to share their views until Brad was not present. In subsequent

interviews, respondents somewhat discounted Brad's perspective (outside of his hearing). They said that, in their personal experiences, people often "look at them different" and "not in a good way" when people find out they are veterans. Bob (mentee) colorfully summed up the sentiment, explaining that "people expect a certain amount of assholery from vets, so yea, we get a pass, but it's still" a bias against them.

Researchers asked respondents to relate some of these comments back to how they were treated in the criminal justice system. Most grew silent, but two mentees spoke about "cops who think they know" what it means to be a veteran. The two men spoke of arresting officers who scolded them for not living up to "the standard." They could not cite specific words or actions that arresting officers or booking agents took, but Joe (mentee) explained that, when he approached the booking desk during his initial arrest, the officer asked if he was a veteran (the booking center apparently tracked veteran status), and the officer shook his head "all disappointed" when Joe affirmed his veteran status. He said that they treated him differently after that, like he was "a disappointment." It is not clear whether that sense of disappointment arose from Joe's internal struggles with what he had done or whether it was, in fact, a byproduct of the booking agent's feelings. Regardless, others who were listening responded affirmatively, concurring that they recognized the experience, which suggested that they perceived increased punitiveness, or negative reactions in the form of stigmatizing shaming, either because of their own internal processing, or external judgment, or a combination of both.

Perceived Stigmatization/Retaliation by Society

Building off the fear of increased punitiveness and resultant judgment by law enforcement, the interviews revealed a companion concern about community-based

stigmatization and retaliation. Some mentees and VTC-decliners even feared that community members might exact retribution against them if they were identified as veterans who had committed a crime. During these interviews a frequent topic of conversation was the notorious picketing and protesting of the Westboro Baptist Church (WBC) hate group that espouses disdain for a multitude of groups and their identities, including military personnel. Respondents felt that the 2011 Supreme Court decision overturning the jury award against WBC was indicative of a larger, anti-military phenomenon (*Snyder v. Phelps*, 562 U.S. 443 (2011)). In that case, Westboro Baptist Church members picketed and protested outside the funeral of fallen Marine Matthew Snyder whose father identified as gay. The Supreme Court reversed the trial court's verdict in a highly publicized decision, finding that the Snyder family's emotional distress that arose from the hateful protests were not compensable under tort law because WBC had a protected right to free speech under the First Amendment. In a conversation consisting of mentees, the discussion accentuated how they were furious about the verdict and found it to be "fucking outrageous," "typical," and proof that society "doesn't get it" meaning their sacrifice and cultural mores were not well understood. During heated conversation, participants voiced that the funeral protest signs made them "fucking pissed" just looking at them. One mentee said that the actions by WBC and the Supreme Court ruling "just shows they [non-military citizens] don't fucking understand us." Another mentee chimed in again, echoing the others: "They don't get it." After that, the group of mentees grew silent and seemingly resigned. Notably, the use of expletives during the WBC conversations increased significantly in comparison to other topics. A few participants occasionally swore on a regular basis, but the WBC conversations involved frequent use of very coarse language, most commonly a derivative of the word "fuck." There was a sense of powerless and perfidy among this group of mentees, as if the Supreme Court had

betrayed them.

The researcher let the conversation move on at this point because it was an obvious source of significant stress to respondents. However, she returned to the topic a few weeks later, and probed more about what the Supreme Court decision meant to them. They were angrier with the court decision than with WBC, in many respects. A Marine mentee commented that “there are always going to be assholes, but you expect more” from government. Transitioning to the present tense, he continued, “I mean, I’m out here getting my ass shot off so that they [WBC]. . . have the freedom . . . to do that shit . . . and they don’t even” get punished when they “go too far.” Another mentee expanded upon that line of thinking. “They said it was because they had their First Amendment, [WBC] could come after us,” to which another man added “they wouldn’t have a fucking First Amendment if it weren’t for us.” Mentees explained that they do not expect people to show gratitude, but they did expect decency and respect.

This conversation about WBC evolved into a larger discussion about societal institutions (including criminal justice organizations) and polarization among the “grunts” and leadership. Mentees described colonels and generals who “sit back” and “watch” and who let the enlisted people fight their battles without “situational awareness.” The problem-solving court format, with the judge presiding over courtroom theatrics, mimics the hierarchical structure of the military and concerns by participants about situational awareness. That sense of “us versus them,” as several said, is exacerbated by a sense that the federal government has grown increasingly detached from the military. The interviewer asked Louis (mentor) who went on active duty in 1965, about mentees’ apparent anger, and sometimes rage, over the WBC decision. Louis placed it in its larger context and explained that the sense that the government does not have your back contributes to participants’ mistrust of the entire criminal justice system and

perceptions that justice-involved veterans are stigmatized. They have trouble trusting that VTC really is in their best interest because “you don’t get anything for free.” He explained further:

Eighty percent of Congress had been in the military [during the Vietnam era], and now it is something like 16 percent. And they are really quick to use our military might without having a clue about the military... I got into vet court because the country is not taking care of veterans the way it should. [They] use them and throw them away. [Veterans] have given their limbs, and much of their lives, and [the government] do[es] nothing for you.

All mentors in this study had military experience, and the mentors explained that they viewed this volunteer work as an extension of the motto that they “leave no one behind.” Volunteering as a mentor, to them, ensured that fellow veterans were not left behind to fight their battles alone. This ethos, in addition to VTC’s military-like structure and military culture, draw veterans to VTCs (Ahlin & Douds, 2016), though coupling military experience with involvement in the criminal justice system is a rare occurrence among the VTC team. Only one mentor in the sample was previously enrolled in the VTC program as a mentee and able to provide situational awareness from the two identities that intersect in VTCs: veteran and justice-involved individual. This lack of image reflection and not seeing themselves represented in the composition of the VTC workgroup may amplify feelings of dispossession or alienation outside of the VTC and exacerbate an “us versus them” mentality.

Participants expressed disappointment at the stigmatization their veteran identity can elicit from civilians. Multiple mentees and a few mentors voiced the sentiment that “They [civilians] just don’t get it.” “It,” we submit, is a distinct veteran culture that pervades all aspects of military veterans’ lives, in some ways subtle and in others overt. This veteran culture transcends race, generation, and gender. To some extent the veteran culture and resultant identity seems to unify participants and influence their decision to enroll in VTC. The veteran identity and its subculture, with respect to veterans involved in the criminal justice system, has the

potential to polarize and stigmatize veterans in the larger society. Interestingly, opting for VTC may further exacerbate the military-citizen divide as participants may inadvertently perpetuate the “us versus them” mindset.

Fear of Bringing Shame to Their Military Branch

Although active duty military personnel occasionally participate in this VTC, all respondents (mentees, mentors, and VTC-decliners) in this study were veterans, having separated from the military through honorable or general discharge. Some served in the Vietnam era, and the majority served in Iraq and/or Afghanistan, many within the past few years. Regardless of how long they had been separated from the military, they all continued to carry their branch-of-service identity, particularly the Marines. When the researchers first met the group of participants, they noticed that certain men always sat together and had a certain similarity in mannerisms. One researcher asked if they were Marines, to which the eldest replied with a smile, “once a Marine; always a Marine!” During subsequent conversation, one Marine corrected an interviewer who called him a “former Marine.” He said, “we are always Marines, ma’am.” Veterans from other branches also had great pride of identity, one man explained that he is (present tense) a Ranger, which elicited verbal and nonverbal indications of respect from others who were listening.

Mentee and VTC-decliners proudly shared their branch of service and “MOS” numbers, their “military occupational specialty” digits that translate across all branches and indicate professional responsibilities and a certain implicit hierarchy. Certain MOSs were perceived as more impressive than others, according to respondents. So, their identities were embedded in at least two military-related cultures, their branch of service and MOS. All mentees maintained

those identities in their current lives and somewhat self-segregated along those lines within the VTC environment. Moreover, those mentees who spoke about the meaning of their military identity in relation to their crimes felt great responsibility and guilt for having brought shame upon their institutions. These mentees felt that their misconduct reflected poorly on their comrades in arms. They believed that they had disappointed their fellow service members, even if those service members did not know of their offense. When confronted with the option to enroll in VTC, several mentees and VTC-decliners expressed concern about bringing shame to the military. Foremost, they articulated a desire to represent their branch of service well; to be a positive example of what it means to be a member of their Armed Forces.

Some mentees and at least one VTC-decliner worried that society would think less of the military as a whole because of their particular involvement in the criminal justice system. Relatedly, there was a sense that the military would be keeping an eye on them during their time in VTC and would know what they have done and, as a result, think less of them as veterans. One VTC-decliner described the “dark cloud of guilt” that he felt because he had caused his branch of service to be cast in a poor light. A mentee explained that he felt as if he “brought shame” on his fellow Marines. He articulated: “I’m a Marine, for Christ’s sake. We don’t do this.”

Finally, and perhaps most universally, the mentees and VTC-decliners feared bringing shame upon their military unit. They no longer served with their unit, but they felt that their crimes reflect poorly upon the men and women with whom they served, as well as the branch of service with which they were affiliated. One Marine mentee lifted his shirt to show his eagle, globe, and anchor tattoo, under which was inscribed “death before dishonor.” He snorted derisively, “So much for that.” Another mentee stated, “I don’t feel like a veteran.” A dual

identity was not possible for this participant. Once he became a justice-involved veteran, the veteran identity slipped from prominence, and the identity of offender dominated his sense of self. For many, there is an either/or sentiment surrounding their identity formation – veteran or offender. The identity of veteran offender, or justice-involved veteran, was harder to accept.

Discussion

The present study was designed to determine the role of identity when justice-involved veterans contemplate the option to enroll in a VTC rather than pursue traditional court case processing. This study illuminates the complicated perspectives of veterans who face criminal charges and how they consider their dual identities in their decision to opt-in to VTC. The findings may help us understand barriers to expanding VTCs to eligible participants and how to expand VTC participation by addressing identity. The four threats to veterans' acceptance of the VTC option and their continued struggle to reconcile their dual identities after enrolling in the program suggest several courses of action to aid the expansion of VTCs. If VTCs are going to thrive and reach those most in need of their unique blend of military culture and therapeutic jurisprudence, policies and practices might consider the four-pronged obstacles to veteran self-identification and self-referral to VTCs.

Addressing Personal Shame

VTCs should prioritize transitional support for veterans as they navigate their new identity and the VTC process. The professionalization of the mentor role and additional treatment staff available at intake could assist new participants as they contemplate VTC (see Jalain & Grossi, 2019). Intake is a pivotal point in the VTC process as veterans begin to reconcile their dual identity as a justice-involved veteran. This is also an opportunity to educate

participants on the potential for VTCs to serve a restorative justice function (see Baldwin & Rukus, 2015; Huskey, 2017) and how they are expected to seek out assistance, rely on staff and their mentors, as well as each other, for support while they navigate the program. A common concern among mentees was their reluctance to ask for assistance to meet their VTC requirements due to feelings of personal shame. VTC participants need support as they learn that it is okay, and even expected, to ask for and receive help within the problem-solving court arena.

A recurrent theme among participants was a sense that people in the criminal justice system did not understand veterans and this contributed to their sense of shame. Only one of the VTC mentors was both a veteran and a former VTC mentee. The situational awareness, and lived experience, this mentor brought to the VTC program raises the possibility that the mentor role is currently underdeveloped. At present, the mentor role is not sufficiently standardized or defined across VTCs, and more consideration about their responsibilities and the value they add is necessary to fully support the VTC experience. Mentors with criminal justice experience could aid participants in reconciling their veteran identity with their offender identity. Mentors with these dual identities would provide participants with opportunity for reflected appraisals to influence their self-perception (Mead, 1934).

Personal shame in this study also stemmed from the perception that veterans should be able to handle their business independently. Military service personnel are trained to be self-reliant, which is an invaluable asset in the highly organic and unpredictable world of combat and deployment. Military units generally are undermanned and over extended, so service members learn to adapt on the fly, to “improvise, adapt, and overcome,” the oft-repeated Marine Corps mantra. Military institutions value people who can take care of things on their own. But that self-sufficiency and independence can impede service members’ proclivity to seek help when it is

needed. They are so conditioned to make things happen without outside assistance, that they do themselves a disservice by not seeking help. For example, research has shown that military personnel often do not seek mental health assistance because they believe they can handle it themselves or because they do not want to feel weak in the face of their need for help (Mackenzie, Gekoski, & Knox, 2006; Mackenzie, Knox, Gekoski, & Macaulay, 2004). Such beliefs may be more prevalent in military settings, where soldiers are expected to “tough out” difficult emotions (Nash, Silva, & Litz, 2009; Vogt, 2011; Zinzow, Britt, McFadden, Burnette, & Gillispie, 2012, p. 743). These sentiments were echoed in our conversations with participants.

The ability to take care of one’s self is part and parcel to the veteran culture. Strength, self-sufficiency, and resourcefulness are valued more heavily than in civilian organizations. Likewise, the ability to control, even suppress, one’s emotions, is a strength that the military culture promotes (Mahalik et al., 2003). Research shows that, while these attributes often are valuable and necessary in military organizations, they may negatively impact veterans’ completion of therapy sessions or other court-ordered interventions (Lorber & Garcia, 2010; Nash et al., 2009). Such self-reliance can limit veteran engagement in treatment, as they may view sharing their struggles as a blemish on their service branch or a personal vulnerability, which may inhibit their understanding of the need for treatment (Addis & Mahalik, 2003; Redmond et al., 2015).

Addressing Concerns of Punitiveness by Law Enforcement

Many police officers have prior military experience, and many police organizations proudly replicate military culture. They build their police programs on military ethos, and they recruit military personnel to their police ranks (see e.g., San Antonio Police Department, 2019).

Some police departments that require college diplomas encourage veterans to seek college credit for their time in service, and many more honor a veteran preference in hiring decisions (see e.g., New Jersey Trooper Hiring, 2019). Given this history and overlap between cultures, it was surprising to hear from mentees and VTC-decliners that they sometimes felt being held to a higher standard by law enforcement. While some research suggests there is a blurring of the “green/blue line,” others find that the cultures remain distinct and distant (Greener-Barcham, 2007). The addition of a justice-involved identity may usurp the already established veteran identity in the eyes of law enforcement though additional data from the perspective of police officers is necessary to understand their mindset.

Relatedly, criminal justice practitioners want to avoid stereotyping veterans (Carrola & Corbin-Burdik, 2015) and aim to support veterans in adopting identities that encourage those involved in the justice system to consider VTC as a positive avenue for their criminal justice experience. While other scholars found that VTC participants may feel “scrutinized and untrusted” by VTC staff (Shannon, Birdwhistell, Hulbig, Jones, Newell, & Payne, 2017), it was surprising that mentees and VTC-decliners felt that criminal justice professionals held veterans to a higher standard and engaged in shaming behaviors. These attitudes further complicate veterans’ reconciliation of their dual identity. This finding suggests there is room for cultural competency training for front-line officers and all practitioners who interact with justice-involved veterans. Veterans should not be held to a higher legal or moral standard; the VTC option is akin to any other problem-solving court that offers a diversion program to certain offenders based on criminogenic need, offender characteristic, or offense characteristic (Ahlin & Douds, 2019). There is also a need to increase the visibility of VTCs and referrals to the program and promote the VTC as a positive experience. A training module for law enforcement on the

needs of justice-involved veterans and the VTC program could be a two-fold response to veterans concerns about increased punitiveness by law enforcement while also extending the VTC opportunity to a larger audience.

Addressing Perceptions of Stigmatization/Retaliation by Society

As much as VTCs are premised on military culture and shared veteran identity, there is also a need to change the perception that military veterans are different. This finding was unexpected and suggests VTCs, while doing their job to address criminogenic needs in a veteran-centric environment, need to bridge the citizen-veteran divide to restore citizens' positive perceptions and reduce resentment. Citizens support justice-involved veterans (Atkin-Plunk & Sloas, 2019) and continued efforts by VTC teams to tout the benefits of the program should be buttressed by outcome evaluations that demonstrate VTCs effective components. VTCs are still emerging, and many are far from sufficiently established to support rigorous evaluations though early efforts to quantify their successes and appraise their value to the community can promote the practical benefits of VTCs.

Another important practical implication is that continued efforts are also needed to encourage veterans to embrace their veteran identity, while also forging relationships with civilians and criminal justice actors. Improved veteran-citizen relations may lead to stronger social ties and reduced perceptions of stigmatization (see Carrola & Corbin-Burdick, 2015). Tensions arise as veterans return to their communities and must resolve their veteran identity with the identity they set aside when they deployed (Demers, 2011). Those tensions become more difficult when veteran identity and community identity must be reconciled with the shame and stigma associated with offender identity, which this study suggests can be part of the calculus of veterans' decisions on whether to pursue VTCs.

Addressing Fear of Dishonoring Service

There is a clear need to create a space for like-minded and similarly situated justice-involved veterans who share concerns about their new identity and need to address their fear of dishonoring their branch of service. The results of this study demonstrate a need to support justice-involved veterans in their development of a post-justice-involved veteran identity, acknowledging that their participation in VTC does not overshadow the positive aspects of their military service.

Restorative justice practices such as engaging local veterans' groups could support veteran reintegration into the wider brother- and sisterhood of military veterans. The need for reintegration goes beyond the veteran-civilian divide. There is a desire by VTC participants to be reconnected, reunified, and redeemed in the eyes of their Armed Service branch. Veterans from the community could facilitate a redemption script (see Maruna, 2001) to promote positive reintegration experiences and reunite justice-involved veterans with their comrades in arms. Restorative practices are embedded in the problem-solving court philosophy (Ahlin & Douds, 2019; Kaiser & Holtfreter, 2016) and aim to acknowledge the wrongdoing while reinforcing the value of the person through the restorative nature of VTCs and problem-solving courts, more generally, has yet to be unpacked (see Baldwin & Rukus, 2015; Huskey, 2017).

Limitations and Future Research

This study was based on the experiences of a limited sample of mentees, mentors, and VTC-decliners from one VTC. We were not able to interview any of the veterans who were denied participation or those who declined to enter the program outright. Future research would

benefit from inclusion of these perspectives when possible. Therefore, the findings could be reflective of the study site and demographics of veterans residing within this urban-rural county. Though the VTC in this study is representative of other VTCs across the U.S. in that its participants are largely White and male, services are leveraged by Veterans Affairs, and it adheres to the 10-key components established for VTCs (see Baldwin, 2013), additional research on this topic in different settings is needed as context can influence choices to pursue VTC. A next step is to engage in additional study with a broader sample of veterans who did not enroll in a VTC, with sample identification preferably at the time of arrest. Though veteran identification by police remains imprecise, such a sample would provide a broader understanding of the identity-based decision-making processes used by VTC eligible veterans in the current study. The authors are not aware of any published studies on the number of justice-involved veterans in a given jurisdiction that have the option to pursue VTC and whether they choose to do so, but data from this VTC's internal reports suggest that more than half of veteran applicants are denied admission (17 out of 33 in 2018), and over a quarter decline offers to enter the VTC (nine out of 33 in 2018). Future study on the size of this phenomenon would be useful to both the research community and practitioners.

This study is also limited by the absence of detailed descriptions of the study participants. These data were not presented to maintain confidentiality (e.g., small cell suppression). Therefore, it is not possible to generalize results to various veteran demographics (e.g., age, branch of service, rank, combat experience). The present focus could contribute to sample bias as the veteran population is becoming more diverse and barriers to services exist for veteran subgroups (see Ahlin & Douds, 2018). It is possible that different themes may emerge among other samples. Further work is required to understand how veteran identity shapes the

experiences of different demographics of justice-involved veterans in VTCs, alternative problem-solving courts, and traditional court processing. Veteran status, and the veteran identity intimately linked to one's professional status - a role that steps beyond personal identity to embrace a group identity - may influence interaction with government programming such as those offered by the criminal justice system (Gade & Wilkins, 2012). Future studies on the current topic are therefore recommended.

Conclusion

To our knowledge, this is the first study to examine how veterans consider the decision to enroll in VTCs when faced with the opportunity to pursue this problem-solving court. A major strength of this research is that our qualitative approach enabled us to identify four salient themes related to veteran identity formulation during the VTC decision-making process. As a result, this study provides foundational data upon which to build further study of what factors contribute to veterans' decisions about VTC participation. This study suggests that military socialization and the resultant veteran identity can influence the decision-making process veterans engage in when considering VTC and while participating in the VTC. It also highlights barriers to VTC expansion related to the perceived need of veterans to reconcile their veteran identity with their offender identity. VTC program staff and criminal justice practitioners can use these findings to help bridge the gap between VTC services and demand for the program.

References

- Addis, M. E., & Mahalik, J. R. (2003). Men, masculinity, and the contexts of help seeking. *American Psychologist, 58*, 5-14.
- Ahlin, E. M., & Douds, A. S. (2016). Military socialization: A motivating factor for seeking treatment in a veterans' treatment court. *American Journal of Criminal Justice, 41*, 83-96.
- Ahlin, E. M., & Douds, A. S. (2018). Many shades of green: Assessing awareness of differences in mental health care needs among subpopulations of military veterans. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology, 62*, 3168-3184.
- Ahlin, E. M., & Douds, A. S. (2019). The problem with problem-solving courts: The black box remains unopened after thirty years. In C. Spohn & P. K. Brennan (Eds.), *Handbook on Sentencing Policies and Practices in the 21st Century*. New York: Routledge.
- Atkin-Plunk, C. A., & Sloas, L. B. (2019). Support for balanced justice and rehabilitation for justice-involved veterans. *Criminal Justice Review, 44*, 165-182.
- Baldwin, J. (2013). Executive summary: National survey of Veterans Treatment Courts. Available at SSRN: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2274138>
- Baldwin, J. (2017). Investigating the programmatic attack: A national survey of veterans treatment courts. *The Journal of Criminal Law & Criminology, 105*, 705-752.
- Baldwin, J. M., & Brooke, E. J. (2019). Pausing in the wake of rapid adoption: A call to critically examine the veterans treatment court concept. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation, 1-29*. DOI:10.1080/10509674.2018.1549181
- Baldwin, J. M., Hartley, R. D., & Brooke, E. J. (2019). Identifying those who served: Modeling potential participant identification in veterans treatment courts. *Drug Court Review, Winter 2018*, 11-31.

- Baldwin, J. M., & Rukus, J. (2015). Healing the wounds: An examination of Veterans Treatment Courts in the context of restorative justice. *Criminal Justice Policy Review*, 26, 183–207.
- Barrett, B. (2017). Veteran treatment court programs in Texas: An exploratory research project. Unpublished Master's Thesis, Texas State University – San Marcos.
- Bronson, J., Carson, E. A., & Noonan, M. (2015). *Veterans in prison and jail, 2011–12 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, Special Report)*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice.
- Carrola, P., & Corbin-Burdick, M. F. (2015). Counseling military veterans: Advocating for culturally competent and holistic interventions. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling*, 37, 1-14.
- Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J. W., & Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory Into Practice*, 39, 124-130.
- Demers, A. (2011). When veterans return: The role of community in reintegration. *Journal of Loss and Trauma*, 16, 160-179.
- Douds, A. S., & Ahlin, E. M. (2019). *The veterans treatment court movement: Striving to serve those who served*. New York: Routledge.
- Douds, A. S., Ahlin, E. M., Howard, D., & Stigerwalt, S. (2017). Varieties of veterans' courts: A statewide assessment of veterans' treatment court components. *Criminal Justice Policy Review*, 28, 740-769.
- Finlay, A. K., Harris, A. H. S., Rosenthal, J., Blue-Howells, J., Clark, S., Flatley, B., & Timko, C. (2018). Justice involvement and treatment use among rural veterans. *Journal of Rural Mental Health*, 42, 46-59.

- Flower, L. (2018). All you need to know about social identity. Review of *Negotiating identity: Symbolic interactionist approaches to social identity* by Susie Scott, 2015. *Symbolic Interaction*, 41, 577-579.
- Gade, D. M., & Wilkins, V. M. (2012). Where did you serve? Veteran identity, representative bureaucracy, and vocational rehabilitation. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 23, 267-288.
- Greener-Barcham, B. K. (2007). Crossing the green or blue line? Exploring the military–police divide. *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 18, 90-112.
- Hartley, R. D., & Baldwin, J. M. (2019). Waging war on recidivism among justice-involved veterans: An impact evaluation of a large urban veterans treatment court. *Criminal Justice Policy Review*, 30, 52-78.
- Hogg, M. A., Terry, D. J., & White, K. M. (1995). A tale of two theories: A critical comparison of identity theory with social identity theory. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 58, 255-269.
- Howard, J. A. (2000). Social psychology of identities. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26, 367-393.
- Huskey, K. (2017). Justice for veterans: Does theory matter? *Arizona Law Review*, 59, 697-736.
- Jalain, C. I., & Grossi, E. L. (2019). Take a load of Fanny: Peer Mentors in Veterans Treatment courts. *Criminal Justice Policy Review*, doi.org/10.1177/0887403419880289
- Johnson, R. S., Stolar, A. G., Wu, E., Coonan, L. A., & Graham, D. P. (2015). An analysis of successful outcomes and associated contributing factors in veterans' court. *Bulletin of the Menninger Clinic*, 79, 166-173.
- Kaiser, K. A., & Holtfreter, K. (2016). An integrated theory of specialized court programs: Using procedural justice and therapeutic jurisprudence to promote offender compliance and rehabilitation. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 43, 45-62.

- Klag, S., O'Callaghan, F., & Creed, P. (2005). The use of legal coercion in treatment of substance abusers: An overview and critical analysis of thirty years of research. *Substance Use & Misuse, 40*, 1777–1795.
- Kleykamp, M., Hipes, C., & MacLean, A. (2018). Who supports US veterans and who exaggerates their support? *Armed Forces & Society, 44*, 92-115.
- Knudsen, K. J., & Wingenfeld, S. (2016). A specialized treatment court for veterans with trauma exposure: Implications for the field. *Community Mental Health Journal, 52*, 127-135.
- Lorber, W., & Garcia, H. A. (2010). Not supposed to feel this: Traditional masculinity in psychotherapy with male veterans returning from Afghanistan and Iraq. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training, 47*, 296-305.
- Mackenzie, C. S., Gekoski, W. L., & Knox, V. J. (2006). Age, gender, and the underutilization of mental health services: The influence of help-seeking attitudes. *Aging and Mental Health, 10*, 574-582.
- Mackenzie, C. S., Knox, V. J., Gekoski, W. L., & Macaulay, H. L. (2004). An adaptation and extension of the Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help Scale. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 34*, 2410-2433.
- Mahalik, J. R., Locke, B. D., Ludlow, L. H., Diemer, M. A., Scott, R. P., Gottfried, M., & Freitas, G. (2003). Development of the conformity to masculine norms inventory. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity, 4*, 3-25.
- Maruna, S. (2001). *Making good: How ex-convicts reform and rebuild their lives*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Mead, G. H. (1934). *Mind, self and society*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Miller, N. S., & Flaherty, J. A. (2000). Effectiveness of coerced addiction treatment

(alternative consequences): A review of the clinical research. *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment*, 18, 9–16.

Mills, J., Bonner, A., & Francis, K. (2006). The development of constructivist grounded theory. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5, 25-35.

Murray, E. (2013). Post-army trouble: Veterans in the criminal justice system: Emma Murray examines how this group is perceived and dealt with. *Criminal Justice Matters*, 94, 20–21.

Nash, W. P., Silva, C., & Litz, B. (2009). The historic origins of military and veteran mental health stigma and the stress injury model as a means to reduce it. *Psychiatric Annals*, 39, 789-794.

New Jersey Trooper Hiring. (2019). New Jersey state police recruiting.

<https://www.njsp.org/recruiting/military-credit.shtml>. Retrieved March 28, 2019.

Redmond, S. A., Wilcox, S. L., Campbell, S., Kim, A., Finney, K., Barr, K., & Hassan, A. M. (2015). A brief introduction to the military workplace culture. *Work*, 50, 9-20.

Sampson, E. E. (1978). Personality and the location of identity. *Journal of Personality*, 46, 552-568.

San Antonio Police Department. (2019). Military and the SAPD.

<https://sapdcareers.com/military-and-the-sapd/> Retrieved March 28, 2019.

Schreger, C., & Kimble, M. (2017). Assessing civilian perceptions of combat veterans: An IAT study. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, 9, 12–18.

Shannon, L. M., Birdwhistell, S., Hulbig, S. K., Jones, A. J., Newell, J., & Payne, C. (2017). Examining implementation and preliminary performance indicators of veterans treatment courts: The Kentucky experience. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 63, 54-66.

Smith, R. T., & True, G. (2014). Warring identities: Identity conflict and the mental distress of

American veterans of the wars of Iraq and Afghanistan. *Society and Mental Health*, 4, 147-161.

Snyder v. Phelps, 562 U.S. 443 (2011)

Stacer, M. J., & Solinas-Saunders, M. (2020). Justice-involved veterans: A critical review and future research. *Critical Military Studies*, 6, 41-66.

Stets, J. E., & Burke, P. J. (2000). Identity theory and social identity theory. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 63, 224-237.

Strauss, A. L. (1987). Qualitative analysis for social scientists. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Tsai, J., Flatley, B., Kaspro, W. J., Clark, S., & Finlay, A. (2016). Diversion of veterans with criminal justice involvement to treatment courts: participant characteristics and outcomes. *Psychiatric Services*, 68, 375-383.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. (2017). Veterans court inventory 2016 update. Retrieved from <https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/docs/VJO/2016-Veterans-Court-Inventory-Update-VJO-Fact-Sheet.pdf>

Vogt, D. (2011). Mental health-related beliefs as a barrier to service use for military personnel and veterans: A review. *Psychiatric Services*, 62, 135-142.

Weaver, C. M., Joseph, D., Dongon, S. N., Fairweather, A., & Ruzek, J. I. (2013). Enhancing services response to crisis incidents involving veterans: A role for law enforcement and mental health collaboration. *Psychological Services*, 10, 66-72.

White, M. D., Mulvey, P., Fox, A. M., & Choate, D. (2012). A hero's welcome? Exploring the prevalence and problems of military veterans in the arrestee population. *Justice Quarterly*, 29, 258-286.

Yerramsetti, A. P., Simons, D. D., Coonan, L., & Stolar, A. (2017). Veteran treatment courts: A promising solution. *Behavioral Sciences & the Law*, 35, 512-522.

Zinzow, H. M., Britt, T. W., McFadden, A. C., Burnette, C. M., & Gillispie, S. (2012).

Connecting active duty and returning veterans to mental health treatment: Interventions and treatment adaptations that may reduce barriers to care. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 32, 741-753.