

# PERCEPTIONS OF PROCEDURAL JUSTICE AND LEGAL LEGITIMACY IN VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS: CORRELATES WITH PTSD RISK FACTORS

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## VALUE STATEMENT

This explorative study begins integrating research on PTSD risk and protective factors, criminogenic risk among veterans, and important theories of justice. For researchers concerned with procedural justice and legal legitimacy, it begins mapping out the extension of these theories in veterans treatment courts (VTCs). For VTC practitioners and policy-makers, the findings point to veteran-specific sociological factors that correlate with increased and decreased trust in the court system. For clinicians, this study further analyzes the links between probable PTSD, criminal behaviors, and perceptions of justice.

## ABSTRACT

As research into veterans treatment courts (VTCs) matures, it will be important to integrate lines of scholarship that have developed independently but come together in this novel context. In the present study, we examined how perceptions of justice interact with factors known to shape risk for PTSD as well as criminal justice involvement among veterans. These constructs are important to examine together because we know (1) risk of both PTSD and criminal justice involvement among veterans are shaped by a related set of pre-military, service-related, and post-military factors and (2) perceptions of procedural justice and legal legitimacy are associated with legal compliance generally and within problem-solving courts. In a sample of participants from two VTCs (N = 191), we found that combat was not associated with the perception of justice but that probable PTSD, military homecoming, and civilian reintegration had varying relationships with the two justice constructs. The veterans' perception of their military homecoming was the most consistent and potent correlate. These findings highlight the importance of assessing sociological as well as psychological factors to help understand how VTC participants perceive and respond to VTC team members and our larger justice system. Implications for research, practice, and policy are discussed.

## KEYWORDS

Veterans treatment courts, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), procedural justice, legal legitimacy, civilian reintegration, military homecoming

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## INTRODUCTION

A challenge for researchers studying veterans treatment courts (VTCs) is to integrate disparate bodies of scholarship regarding veterans, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), problem-solving courts, and criminogenic risk. This manuscript begins an exploration of one nexus, specifically, how perceptions of justice among VTC participants interact with common factors that shape risk for PTSD as well as arrests. We begin by reviewing the literatures on: (1) risk and protective factors for PTSD with an emphasis on military veterans; (2) correlates of criminal justice involvement among veterans that are closely tied to PTSD risk in the population; and (3) procedural justice and legal legitimacy.

These constructs are important to examine together because we know (1) risk of both PTSD and criminal justice involvement among veterans is shaped by a related set of pre-military, service-related, and post-military factors and (2) perceptions of procedural justice and legal legitimacy are associated with legal compliance generally and within problem-solving courts. Yet, attempts to integrate these different ways of understanding pathways to and desistance from criminal behavior have not been undertaken. Two key post-military factors—homecoming and civilian reintegration—are highlighted based on (1) their importance in shaping risk for PTSD and justice involvement among veterans and (2) logical connections between them and the relied upon normative theories of justice. Both procedural justice and legal legitimacy theories assume that how individuals have been treated by and are connected to the larger society affects their perceptions of judicial actors, the larger legal system, and, in turn, compliance.

Using a cross-sectional design with a convenience sample ( $N = 191$ ) from two VTCs, we conducted exploratory analyses into the correlates of probable PTSD among participants and then if and how the presence of probable PTSD, exposure to combat, post-military homecoming, and civilian reintegration interact with participant perceptions of treatment by court staff (procedural justice) as well as the larger legal system (legal legitimacy) while controlling for recidivism risk and demographic factors. Such research can aid court administrators and clinicians as they make decisions on eligibility, court structure, assessment, and treatment. We end with a discussion of key findings, study limitations, and implications for research, practice, and policy.

## REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### PTSD Risk and Protective Factors

Research shows that trauma exposure is common, such that 61% of men and 51% of women in the United States experience at least one traumatic event in their lifetime (Kessler et al. 1995). However, based upon U.S. lifetime prevalence rates of 5.0% for men and 10.4% for women (Kessler et al. 1995), we know that most exposed individuals do not develop PTSD. Instead, development of PTSD depends on the interplay of several risk and protective factors.

Risk and protective factors can be categorized as pre-, peri-, and post-traumatic. For each, risk and protective factors can be thought of as two sides of the same coin. That is, saying an individual has a risk factor is typically the same as saying that individual lacks the corresponding protective factor. As an example, we can frame the lack of a post-event support system as a risk factor or the presence of such a system as a protective factor.

Various factors that are present prior to the exposure have been found to affect the likelihood of experiencing trauma and/or developing PTSD following exposure. The difficulty in separating how pre-traumatic characteristics increase the likelihood of (1) experiencing trauma and (2) developing PTSD as a response is worth bearing in mind. Pre-trauma risk factors include prior trauma—especially if experienced at a young age (Bremner et al. 1993; Davidson et al. 1991), a family history of psychiatric disorders (Bisson 2007), limited education (Bisson 2007), maladaptive personality traits (Breslau et al. 1998; Friedman and Rosenberg 1993; Schnurr, Friedman, and Rosenberg 1993), a history of behavioral or psychological problems (McFarlane 1989), minority status (Breslau et al. 1998), and identification as a female (Breslau et al. 1998). Pre-traumatic training and preparation have been shown to protect against the development of PTSD (Alvarez and Hunt 2005).

Characteristics of traumatic events have been found to influence the trajectory of posttraumatic stress symptoms. Specifically, risk of developing PTSD is increased if the event occurs at an early age (Bremner et al. 1993), by frequency of exposure (de Jong et al. 2001) and by the type of event (Kessler et al. 1995).

Finally, there are important post-event factors that affect the likelihood of developing PTSD. The risk is diminished by positive social supports—including help with physical activities, emotional support and someone to process the event with (Ozer, 2003), positively coping with—instead of avoiding—implications of the experience (Benotsch et al. 2000), and receipt of therapeutic interventions (Bisson 2007; Cahill 1997; McCleery and Harvey 2004).

### **Risk and Protective Factors: Military Contextualization**

Combat veterans who served in Vietnam (Kulka et al. 1990), the Gulf War (Kang et al. 2003), and Iraq and Afghanistan (Hoge et al. 2004; Smith et al. 2009) have consistently experienced grossly elevated rates of PTSD when compared with the general public and non-combat veterans. Yet, with rates ranging from roughly 10% to 20%, it bears noting that the vast majority of individuals exposed to combat do not develop PTSD. Generally, the type of pre-, peri-, and post-traumatic factors that inform risk and resiliency in the civilian populations are also involved with members of the military and veterans. However, the shapes these factors take often follow the realities of military service.

The military contextualization is least distinct in pre-traumatic factors. There is broad agreement that family instability, adverse childhood experiences, and demographic factors affect risk of and path to PTSD among combat veterans (Fontana and Rosenheck 1994; King et al. 1999; Vogt et al. 2011). The military context emerges with pre-exposure training and preparation. Renshaw (2011) found associations between pre-deployment preparedness and threat perception as well as threat perception and PTSD.

When considering the events surrounding the trauma, the importance of the military context intensifies. Certain types of trauma members of the military are disproportionately exposed to are among those most likely to lead to PTSD. From general population studies, we know that exposure to combat follows only rape in risk for development of PTSD among men<sup>3</sup> (Kessler et al. 1995). Further, there is evidence of differential risk secondary to types of combat-related trauma (Renshaw 2011). Among veterans, the baseline risk of combat in predicting PTSD is amplified by military sexual trauma.

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<sup>3</sup>No female respondents in the data reported experiencing “direct combat experience in war” (Kessler et al. 1995).

Whereas sexual trauma is also the most potent type of trauma in predicting PTSD for women, female members of the military are at significantly elevated risk of sexual assault when compared with civilian women (Suris and Lind 2008). Research suggests that military sexual trauma is more predictive of PTSD than civilian sexual trauma (Suris et al. 2004).

Military and veteran realities affect post-traumatic factors in two broad ways. First, although interventions can reduce the likelihood of developing PTSD and successfully reduce symptoms, members of the military and veterans face unique barriers to receiving treatment. They include internal barriers such as stigma (Hoge et al. 2004) and external barriers including institutional failure to refer individuals who screened positive for a mental health condition (Milliken, Aucherlonie, and Hoge 2007).

Finally, as veterans transition from warriors to civilians, the importance of post-traumatic social supports takes on military-specific contours that are particularly relevant for the present study. Since Fontana and Rosenheck (1994) conducted their seminal work modeling the pathways to PTSD among Vietnam veterans, perception of homecoming has served as a key post-service construct. In broad terms, homecoming has been operationalized to capture how veterans feel the larger society and their families/smaller social networks welcomed them back. Although some of the early work (Johnson et al. 1997) was rooted in the negative way many Vietnam veterans were treated, the construct has helped understand PTSD risk in veterans of the Gulf War (King et al. 2006), as well as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (Vogt et al. 2011). As will be discussed, perception of treatment following military service raises questions regarding how veterans view society and its legal institutions.

Although not included as clearly and consistently in causal models of PTSD risk among combat veterans, research into reintegration problems among Iraq and Afghanistan combat veterans has helped understand risk for PTSD (Sayer et al. 2010) and difficulties tied to sub-clinical symptomology (Sayer, Carlson, and Frazier 2014). The construct draws heavily on work regarding community integration and focuses on social relationships, productivity, community participation, meaning in life, self-care, and leisure activities (Sayer et al. 2010). Of interest to the present study, many of these reintegration difficulties are tied to illegal, dangerous, and/or antisocial behaviors (Sayer et al. 2010).

Research into PTSD consistently points to a complex mix of risk and protective factors that help explain why trauma-exposed individuals do or do not develop the condition. With both civilian and military populations, the research supports a diverse set of risk and protective constructs, spanning the life-course of exposed individuals. Many involve how individuals have been treated by and fit within social systems. In the next section, conceptually-similar research into factors that predict criminal justice involvement of veterans is explored.

### **Common Risks for PTSD and Justice-Involvement among Veterans**

Discussions of possible connections between exposure to military combat and subsequent criminal behavior are not new. Nor are calls to recognize such past service and to reduce incarceration when

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possible. Writing in the aftermath of World War I, Edith Abbott (1918), a pioneer in the emerging social work profession, wrote:

*Now the importance of all this at the present time is the fact that every belligerent nation must be prepared for a grave increase in crime after the war and that the obligations upon society were never greater than they are today to see that every effort is made to save men convicted of minor offenses from the demoralization of a prison term. (38)*

A century later, this assumption has been used to justify the creation and guide the objectives of VTCs (e.g. Russell 2009; Smee et al. 2013). Perhaps as an operationalization of the assumed link between combat itself and behavioral health conditions secondary to it, a sizeable minority of VTCs restrict eligibility to combat veterans (5.6%) or those with military-related mental health conditions (20.2%) (Flatley et al. 2017).

As such, it is important to consider the extent to which the perceived associations between combat, PTSD, and crime are supported empirically. The relationships between military service and criminal behavior have been researched in a number of different ways that shed light on various aspects of this complex topic. Research has compared rates of incarceration between veterans and non-veterans (Bronson et al. 2015), considered how risk of incarceration varies based upon era of military service (Greenberg, Rosenheck, and Desai 2007), evaluated the efficacy of military service as a life transition with the ability to support desistance from juvenile delinquency (Bouffard 2005; Criag and Connell 2015), and has reported on behavioral health (Blodgett et al. 2015) and socioeconomic (Tsai et al. 2014) correlates of justice-involved veterans. Although these approaches and traditions noted above are important, the present study is most informed by an approach that is closely tied to the discussion of military-specific risk and protective factors for PTSD in understanding risk of post-military criminal justice involvement.

Shortly after the formal development of PTSD in the *DSM-III*, Wilson and Zigelbaum (1983) conducted the first known attempt to explore correlations between pre-military personality characteristics, combat exposure, PTSD, homecoming, and criminal behavior. Their study was limited by a small convenience sample, and aspects of their findings have been contradicted by stronger subsequent research. However, the study is notable for drawing early attention to pre-military, military, clinical, and post-military factors—including homecoming. This conceptual approach has had an important and enduring legacy.

Fontana and Rosenheck (2005) built upon the work of Wilson and Zigelbaum (1983) with a sample of 1,117 male Vietnam veterans, 21% with PTSD. They evaluated the relationships between post-military antisocial behavior (including, but not exclusively, criminal behavior) and the following: childhood abuse and instability, pre-military antisocial behaviors, race, combat exposure, disciplinary action in the military, level of perceived support during homecoming, PTSD, and substance abuse. Combat exposure and war trauma were only related to post-military antisocial behavior when mediated through PTSD. War trauma and a lack of support during homecoming were significantly tied to PTSD. Even the mediated association between combat exposure and antisocial be-

**War trauma and a lack of support during homecoming were significantly tied to PTSD.**

havior was more modest (9% of total variance) than lifelong conduct disorder (28% of total variance) or being African American (14% of total variance). Taken together, this study stresses the complex interactions between military and non-military experiences in shaping risk for antisocial behavior among veterans.

Drawing upon a national sample of veterans who served during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars era, Elbogen et al. (2012) examined correlates of arrest. Among their sample of 1,388 veterans, 9% reported being arrested since deployment. They assessed PTSD, TBI, and irritability. They further included combat exposure, substance misuse, age, gender, witnessing parents fighting, and a history of prior arrests as variables. To the extent that combat had a relationship with arrest, it was mediated through PTSD with negative affect. Yet, non-combat factors—especially witnessing parents fighting, gender, and substance misuse—had stronger associations with arrest.

This line of research has limitations and needs on-going development. Yet, research conducted with combat-exposed veterans from the Vietnam War as well as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan highlights the interplay of pre-military, service-related, clinical, and post-military factors in explaining veteran involvement in the criminal justice system. Additionally, the findings offer a caution to not focus on combat-related experiences or even subsequent PTSD alone when considering veteran involvement in the criminal justice system and should draw our attention to factors that affect both PTSD and criminogenic risk. To the extent that PTSD helps shape future behavior, the factors that contribute to PTSD risk should still be considered.

## Perceptions of Justice

The primary mechanisms to reduce criminal recidivism used by the drug treatment and mental health courts on which VTCs are modeled are the provision of behavioral health services, close supervision, and the use of incentives and sanctions (Marlowe, Hardin, and Fox 2016). However, many of these older problem-solving courts have drawn upon normative theories of justice in attempts to further encourage prosocial attitudes and behaviors among court participants (McIvor 2009; Poythress et al. 2002; Rossman et al. 2013). In broad terms, normative theories of justice can be thought of as alternatives to instrumental or deterrence-based approaches to crime reduction. That is, they attempt to alter the norms of individuals so that laws and legal institutions seem fair, trustworthy, and worthy of compliance. There is a foundational focus on how individuals feel they have been treated by and are connected with the larger society (Tyler and Huo 2002) that raises potential connections with homecoming and civilian reintegration. Based on their importance within problem-solving courts and applied criminology more broadly, the present study examines two inter-related theories within the VTC context: procedural justice and legal legitimacy.

**Procedural justice theory focuses on the extent to which individuals believe that agents of a legal system have treated them with respect, listened to and considered their perspectives, and provided evidence of trustworthy motives.**

Procedural justice theory focuses on the extent to which individuals believe that agents of a legal system have treated them with respect, listened to and considered their perspectives, and provided evidence of trustworthy motives. Dating back to a series of laboratory experiments in the 1960s and 1970s (Thibaut and Walker 1975) through population-based surveys (Tyler 1990; Tyler and Huo 2002), perceptions of procedurally fair treatment have been shown to be positively associated with prosocial attitudes and behaviors. Further, these outcomes tend to exist even in the face of adverse decisions from legal actors (e.g. losing a court case, being arrested), supporting the relative superiority of normative over instrumental considerations.

Although the effect size tends to be smaller and many studies are limited by cross-sectional designs, the positive effects of procedural justice have been observed in applied criminal justice contexts. In a recent review of the available evidence, Nagin and Telep (2017) noted important limits and avenues for further research but summarized the available studies (one on domestic violence offenders and two focused on reducing gun violence with recently released prisoners) as supporting a negative association between perceived procedural justice and future crime. Blasko and Taxman (2018) reported on two distinct studies conducted with parolees and probationers. In each, higher levels of procedural justice were associated with fewer technical violations, self-reported criminal behavior, and official records of arrest. Within mental health courts, perceptions of procedural justice have been associated with higher rates of program completion (Dollaret al. 2018) and lower rates of criminal recidivism (Wales, Hiday, and Ray 2010). Finally, it has been shown to be associated with lower levels of criminal recidivism in drug courts (Gottfredson et al. 2007).

Scholars from diverse disciplines have long studied the factors that lead individuals to perceive societies' legal authorities as having—or not having—legitimacy. In contrast with the ability of elites to force compliance, legitimacy can be thought of as belief from the governed that a system is due such deference. From this perspective, people obey laws because they feel they should as opposed to fearing sanctions for not doing so. Although the work of Weber (1968) has been seen as foundational, it has also been critiqued as leaving important gaps—especially as regards the practical implications of legitimacy (Spencer 1970). The work of Jeremy Beetham has moved the definition and utility of legitimacy forward and shaped the measure of legitimacy used in the present study (Jackson et al. 2011).

In developing his social scientific theory of legitimacy, Beetham (1991) attempted to integrate what he described as the historically distinct treatments of the issue by legal scholars, moral philosophers, and social scientists. His conceptualization drew upon these three traditions and focused on (1) the existence of established rules, (2) the ability to justify these rules through shared beliefs, and (3) obligation to comply with these rules. Of particular importance to Beetham was how legitimacy could be used to predict compliance with laws and legal actors.

The normative theories of justice discussed in this section draw our attention to the potential power of how participants in courts perceive the treatment they receive by individuals within the court as well as the legitimacy of the larger legal system.

Beetham's work has informed applied theories of compliance (Bottoms 2002; Robinson and McNeill 2008; Sherman 1993). In a recent review of his seminal work (1991), Beetham (2013) described Tyler's theory of procedural justice as helping to operationalize his theory of legitimacy. A survey conducted with a national probability sample of adults in England and Wales found perceptions of legitimacy were associated with lower levels of self-reported criminal behavior (Jackson et al. 2012). A recent review of empirical studies has offered support for the connection between perceived legitimacy and criminal behavior among those currently or previously involved in the criminal justice system (Eisner and Nivette 2013). Murphy, Bradford, and Jackson (2015) found legitimacy played a mediating role between perceptions of procedural justice and legal compliance among previous tax offenders.

The normative theories of justice discussed in this section draw our attention to the potential power of how participants in courts perceive the treatment they receive by individuals within the court as well as the legitimacy of the larger legal system. Perceptions of both procedural justice and legal legitimacy have been shown to have positive associations with desistance from criminal behavior. However, these constructs have not been studied within the context of VTCs or with justice-involved veterans more generally.

## SUMMARY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The present study is informed by three discrete lines of research. First, we know that risk for PTSD is shaped by a complex mix of pre-, peri-, and post-traumatic factors and that exposure to combat, homecoming, and civilian reintegration are particularly important in predicting development of the condition among veterans. Second, risk for veteran criminality is shaped by many of the same risk factors that inform our understanding of PTSD—including post-military social factors. This body of research should caution us against focusing only on the clinical diagnosis at the expense of the common risk factors. Third, perceptions of procedural justice and legal legitimacy have been shown to predict legal compliance. If perceptions of procedural justice and legal legitimacy are associated with future criminal behavior among those participating in VTCs, we need to begin exploring veteran-specific factors that may shape these perceptions of justice. There is reason to believe that perceptions of procedural justice and legal legitimacy may be responsive to how veterans assess their past treatment by (homecoming) and current connection with (civilian reintegration) society.

Based on the above, the present study begins a synthesis of these disparate bodies of inquiry within the VTC context. Although the literatures summarized above informed the selection of variables, the study was approached in an exploratory manner. As such, two research questions were posed.

- 1) *Was probable PTSD associated with combat exposure, homecoming, civilian reintegration, demographic variables, and recidivism risk within this VTC sample?*
- 2) *Were perceptions of (a) procedural justice and (b) legal legitimacy associated with probable PTSD, combat exposure, homecoming, civilian reintegration, demographic variables, and recidivism risk within this VTC sample?*

## METHODS

### Study Settings and Participant Recruitment

The study drew participants from two urban VTCs in the US Southwest in 2016. Both courts hear misdemeanor-level cases but have otherwise liberal eligibility criteria. Each court accepts veterans regardless of military discharge type, eligibility for VA services, era of service, or combat exposure. Specific diagnoses, service-related or otherwise, are not required.

The study utilized a cross-sectional design and convenience sampling. Individuals were eligible if they had attended at least two prior sessions of the VTC and were not in the custody of jail or detention staff. All recruitment occurred within the two court buildings during VTC sessions. Outreach was conducted by the lead author as well as two research assistants who were military veterans. Approximately 80% of approached and eligible VTC participants agreed to complete the self-administered survey. Participants were provided \$10 gift cards in return for completing the roughly 20-minute survey. Memoranda of understanding were developed with each court, and the research was approved by two university institutional review boards.

### Missing and Problematic Data

The approach to missing and questionable data had three phases. First, all 206 surveys were reviewed, and 15 were excluded due to response patterns that suggested the participants did not understand or take the survey seriously. Tests of difference were conducted (chi square, Fisher's exact and independent sample t-tests) to evaluate if the 15 excluded cases differed from the 191 on all variables except for legitimacy, procedural justice, homecoming and reintegration (because the multi-item scales had the most problematic responses in most cases). The excluded cases did not differ at a significant level on any variable.

The second phase focused on the final sample ( $N = 191$ ) and the multi-item measures (perceived homecoming, civilian reintegration, procedural justice, and legal legitimacy). The overall rate of missing data for the 66 items across these four measures was under 1%. In order to capitalize on the correlations between items within scales as well as those across scales, the approach to item-level imputation developed by Little (1988) and described by Enders (2010) was utilized. This process called for the development of temporary scale means for all cases—including those with missing values on some scale items. A series of imputations were conducted—one each for perceived homecoming, civilian reintegration, procedural justice, and legal legitimacy. The expectation-maximization (EM) algorithm was used to impute missing values for all items on the respective scales, using the other scale items, the temporary scale means of the other scales, and other constructs from the larger study not used in this paper (e.g. veteran identity) in the imputation equations.<sup>4</sup> Finally, the temporary scale mean variables were deleted and final scale scores were generated.

The third phase again focused on the final sample ( $N = 191$ ), using the EM algorithm<sup>5</sup> to impute quantitative variables (age at first arrest, total lifetime arrests, service years, and separation years). Im-

<sup>4</sup>As part of each imputation, the nature of the missing data was considered. Review of Little's MCAR tests (Little 1988) as well as univariate t-test comparisons (Enders 2010) supported that the data were likely missing at random. Additionally, the inclusion of the temporary scale means for the other measures buffers against the possibility of data missing not at random (Enders 2010).

<sup>5</sup>Little's MCAR test and univariate t-tests again suggested that the data were likely missing at least at the MAR level and auxiliary variables were again used to buffer against the possibility of MNAR data.

**TABLE 1: PERCEPTIONS OF JUSTICE  
IN VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS**  
Study Sample, Descriptive Statistics

CHARACTERISTICS	VALUE
<b>GENDER, MALE</b>	<b>89.5%</b>
<b>AGE</b>	
Median	44.0%
18 to 24	3.7%
25 to 34	26.2%
35 to 44	20.4%
45-54	21.5%
55 to 64	20.9%
65 and Above	7.3%
<b>RACE/ETHNICITY</b>	
African-American	19.4%
Asian/Pacific Islander	1.0%
Native American	3.1%
Hispanic	20.9%
White, non-Hispanic	49.2%
Multiracial or multiethnic	5.8%
Other	0.5%
<b>CURRENT HOUSING STATUS</b>	
Homeless (stress or emergency shelter)	9.4%
Transitional program	11.5%
Temporary with friend or family	13.6%
Private housing, in jeopardy	12.6%
Private housing, secure	52.9%
<b>CURRENT EMPLOYMENT STATUS</b>	
Full-time	9.4%
Part-time	11.0%
Retired	11.0%
Disabled	25.7%
Unemployed	25.1%
<b>ERA(S) OF SERVICE</b>	
September 2001 to Present	43.5%
August 1990 to August 2001 (includes Gulf War)	26.7%
May 1975 to July 1990	29.8%
Vietnam War Era (August 1964 to April 1975)	15.2%
<b>YEARS OF MILITARY SERVICE</b>	
Mean (SD)	5.73% (5.45)
<2	7.3%
2 to 4.9	51.6%
5 to 9.9	30.9%
10 and Above	9.9%
<b>DEPLOYMENT TO COMBAT ZONE</b>	<b>44.5%</b>
<b>COMBAT EXPOSURE</b>	<b>45.5%</b>
<b>PROBABLE PTSD</b>	<b>64.4%</b>
<b>AGE AT FIRST ARREST</b>	
13 and younger	7.0%
14 to 17	19.8%
18 to 29	43.3%
30 to 39	17.6%
40 to 49	5.3%
50 and Older	7.0%
<b>TOTAL LIFETIME ARRESTS</b>	
0	2.1%
1	19.4%
2 to 5	42.9%
6 to 10	16.8%
11 to 20	11.0%
21 and above	7.9%

putation was not conducted on probable PTSD and combat exposure due to the limits of SPSS in imputing categorical variables (Allison 2009). Although the four cases missing data on one or more of these two variables were left in the dataset, they were deleted listwise during analyses.

### Sample Characteristics

The following descriptive summaries use the final sample (N = 191) after the imputation described above. Table 1 contains a detailed description based on demographics, socioeconomic status, military service, and arrest history. The sample data highlight the depth of diversity hidden by terms like “justice-involved veterans.” Participants in the sample varied greatly by age, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, military experiences, and past experiences with the criminal justice system. Unfortunately, the available data do not allow comparisons between the sample and the population of participants in the two VTCs. However, comparisons can be drawn with a national inventory of veterans engaged in VTCs and other problems solving courts (Clark, McGuire, and Blue-Howells 2014) on some variables of interest.

The basic demographics of the sample are somewhat consistent with available national data (Clark, McGuire, and Blue-Howells 2014). The mean age is the same as that from the national inventory. Although the sample in the present study is heavily male (89.5%), it is less so than that reported by Clark and colleagues (2014) in the national survey (96%). Finally, the racial and ethnic breakdown deviates from the national numbers which have a higher percentage of African Americans (31%) but a lower percentage of Hispanics (10%). This deviation is appropriate for cities in the Southwest.

Participants were asked about their employment and housing. Different approaches to categorization and assessment periods make comparisons between the study sample and the national reference groups difficult. However, the participants in this study can be categorized as experiencing lower rates of housing stability and workforce involvement than the general adult population in a way generally consistent with Clark and colleagues’ (2014) national VTC survey.

It is difficult to compare all service-related characteristics with the national data due to different question framing and

reporting. However, the data highlight the significant degree of service-related diversity that exists within the veteran community. Rates of deployment to combat zones and personal exposure to combat are consistent with national VTC characteristics (Clark, McGuire, and Blue-Howells 2014).

The probable PTSD rate presented above deserves comment for two reasons. First, although we have presented it alongside service-related variables, PTSD is not best thought of as a military factor. It is a behavioral health condition. Although many veterans who develop PTSD do so in response to traumatic events experienced while in the service, this is not universally true. In the national inventory, for example, 35% of the sample was assessed as having military-related PTSD and another 6% as having PTSD tied to a non-military event (Clark, McGuire, and Blue-Howells 2014). The present study is unable to disentangle these numbers. It is also important to note that the present study used a screening approach to identify instances of probable PTSD, whereas the national study used diagnoses established through clinical assessment or review of medical records. This likely contributes to the higher rate of positive cases in the present study.

Finally, we provide a summary of the age of first arrest and number of lifetime arrests for the sample. The national survey (Clark, McGuire, and Blue-Howells 2014) did not report such data, preventing comparisons. However, the participants in the present study reported a wide, relatively well-dispersed, range of responses for both variables.

## Measures

**Probable PTSD.** For the present study, the four-item Primary Care PTSD Screen (PC-PTSD) was used. Although developed for primary care settings (Prins et al. 2003), it has been used successfully as a self-administered screening tool in prior research (Sayer et al. 2011). The PC-PTSD's validity was supported by high rates of prediction of PTSD diagnosis from historical records of participants and concurrent screening and evaluation. Subsequent research (Bliese et al. 2008) has supported the initial findings. Prins and colleagues (2003) suggest using positive responses to three of the four items as the cut-point for probable PTSD; we used this approach.

Although it is an effective instrument, the PC-PTSD only focuses on the preceding 30 days. However, some of the subjects had been participating in the VTC for several months. It is possible that this tool would fail to identify individuals with well-controlled PTSD. In response, respondents were also asked if they had been diagnosed with or treated for PTSD by a physician or other mental health professional during their time in the VTC. Either a positive screen on the PC-PTSD or a positive response to this question resulted in the individual being coded as "probable-PTSD." This two-tiered approach has been used previously (Smith et al. 2008).

**Civilian reintegration difficulties.** Post-military community integration was measured with the Military to Civilian Questionnaire (M2C-Q). This 16-item scale was developed by Sayer et al. (2011). All items focus on the preceding 30 days and are on a 1 (no difficulty) to 5 (extreme difficulty) scale. The scale was developed with Iraq and Afghanistan combat veterans and had a high degree of internal consistency ( $\alpha = .95$ ); construct validity was established through correlations with reported global as-

... PTSD is not best thought of as a military factor. It is a behavioral health condition.

assessment of reintegration difficulties, probable PTSD, and overall mental health. An improvement the M2C-Q offers over past surveys is that it is not focused on the period right after military separation. This is especially important for the current study as participants have been out of the military for greatly varying periods of time. Further, it offers an important contrast with the next measure. Descriptive and psychometric values for the scale in the present study follow: mean: 2.97, standard deviation: 0.95, skew: -0.12, kurtosis: -0.39, and Cronbach's alpha: .92.

**Perceived homecoming.** The Deployment Risk and Resilience Inventory (DDRI) was developed with a sample of veterans from the Gulf War to capture a broad mix of pre-, peri-, and post-trauma risk and resiliency factors (King et al. 2006). The DDRI-2 was developed based on research with Iraq and Afghanistan veterans (Vogt et al. 2013). Although the DDRI-2 is a suite of 17 related scales, the developers indicate that individual scales can be used. For the present study, the 10-item post-deployment social support scale, which explores perceived homecoming, was used. The items are scored on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) scale. Items focus on response from the public (e.g., "The American people made me feel at home when I returned") and immediate social circle (e.g., "My family and friends understand what I have been through in the Armed Forces"). This scale had strong internal consistency ( $\alpha = .90$ ), and construct validity was supported through bivariate correlation with PTSD, depression, and anxiety (Vogt et al. 2012). Descriptive and psychometric values for the scale in the present study follow: mean: 3.54, standard deviation: 0.81, skew: -0.50, kurtosis: 0.30, and Cronbach's alpha: .90.

**Combat exposure.** Combat exposure was assessed through a single, dichotomous item. Participants were asked, "were you personally exposed to combat-related situations (including, but not limited to, receiving fire, taking part in offensive activities, or exposure to dead or seriously wounded comrades, enemy combatants or civilians)?" This item was developed by the lead author through consultation and pilot testing with university students who had served in the military.

**Recidivism risk.** The proxy score was used to measure relative recidivism risk among the individuals in the sample. Although its use was not evident in peer reviewed literature, applied usage of the proxy has been well described in technical and/or governmental reports (Davidson 2005; Wong 2009). Its primary use is as a screening instrument to identify individuals at higher risk of recidivism to target for full assessments. Validation studies have demonstrated that higher proxy scores predict higher rates and earlier onset of recidivism (Davidson 2005; Wong 2009).

Three items (current age, age at first arrest, and total lifetime arrests) were used to generate the score. The proxy was used in the present study for the same reasons that it is used in applied settings: solid predicative validity and its brevity. In applied settings, the raw proxy scores are divided into risk levels (typically high, medium, and low). For the present study, the raw score (2-8) was used to increase the variance of the measure. This approach is supported by a validation study in which each increase in score was significantly associated with higher and earlier rates of recidivism (Wong 2009). Descriptive values for the scale in the present study follow: mean: 4.97, standard deviation: .1.62, skew: -0.12, and kurtosis: -0.70.

**Procedural justice.** Procedural justice was evaluated using a 12-item scale. The first nine items are based<sup>6</sup> on a scale used with Australian DUI offenders (Tyler et al. 2007) and focus on respectful treatment and the opportunity to be heard within the court context. It demonstrated solid internal consistency ( $\alpha = .87$ ) in the Australian DUI sample. The final three items were created by the lead author

to explore procedural fairness from a veteran-centric perspective.<sup>7</sup> They were developed with the same structure as the modified Tyler and colleagues (2007) items. An example item was, “the court has shown respect for my military service.” Respondents were prompted to think about the judge, lawyers, and other staff of the VTC as they considered all 12 items. The items are on a 1 to 5 Likert-type scale with higher scores indicating higher perceptions of procedural justice. Descriptive and psychometric values for the scale in the present study follow: mean: 4.26, standard deviation: 0.69, skew: -1.40, kurtosis: 3.31, and Cronbach’s alpha: .94.

**Legal legitimacy.** Legitimacy was measured through a scale developed for use in the European Social Survey (ESS).<sup>8</sup> Beyond its use in the ESS (2011), it has been used in a national sample of US adults (Tyler and Jackson 2014) which offered further support for reliability and construct validity through significant multivariate associations with indicators of compliance, cooperation, engagement, and fair treatment. Although the original ESS legitimacy items are on a 1 to 11 response scale, the present study used the same 1 to 5 scale, focusing on agreement or disagreement with statements, used in the US survey. Higher scores indicate more positive assessments of the legitimacy of legal systems and actors. Although developed as a multi-dimensional scale, an overall score has been used by the developers (Jackson et al. 2011) as well as by Tyler and Jackson (2014). Descriptive and psychometric values for the scale in the present study follow: mean: 3.52, standard deviation: 0.67 skew: -0.33, kurtosis: 0.72, and Cronbach’s alpha: .95.

## Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS, version 23. The data were analyzed in three steps. First, a series of bivariate correlations<sup>9</sup> were conducted. Second, logistic regression was used to regress probable PTSD on demographic variables, combat exposure, homecoming, civilian reintegration, and recidivism risk. In the third step, each of the perception of justice constructs—procedural justice and legal legitimacy—was regressed on demographic variables, exposure to combat, probable PTSD, homecoming, civilian reintegration, and recidivism risk.

Using two study sites introduced the possibility that data would cluster based on site. To evaluate this possibility, a series of t-tests and chi square tests were conducted to determine if participants differed on any of the variables used in the present study based on site. The only significant difference was procedural justice ( $t(189) = 4.28, p < .001$ ). Therefore, site was used as a control variable in the regression of procedural justice, but not during other analyses.

<sup>6</sup>Without changing fundamental content, minor changes to the items were made for the present study. First, items were reframed from questions yielding very fair to very unfair responses to statements yielding strongly agree to strongly disagree responses. The original 1 to 5 scale is retained. Second, the original items asked about the “conference/court” as participants were assigned to one of these two conditions. For the VTC study the term “the court” is used. Finally, as the survey was administered to individuals still participating in the VTC, item verbs were changed from past to the present tense.

<sup>7</sup>Prior to merging the existing 9-item scale with the 3 new veteran-centric items, the following steps were taken to ensure they functioned as a cohesive scale. First, patterns of inter-item correlations were reviewed. All 12 items were positively and significantly correlated and a differential pattern did not exist with the 3 new items. Second, mean scores, skew and kurtosis were reviewed for the 12 items and differences did not emerge based on item origination. Alpha coefficients for the 9- and 12-item versions were reviewed and there was not a meaningful change. Finally, exploratory factor analysis was conducted and the 3 items did not load on a new or discrete factor.

<sup>8</sup>See Jackson et al. (2011) for its theoretical influences and development.

<sup>9</sup>The approach to selection of tests was to use Spearman’s rho on any test involving procedural justice due to the deviation from normality, Pearson’s r and point-biserial tests with the other ordinal-level measures based on normal distributions, and Phi coefficient when testing two dichotomous variables.

**TABLE 2**  
**PERCEPTIONS OF JUSTICE IN VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS**  
**BIVARIATE CORRELATIONS**

VARIABLE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1) AGE	1	-.02	.23**	-.18*	-.14*	-.20**	-.08	-.01	-.07	.10	-.49***
2) GENDER, FEMALE	—	1	-.04	-.09	.01	-.18	.04	.01	-.01	.07	-.20**
3) BLACK	—	—	1	-.25***	.09	.03	.01	.08	-.06	-.02	-.02
4) HISPANIC	—	—	—	1	.05	.01	-.06*	.10	.14*	.20**	.04
5) PROBABLE PTSD	—	—	—	—	1	.45***	.36***	-.34***	-.02	-.15*	.23**
6) COMBAT	—	—	—	—	—	1	.18*	-.16*	-.02	-.07	.10
7) REINTEGRATION	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	-.31**	-.02	-.17*	.18*
8) HOMECOMING	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	.21**	.40***	-.22**
9) PROCEDURAL JUSTICE	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	.42***	-.01
10) LEGITIMACY	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	-.15*
11) RECIDIVISM RISK	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1

Note. \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

**RESULTS**

To begin examining the relationships between constructs, a series of bivariate correlations was conducted. Full results are presented in Table 2. Here, some key results are highlighted. Regarding factors typically associated with PTSD, there were significant correlations between probable PTSD and combat exposure, perceived homecoming and civilian reintegration, but not gender, race, or ethnicity. Probable PTSD was associated with legitimacy but not procedural justice. The post-military variables had mixed results vis-à-vis the perceptions of justice. While homecoming was significantly associated with both

variables, reintegration was associated with legitimacy but not procedural justice. Finally, race and ethnicity did not have the types of associations with the perception of justice variables that are typically found. Specifically, although being Black was not significantly associated with any of the measures, being Hispanic was associated with higher assessments of procedural justice and legitimacy.

Logistic regression was used to explore multivariate correlates of probable PTSD with this sample of VTC participants. As can be seen in

**TABLE 3**  
**PERCEPTIONS OF JUSTICE IN VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS**  
**Logistic Regression of Probable PTSD (N = 187)**

VARIABLE	$\beta$	SE	Wald $\chi^2$	$p$	OR	95%CI
AGE	.00	.02	.00	.995	1.00	.96, 1.04
GENDER, FEMALE	.99	.66	2.18	.140	2.63	.73, 9.49
BLACK	.99	.53	3.48	.062	2.68	.95, 7.55
HISPANIC	1.05	.52	4.03	.045	2.85	1.03, 7.91
COMBAT	2.33	.47	24.95	<.001	10.28	4.12, 25.64
REINTEGRATION	.59	.22	7.29	.007	1.81	1.18, 2.77
HOMECOMING	-1.01	.32	10.30	.001	.36	.20, .67
CONSTANT	.25	2.10	.01	.904	—	—

Note. Model:  $\chi^2(8) = 80.29, p < .001, R^2 = .35$  (Cox & Snell)

Table 3, the overall model was significant and the significant relationships probable PTSD had with combat exposure, homecoming, and civilian reintegration persisted in the multivariate analysis. However, recidivism risk was no longer significantly associated with probable PTSD, and individuals who identified as Hispanic now had a higher likelihood of screening positive.

In the final phase, two separate linear regression models examined the relationship between the two perception of justice constructs and probable PTSD, its risk factors, demographic variables, and recidivism risk. Each is reviewed in turn.

As can be seen in Table 4, the overall model for the regression of procedural justice was significant with a moderate effect size. The transition from bivariate to multivariate analyses did not alter many relationships between procedural justice and other variables. Perceived homecoming remained significantly associated, being Hispanic was no longer significant, and no previously non-significant variables became significant. The control variable—site—remained significantly associated with procedural justice.

Table 5 contains results of the regression of legal legitimacy. As with procedural justice, the overall model was significant. However, the use of multivariate analysis altered the patterns of associations found during bivariate analyses. Hispanic identity and homecoming were the only variables associated with legitimacy in bivariate and multivariate tests. Recidivism risk, probable PTSD, and civilian reintegration were no longer associated with legitimacy, while age became a significant correlate. That the static perception of initial homecoming remained significant while measures focused on recent clinical status (probable PTSD) and social support/functioning (reintegration) did not is noteworthy and will be explored in the discussion.

**TABLE 4**  
**PERCEPTIONS OF JUSTICE IN VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS**  
Regression of Procedural Justice (N = 187)

VARIABLE	b	SE	$\beta$	p
SITE	-.47	.10	-.32	<.001
AGE	.00	.00	-.00	.980
GENDER, FEMALE	.10	.17	.04	.558
BLACK	-.10	.13	-.06	.443
HISPANIC	.23	.13	.13	.073
COMBAT	.01	.11	.01	.956
PROBABLE PTSD	.04	.12	.03	.745
REINTEGRATION	.03	.06	.04	.617
HOMECOMING	.20	.07	.24	.003
RECIDIVISM RISK	.00	.04	.00	.998
CONSTANT	4.02	.52	—	—

Note. Model:  $F(10, 176)=3.74$ ,  $p<.001$ ; Adj.  $R^2=.13$

**TABLE 5**  
**PERCEPTIONS OF JUSTICE IN VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS**  
Regression of Legal Legitimacy (N = 187)

VARIABLE	b	SE	$\beta$	p
AGE	.01	.00	.18	.029
GENDER	.24	.16	.11	.130
BLACK	-.06	.12	-.04	.602
HISPANIC	.33	.12	.20	.006
COMBAT	.08	.11	.06	.467
PROBABLE PTSD	-.03	.12	-.02	.810
REINTEGRATION	-.00	.05	-.00	.956
HOMECOMING	.33	.06	.40	<.001
RECIDIVISM RISK	.02	.04	.05	.545
CONSTANT	1.74	.48	—	—

Note. Model:  $F(9, 177)=5.58$ ,  $p<.001$ ; Adj.  $R^2=.18$

## DISCUSSION

Without minimizing its methodological limits, the results of the present study highlight the importance of integrating these and other discrete bodies of scholarship as researchers, policymakers, and practitioners strive to better understand this widely-disseminated but understudied VTC model. Despite drawing heavily on other problem-solving courts, VTCs are not merely drug or mental health courts for veterans. Although these results do not question the use of a treatment court model for veterans, they should remind us that the target population is not defined by diagnostic labels, but rather by shared experiences. The discussion begins with a review of key findings. Although this exploratory study did not specify and test hypotheses, points of convergence and divergence with past research are made when reviewing the findings. This is followed by a discussion of limitations and implications for research, practice, and policy.

### Key Findings

Regarding the first research question, it can be said that the veterans in this sample were screened for probable PTSD in a way consistent with well-established research into risk and protective factors. Not surprisingly, exposure to combat had a positive and significant bivariate correlation of moderate magnitude with probable PTSD. Also consistent with past research is the significant and positive correlation between reintegration difficulties and probable PTSD as well as the significant negative relationship between homecoming and probable PTSD. All of these associations persisted in multivariate analyses. Although not surprising, the conformity with general research on risk for PTSD supports the utility of using this sample to explore the second research question—which we turn to now.

Although past research has not explored the relationships between PTSD, its risk factors, and perceptions of justice, many of the results from the present study are what would be expected when integrating the disparate research regarding (1) the relationships between PTSD, its risk factors, and criminal behavior with (2) research concerning normative theories of justice and criminal behavior. The bivariate results stayed particularly close to these expectations. Just as combat exposure does not

increase the risk for criminal justice involvement, it was not associated with either perception of justice variable in this sample. Probable PTSD and reintegration difficulties were negatively associated with legitimacy. Finally, homecoming was significantly associated with both perception of justice variables. Only the lack of significant associations between procedural justice and probable PTSD and reintegration difficulties stand out as unexpected.

The multivariate regressions of procedural justice and legal legitimacy offer a more complex picture. In neither model are probable PTSD or reintegration difficulties associated with the perception of justice measures. However, a significant, positive association between homecoming and the justice-related dependent variables remained even when controlling

**Although these results do not question the use of a treatment court model for veterans, they should remind us that the target population is not defined by diagnostic labels, but rather by shared experiences.**

for recidivism risk and key demographic factors. This is interesting. Unlike probable PTSD (which focuses on relatively recent symptoms or a diagnosis) or civilian reintegration (which focuses on recent social engagement and functioning), the homecoming construct is concerned with a past response from society in broad terms. This highlights the importance of not viewing the clinical label in isolation, but also considering how specific risk and protective factors that are associated with PTSD may be a common factor helping to explaining the relationship with attitudes regarding legal systems and, perhaps, future criminal behavior.

Finally, the functioning of race and ethnicity in this study stands out. Race and ethnicity have been shown to predict perceptions of legitimacy (Tyler and Jackson 2014), procedural justice (Atkin-Plunk, Peck, and Armstrong 2017), and perceptions of and experiences with the criminal justice system more broadly (Applegate et al. 2008; Unnever 2008). Although African Americans (especially) and Hispanics typically hold more negative assessments of these constructs, in this sample, being Black was not associated with either of the measures of justice in bivariate or multivariate analyses, while being Hispanic had significant and positive associations with procedural justice in the bivariate test and with legal legitimacy in bivariate and multivariate analyses. Although the reasons for these findings are unclear and may not persist in other VTCs, it is interesting to consider in light of the efforts the US military has placed on accentuating military cohesion above racial and ethnic differences (Lundquist 2008).

... homecoming was significantly associated with ... perception of justice ... even when controlling for recidivism risk and key demographic factors.

## Limitations

The present study has limitations to be mindful of as the findings and implications are weighed. The cross-sectional nature is perhaps the most obvious limitation. It precludes seeing if perceptions of procedural justice and legitimacy change in response to time in the VTC. Although eligible individuals opted into the study at a relatively high rate, the reliance on a convenience sample introduces the possibility of selection bias. Responses may have been affected by social desirability as well as recall problems (primarily for age at first arrest and total lifetime arrests which were used to develop the measure of recidivism risk). The use of a screening tool to identify cases of probable PTSD as opposed to identifying confirmed instances of PTSD via clinical assessment or review of records likely increased the number of people identified. The mean response to the procedural justice measure was quite high. The resultant non-normal distribution may have affected tests. This and/or a ceiling effect may help explain why procedural justice was associated with far fewer variables than was legitimacy. Finally, considering the diversity of VTCs, it is unclear how generalizable the findings of a study set in two misdemeanor-level VTCs in one region of the country are to VTCs across the country.

## Implications

The findings of this exploratory study, as well as its limitations, suggest several avenues for future research. Incorporating multiple measurement points would allow exploration of the ability of VTCs to enhance participants' perceptions of procedural justice and legitimacy. Including these types of

constructs when conducting multi-site VTC research or at least in research set in more diverse VTCs—ideally without reliance on convenience sampling—will help inform if the present findings generalize to VTCs broadly, apply best to VTCs similar to those in the current study, or are best thought of as an artifact of an exploratory study. Drawing upon official arrest records would remove the potential for recall or social desirability affecting the measure of recidivism risk. Adding a follow-up measure of post-VTC recidivism would strengthen the analysis. While we know from past research that procedural justice and legitimacy are associated with recidivism (see Review of the Literature), they are far from the only factors. The skewed responses regarding procedural justice may be addressed in three ways.

Controlling for time in the VTC prior to administration and increasing the 1 to 5 response range may help. Third, it may prove useful to prompt respondents to consider this construct independently for different court actors. Although the current study prompted respondents to consider all together, research conducted in drug and mental health courts recently reported different mean scores and associations with other variables based on court role and suggested discrete assessment (Dollar et al. 2018). Finally, future research should explore if the unexpected findings regarding race and ethnicity exist in other VTCs.

There are potential implications for VTC treatment and policy—especially if the findings regarding the importance of perceived homecoming are replicated in future studies. From an assessment and treatment perspective, it suggests that greater attention should be paid to how the veteran feels he or she has been treated by society. This is not meant to suggest less attention on clinical factors and current social functioning. We know there are many, often interacting, pathways to criminal behavior. However, it should serve as a reminder that the relationships attorneys, judges, and clinicians attempt to establish with VTC participants can be negatively affected by perceptions of past treatment by others.

There may be benefits to broadening assessments to include sociological issues such as homecoming and legitimacy. While there is not a treatment per se for past experiences, this knowledge may help court staff and clinicians identify veterans with whom they will need to work harder to develop trust in both their own motives as well as the legitimacy of our larger legal system. For baseline setting, this can entail administering the measures of homecoming and legitimacy used in the present study. Additionally, there are a number of instruments that have been developed to help assess the quality of relationships between justice-involved individuals and the professionals charged with the complex mix of supervision and facilitating change through a therapeutic relationship. Most closely tied to the present study, Blasko and Taxman (2018) developed a measure of procedural justice for use in community correction settings. Additionally, an offender-oriented version of the Working Alliance Inventory has been developed (Tatman and Love 2010) as has an instrument developed to assess relationships within the context of court-mandated treatment (Skeem et al. 2007). When administered over time, such instruments can be used to evaluate if the attention many VTCs pay to recognizing

**Incorporating multiple measurement points would allow exploration of the ability of VTCs to enhance participants' perceptions of procedural justice and legitimacy.**

and respecting the past service of participants (Justice Programs Office 2016) can help improve trust and relationships despite negatively perceived homecomings and baseline assessments of legitimacy. This information should be of utility to court staff, clinicians and researchers.

When viewed alongside existing research that highlights the importance of PTSD risk factors—in addition to or even instead of PTSD itself—in predicting criminal justice involvement among veterans (Elgoben et al. 2012; Fontana and Rosenheck 2005; Wilson and Zigelbaum 1983) and illegal, aggressive, or dangerous behavior (Sayer et al. 2010), the current findings should encourage on-going review of eligibility criteria for VTCs. Specifically, the 20% of VTCs that require a service-related behavioral health diagnosis (Flatley et al. 2017) should consider if accepting individuals without a formal diagnosis who have negative perceptions of their homecoming experiences, current reintegration difficulties, or other risk factors would help meet their programmatic objectives.

Finally, from a broader social perspective, the role of military homecoming in assessments of justice highlights the importance of efforts to make veterans feel welcomed following their service to our country. In many ways, VTCs themselves can be thought of as an attempt to welcome veterans back to civilian communities. Yet, it would clearly be better if more veterans felt such efforts occurred earlier and outside of the criminal justice system.

**While there is not a treatment per se for past experiences, this knowledge may help court staff and clinicians identify veterans with whom they will need to work harder to develop trust in both their own motives as well as the legitimacy of our larger legal system.**

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