Justice Involved Veterans’ Post-Release Employment-Related Experiences

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JUSTICE INVOLVED VETERANS’ POST-RELEASE EMPLOYMENT-RELATED EXPERIENCES

by

James L. Dawson

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Leadership, Research, and Technology at Western Michigan University April 2017

Doctoral Committee

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In 2010, the cost to U.S. taxpayers was $39 billion to incarcerate individuals in State and Federal Correctional facilities. A sub-population of these prisoners is those that have served in the U.S. military, or “Justice Involved Veterans” (JIVs). Many Veterans are eligible for federal and state funds for Career Tech. Education to assist them with obtaining employment, which research shows often contributes to keeping them from re-offending. However, recent studies of employment after prison have all been quantitative investigations that do not incorporate the voices of JIVs describing their experiences in depth. Bush’s (2011), and Bolman and Deal’s (2008) theories of political leadership, Ebaugh’s (1988) role theory, and Danforth’s (2005) chaos theory ground my study’s framework for the transformational process (Burns, 1978) of prisoner reentry for JIVs.

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the post-release employment experiences of 10 JIVs released from a Midwest State Department of Correction facility. The participants’ reflections of their employment experiences were explored through individual, semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions. The interviews provided sufficient data to address the four research questions developed for the study which focused on the JIVs’ lived experiences.
Four major themes emerged from the data: services and programs; successes; barriers and challenges; and military identity experiences of JIVs. Results from the study found most participants were not aware of Veteran specific services and programs available to them; the services JIVs were involved with had positive results on their employment efforts; a few of the participants experienced PTSD and Stigma barriers, and most participants described their enlistment as a positive experience.

Further research should include expanding the study to include prisoners from the MDOC Vocational Village, increasing the sample size to include multiple races and genders, and using a longitudinal study to follow JIVs from their incarceration to community supervision utilizing their Career Technical Education training. The significance of this study provides recommendations to the Department of Veteran Affairs, Department of Corrections, Workforce Development leaders, State Universities, Community Colleges, and Veteran Service Organizations. In addition, it provides recommendations leading to best practices for helping to improve JIV experiences while seeking employment, and adds to the qualitative literature on this topic.
DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my children Ben and Josie, thank you for your angelic words of support while Daddy was away. You youthful enthusiasm was the engine that kept me going.

Remember, anything is possible if you want it bad enough.

Additionally, I would like to dedicate this work to my mother, Barb. Thank you for your support, advice, and love. Through your own example, you taught me at an early age the meaning to be “driven,” and through the difficult times you reminded me that in order to be the “cream of the crop, you need to rise to the top.” After all, “if it were easy, everyone would be doing it.”
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Although only my name will appear printed on the diploma, there are others that are deserving of being printed on it as well. I would like to thank my wife Nancy for keeping the lights on all those times I was away during this journey. This personal achievement could not have been possible without your understanding and patience. To my family & friends, I thank you for extending your support to me. You helped me reach my goal by opening your homes to me, feeding me, giving me encouragement, and letting me vent when I needed to. You each found ways to help me decompress and recharge to press on regardless.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Employment issues are common with military Veterans that are involved in the Criminal Justice system (Henrichson & Delaney, 2012). According the Bureau of Justice Statistics, at year-end 2015, the United States held an estimated 1,526,800 prisoners in state and federal correctional facilities. Further, 1 in 37 adults (2.7%) in the United States was under some form of correctional supervision, and about 7 in 10 persons under correctional supervision were supervised in the community (Kaebel & Glaze, 2016). Among those that are incarcerated and unreported, are often forgotten military Veterans.

Criminal Justice involvement and incarceration among American military Veterans, especially those who have served in combat, have long been of national concern (Tsai, Rosenheck, Kasprow, and McGuire, 2013). In 2004, 10% or 140,000 of state prisoners, reported prior service in the U.S. Armed Forces (Noonan & Mumola 2007; U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2007). The increase of the prison population has been astonishing, but it has not been the largest area of growth in the Criminal Justice system. Those generally on probation and parole—the sentenced offenders, who are not behind bars—show the largest growth (Kaebel, Glaze, Minton, & Tsoutis, 2015). Reintegrating Veteran parolees, or Justice Involved Veterans (JIVs), back into the workforce is a significant barrier to overcome for employment and reentry efforts.

Background of the Study

The cost to incarcerate is increasing. Data from 40 states that participated in a survey placed the cost of prisons at $39 billion in fiscal year 2010; $5.4 billion more than what their corrections budgets reflected (Henrichson & Delaney, 2012). This data is shocking considering
that a criminal background poses difficulties in employment (Graffam, Shinkfield, & Hardcastle, 2008; Pager, 2003), and unemployment is a leading risk factor in offenders returning to criminal behavior (Bonta & Andrews, 2007; Gendreau, Goggin, & Gray, 1998). Among parolees who are reincarcerated, those who obtain employment spend more time crime-free in the community than those who were not employed before returning to prison (Tripodi, Kim & Bender, 2009). If more parolees were gainfully employed, they could contribute to society through taxes and not burden society through costs related to criminal activity (Marbley & Ferguson, 2005; Shiraldi & Greene, 2002).

One of many treatments to address unemployment of parolees is by training and education through vocational education at community colleges. Harbour and Wolgemuth (2015) wrote how central points developed by Dewey (2008; 1916) provided the rationale needed to adopt institutional and policy recommendations made by Grubb and Lazerson (2004). Dewey believed that democracy, education, individual growth, and social transformation were closely interrelated. The authors described how a Deweyan view of education and democracy might provide the motivation and guidance needed to move forward on the Grubb and Lazerson agenda to benefit community college vocational education. Their argument reveals that a meaningful reconstruction of community college vocational education will require implementation of institutional reforms and public policy reforms.

Harbour and Wolgemuth (2015) see this new vision for community college vocational education as comprised of the following six perspectives, which could be applied to JIVs:

1. JIVs should be prepared not just for employment, but also for life in a democracy. This education should provide them with the ability to solve problems not just in their
selected occupations, but also in their community, and should be grounded in their experience;

2. Vocational education programs should reject the traditional distinction between liberal education and vocational education, whereby JIVs should be prepared to make a social contribution through an occupation of their choosing;

3. Vocational education programs should ensure that JIVs acquire the skills and knowledge to be successful in an occupation and they should also encourage the development of democratic character;

4. JIVs individual growth should be the top priority—not simply satisfying the labor force needs of employers or the economic development interests of the state;

5. Vocational education programs should facilitate the development of democratic communities where people value "more numerous and more varied points of shared common interest" so they are prepared for productive and "freer interaction between social groups" (Dewey, 2008, p. 92); and

6. Vocational education programs should be a pathway to progressive social transformation. Although community college vocational education is only a part of a much larger education continuum, community colleges are literally everywhere.

The perspectives they list are only a starting place for JIVs and are limited to community college vocational education.

It is important to understand that JIVs are different from typical students in the community college setting. Hirschy, Bremer, and Castellano (2011) wrote community college occupational programs hold the promise of a better life for many people, such as JIVs.

Understanding how the profile of occupational students differs from those in academic transfer
programs provides a basis for assessing if JIVs reach their educational goals. In a new conceptual model of JIV success for career & technical education (CTE) students in community colleges, Hirschy et al. (2011) proposed the introduction of the career integration variable, promoting the collection and tracking of students such as JIVs educational goals, and expanding traditional student success measures to better reflect the experiences of CTE students. Their conceptual model can assist community college faculty members, administrators, and policy makers as they review and design programs and policies to support occupational student success of JIVs.

To assist community colleges, Congress developed the Second Chance Act, which is the government’s bold shift of the criminal justice system from a punishment to rehabilitative corrections model (Office of the White House Press Secretary, 2004). Signed into law on April 9, 2008, the Second Chance Act (P.L. 110-199) was designed to improve outcomes for people returning to communities after incarceration (CSG Justice Center, 2015). This law authorizes federal grants for government agencies and nonprofit organizations to provide parolees education and other services to reduce recidivism (The Second Chance Act, 2015). On July 29, 2015 the renewal of the Second Chance Act was passed (known as the Second Chance Reauthorization Act of 2015), which allows investments in strategies to reduce recidivism and increase public safety to continue to be made for an additional four years (CSG Justice Center, 2015). The bill extended the Second Chance Act, which had been awarded $25 million for 2009, $100 million for 2010 (Crayton, Mukamal, & Travis, 2009), and $100 million again for 2015.

In addition to the Second Chance Act, President Obama had signed the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act into law on July 22, 2014. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act is designed to help job seekers access employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market and to match employers with the skilled workers
they need to compete in the global economy. Congress passed this Act by a wide bipartisan majority; it is the first legislative reform in 15 years of the public workforce system (United States Department of Labor, 2015). Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act has several provisions, which are designed to support Veteran-related services, such as targeting employment services to Veterans of the Armed Forces. In addition, the law includes provisions regarding Veteran representation on state and local workforce boards, and funding is provided to help Veterans and people with disabilities navigate multiple service programs and activities at the one-stop centers (United States Department of Labor, 2015). Further, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act increases funding within the adult education program to serve ex-offenders and assist entry back into the workforce. Ex-offenders attempting to re-enter the workforce are eligible for job training, including training administered through pay-for-performance contracts and transitional jobs which often assist individuals with poor work histories (Society for Human Resource Management, 2014).

Another United States Department of Labor program is the Reentry Employment Opportunities program which provides funding, authorized as pilot and demonstration projects under Section 171 of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, for youth, young adults and adults who were formerly incarcerated (returning citizens). From 1998 to 2001, the United States Department of Labor received roughly $50 million a year for youthful offender projects, while in FY 2014 it received approximately $80 million to further support the Reentry Employment Opportunities program (United States Department of Labor, 2015). With such an increase in funding, the government is emphasizing the importance of reentry programs throughout the United States under the supervision of the United States Department of Labor.
Some states are emphasizing employment readiness programs for Veterans as part of reentry efforts. For example, Michigan’s Governor Rick Snyder has proposed reinventing prisoner reentry to include tailoring training programs that target areas of demand in the workforce, bringing employers into institutions to start the hiring process prior to parole, and providing wrap-around services to ex-offenders in the workplace, such as placing a parole officer at companies that hire many parolees (Michigan Department of Corrections, 2015). Such efforts are meant to help ensure prisoners receive the education and training they need in order to find and keep employment, which will contribute to their success in the community (Michigan Department of Corrections, 2015). “Michigan’s prisoner population has grown from fewer than 7,900 in 1973 to over 43,000. Corrections have gone from 1.6 percent of general fund spending to nearly 20 percent. Today the budget of the Michigan Department of Corrections is roughly $2 billion” (Citizens Alliance on Prisons & Public Spending, 2015, p. 1). Now more than ever, a systemic perspective needs to be taken towards our specific populations, such as Veterans, to reduce the recidivism rates.

Problem Statement

Justice-Involved Veterans (JIVs) are defined as Veterans in contact with local law enforcement who can be appropriately diverted from arrest into mental health or substance abuse treatment; in a local jail, either pre-trial or serving a sentence; involved in adjudication or monitoring by a court; or being discharged from State and Federal prisons (Clark, 2010). JIVs represent a significant segment of the U.S. correctional population, with the most recent data available estimating that 10% of those incarcerated in state and federal prisons have a history of U.S. military service (Noonan & Mumola, 2007). Further, “Male Veterans may be at greater risk of incarceration than men in the general population as a result of mental health conditions such
as post traumatic stress disorder, but also from difficulties reintegrating into civilian society after extensive periods of time away from civilian employment and supportive social networks” (Greenberg, Rosenheck, & Desai, 2007, p. 337). It is important to note that data on whether an incarcerated person is a Veteran or not is not routinely captured upon intake or monitored by the Bureau of Justice Statistics. Thus, data on this population only exists as part of special periodic studies.

To aid JIVs, there are many services intended to help ease the transition from incarceration to the community, including developing linkages to vocational training and employment opportunities for JIVs. These services and programs may also address the personal, social, and economic costs associated with incarceration (McDonough, Blodgett, Midboe, & Blonigen, 2015). The importance of work as a means to decrease crime and, more closely, recidivism has been recognized by the major theories within criminology. Social control theory, for example, suggests that employment decreases the likelihood of crime by providing individuals with a stake in conformity and involvement in conventional activities (Hirschi, 1969). According to strain theory, work can reduce economic need and, therefore, strain by providing a legitimate means to achieve material success (Merton, 1938). Social learning and differential association theories also point out, however, that relationships with coworkers may inhibit criminal activity by fostering prosocial values, attitudes, and behaviors (Sutherland, 1947). Although rational choice theory suggests that work curbs crime by increasing the perceived benefits of conventional behavior (Becker, 1968), labeling theory argues that the stigma of criminality can increase the likelihood of future criminal offending by limiting access to employment (Needels, 1996). Finally, life-course theory proposes that employment can provide a critical turning point in helping individuals desist from crime, particularly for older
adults (Uggen, 2000). Despite the theoretical importance of work as a factor against crime, relatively few studies have examined the post-release employment-related experiences of JIVs.

The U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (2015) provides such career-placement assistance, referrals, and other specialized assistance. The research literature on such JIVs to date has focused primarily on recidivism and services offered in employment reentry programs. For example, while JIVs have higher levels of education and recent employment as civilians than non-JIV adults, many JIVs may still have challenges related to education and recent employment, may likely have deficits generally found in civilian employment-related experiences, and may lack job-readiness skills that are frequently desired by employers (McDonough et al., 2015). Visher, Debus-Sherrill, and Yahner (2011) also found that unemployed parolees without military experience were three times more likely to return to prison one year after release (23%) than individuals who were employed and making more than $10 an hour. There was no data available for JIVs, thus making my study significant in expanding the current literature on JIVs employment.

Given past research, one might question if employment services are meeting the needs of our JIVs. Yet, there are very few articles among the major journals that deal with the firsthand experiences of either prison staff or inmates due to accessibility issues. Patenaude (2004) noted a twofold challenge remains with qualitative research conducted with prison-related populations: (a) researchers need to decide to get their hands dirty in prison, and (b) correctional managers need to facilitate such research. Indeed, conducting research in this field is enormously challenging. Such research usually requires specialized prisoner representation on Institutional Review Boards, which is not a common practice. Institutional Review Boards and funding agencies may not support the randomized designs necessary to provide the rigorous evidence
needed to evaluate interventions, although a compelling rationale has been put forth to do just
this with justice populations (Gueron, 2000). In closing, the words of the late George Beto seem
to summarize the rationale for qualitative prison research, namely: “How do we know what
we’re doing wrong in these places if we don’t let outsiders tell us” (Jackson, 1987, p. 48).

Overall, some research exists regarding prisoners engaging in employment programs
(e.g., Lockwood, Nally, Ho, & Knutson, 2012) and quantitative information on JIVs (Culp,
Youstin, Englander, & Lynch, 2013), but minimal qualitative research exists regarding these
efforts with JIVs. There are only a few quantitative studies on the topic and few extensive
literature reviews that detail the various intervention programs available to JIVs that reduce
recidivism (Blonigen, Bui, Elbogen, Blodgett, Maisel, Midboe, & Timko, 2014) however, it is
not clear how JIVs describe their employment-related experiences as they reenter society. The
gap in literature reflects a need to hear the voices of JIVs as they prepare to re-enter society and
find employment.

**Purpose Statement and Research Questions**

The purpose of this study, therefore, was to describe and understand the employment-
related experiences of 10 JIVs after being released from different Midwest State Department of
Corrections facilities. The focus of my study was to learn how JIVs described their employment-
related experiences as they reentered society and any common themes that existed among them.
Describing the expressed lived experiences of JIVs will help inform corrections administrators
and legislative policy makers about the JIV perspective, a world unknown to law-abiding citizens
who have never served in the military. The intended audiences for this study include vocational
educators inside and outside correctional departments, Veterans Administration and non-
Veterans Administration practitioners and service providers, criminal justice professionals,
researchers and program evaluators, and leaders across all of these domains.

This proposed study is guided by two key research questions:

1) How do Justice Involved Veteran’s (JIVs) experience post-release employment-related issues including:
   a. the services and programs available to them;
   b. successes when seeking employment; and
   c. barriers and challenges?

2) What role does the experience of, and identity associated with, having served in the military play in their post-release employment-related issues?

These research questions were chosen to address the lack of qualitative research conducted on JIVs, and help reveal the voices of JIVs regarding their efforts to seek employment post-release. The intended objectives of my study are to: understand the current knowledge base regarding employment for this population of Veterans, describe the evidence base for selecting interventions for this population, and highlight the many areas where further work is needed. In providing information on the state of what is available, this document delivers the beginning elements of an agenda for evaluating developmental work through pilot and demonstration projects in order that policy questions such as effectiveness, staffing, and costs can begin to be informed (McDonough et al., 2015). I, as the researcher, asked about their post-release experiences, their feelings toward such experiences, and how those experiences influenced their lives. In addition, I examined JIVs’ experiences with programs or services tailored towards their employment so that we could obtain a better understanding of the meaning of those experiences.
Theoretical Perspective

Prisoner and military reentry both include a process or systems approach. Senge (2012) mapped out an excellent model for systems thinking used by educators that could be applied to prisoner reentry, especially those with military experience. According to Senge, “a system is any perceived structure whose elements hang together because they continually affect each other over time” (p. 124). As is true in prisoner reentry, over time there are many things (i.e.: education, training, employment) that can affect a JIVs success while on parole status.

Bush’s (2011), and Bolman and Deal’s (2008) theories of political leadership, Ebaugh’s (1988) role theory, and Danforth’s (2005) chaos theory ground my study’s framework for the transformational process (Burns, 1978) of prisoner reentry for JIVs. Political leadership theories (Bush, 2011; Bolman & Deal, 2008), assume there is really no true consensus regarding a set of goals that drives all decision-making. Role theory assumes an individual stops engaging in a role previously central to their identity, and the process of establishing a new identity. Role theory is significant to this study because to a parolee if they truly want to “change” their role from a criminal to a law-abiding citizen (Ebaugh, 1988), they must demonstrate the behaviors that reflect a change. Last, chaos theory assumes the present determines the future, but the approximate present does not approximately determine the future (Danforth, 2005). Chaos theory is meaningful to this study because it is important to understand that current actions of a parolee will impact their future success or failure.

According to the MDOC website, the mission of the Michigan Offender Success Model is to reduce crime by implementing a seamless plan of services, supervision, and opportunities developed with each offender and delivered through state and regional collaboration with the goal of obtaining employment and self-sufficiency (2017). There are many leadership themes
that were described by Burns (1978) that can been also be seen within the offender success models. Burns’ model elevates leadership philosophically and developmentally as a relationship between parolees and employment-related experiences that share common purposes, motivations, and values (Fairholm, 2001).

Burns (1978) described transforming leadership this way:

    Such leadership occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality. Their purposes, which might have started out as separate but related, as in the case of transactional leadership, become fused. Power bases are linked not as counterweights but as mutual support for common purpose…. The relationship can be moralistic, of course. But transforming leadership ultimately becomes moral in that it raises the level of human conduct and ethical aspiration of both leader and led, and thus it has transforming effect on both. (p. 20)

The conceptual framework (Figure 1) is a system of concepts that explains what I believe is going on with the phenomena in my study (as extracted from a review of related literature and research), and charts the relationship among the concepts (Maxwell, 1996). The conceptual framework for my study of the experiences of post-release employment-related issues of JIVs consists of four topics, each containing their own sub-topics. The boxes on my conceptual framework represent the four topics for my study: challenges and barriers, motivations to enlist, programs and services, and successes. Each topic contains its own sub-topics emerging from my literature review on the issues. The topics are connected with other topics through arrows, which represent how they impact one another.
The first topic is the challenges and barriers of JIVs as they sought employment after being released from prison. Within this topic are three subtopics related to my study including: Health, Recidivism, and Social issues related to employment. These topics are already known to
exist; however, this study sought to verify these issues through the lens of JIVs as one result of this study.

In reference to health issues (post traumatic stress, traumatic brain injury, and psychological issues), the work of Abraham, Ganoczy, Yosef, Resnick, and Zivin’s (2014) research is meaningful to this study. They examined JIVs’ likelihood of receiving any employment services and specific types of services, including supported employment, transitional work, incentive therapy, and vocational assistance. They identified the clinical and demographic characteristics associated with receiving employment services. After adjusting for clinical and demographic characteristics, Veterans Health Administration patients with schizophrenia and bipolar disorder were more likely to receive employment services and to receive supported employment, than were patients with depression, post traumatic stress disorder, or other anxiety disorders (Abraham et al., 2014). Veterans Health Administration patients with depression and post traumatic stress disorder were more likely to receive transitional work and vocational assistance than patients with schizophrenia (Abraham et al., 2014). In my study, I looked into the challenges and barriers for JIVs, who might reoffend, suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, psychological, and struggle with substance abuse impairments as a result of combat, and any employment-related rehabilitation services they may be engaged in.

The second topic focused specifically on the former military aspects of these JIVs and how their worldview shapes their motivations to enlist and their perceptions of employment post-release from prison. Within this topic are two sub topics related to my study, including institutional and occupational motivations to enlist. Institutional motivations include the customary reasons such as duty, honor, and patriotism. Occupational reasons include career
motivations for financial compensation or the benefits to supplement wages.

The third topic is the federal services of JIVs as they seek employment after being released from prison. Within this topic are two sub topics related to my study including: Benefits and Programs. One benefit available to JIVs is educational opportunities. Bhatti’s (2010) research on the meanings of teaching and learning in prisons is informative by providing the peripheral experiences of prisoners and the legitimate peripheral participation of their teachers. It was found that teachers and students are interdependent and feel equally marginalized in the prison setting. I looked into JIVs’ experiences by asking probing questions regarding their general and vocational educational experiences while they were incarcerated.

Another benefit available to JIVs is training opportunities and federal funding such as Pell grants and the post 9/11 GI Bill. A Pell Grant is money the U.S. federal government provides for students who need it to pay for college. Federal Pell Grants are limited to students with financial need, who have not earned their first bachelor's degree, or who are enrolled in certain post-baccalaureate programs, through participating institutions. The Post-9/11 GI Bill is an education benefit program for individuals who served on active duty after September 10, 2001. It can be used at colleges, universities, trade schools, and for on-the-job training, apprenticeships. Both federal programs are resources available to JIVs that could potentially divert criminal behavior. Karpowitz, Kenner, and Initiative (1995) found an overwhelming consensus among public officials that post-secondary education is the most successful and cost-effective method of preventing crime. I researched the training opportunities and the status of the Pell grant availability to JIVs. Probing questions was used for this section revolving around if were they aware that these resources are available and to what extent did they participate.
In reference to the Health Care for Reentry Veterans, Veteran Justice Outreach Initiative, Veterans Treatment Court programs, and Priority of Service, I researched the program availability to JIVs through the Department of Military and Veteran Affairs and the United States Department of Labor. Health Care for Reentry Veterans are services designed to address the community re-entry needs of incarcerated Veterans. Services include: (a) Outreach and pre-release assessments services for Veterans in prison; (b) Referrals and linkages to medical, psychiatric, and social services, including employment services upon release; and (c) Short-term case management assistance upon release. The Veteran Justice Outreach Initiative is designed to help Veterans avoid unnecessary criminalization of mental illness and extended incarceration by ensuring eligible justice-involved Veterans receive timely access to Veteran affairs health care, specifically mental health and substance use services (if clinically indicated) and other Veteran affairs services and benefits as appropriate. Veterans Treatment Court programs allow jurisdictions to serve a large segment of the justice-involved Veteran population as opposed to having Veterans appear before judges who may or may not have an understanding of their unique problems. Priority of service for Veterans requires program operators to give first consideration for participation in a program to those Veterans and eligible spouses who meet the eligibility criteria for that program. Probing questions was be used for this section revolving around if they were aware that these resources are available and to what extent did they participate.

The fourth and final topic is the successes of JIVs as they seek employment after being released from prison. Within this topic are two sub topics focused on: reemployment and self-employment. In reference to their success, previous research on JIV employment history states that employment difficulties among JIVs occur within the interrelationship of unemployment and
recidivism (McDonough et al., 2015). Neglecting the needs in any of those areas can limit positive outcomes in the other areas. Ultimately, employment may reduce recidivism as well as serve to enhance overall quality of life. I studied JIVs’ employment history by asking probing questions regarding previous and current successful employment-related experiences.

I selected these topics after reflecting from my own experiential knowledge and the practical experience I have obtained from the field of corrections. For instance, compared to non-Veterans, I have found in some cases Veterans have more of a desire to “give back” to the community, to make amends, and work harder toward institutional employment within a correctional facility. The topics I selected overlap one another in such a way that they make me question, “What are the experiences of JIVs as they seek employment when released from prison?”

As Figure 1 shows, the center of my study is the voice of JIVs regarding post-release employment-related experiences. Surrounding their experiences, are four areas that previous research has hinted as impacting those voices, and for which I researched to add to the current review of literature of the topic.

Methods Overview

The methodology for this study is an exploratory phenomenological study. The philosophy behind phenomenology research is that there are common lived experiences among research participants, and that the essence of these experiences can be captured and described (Creswell, 2009). This type of study helps to understand the essence of a shared experience of a phenomenon by several individuals (Creswell, 2009). This study consisted of interviews through purposeful sampling, 10 JIVs’ post-release (Visher et al., 2011) from a Midwest state correctional system as my research participants.
During the analysis section of this study, I followed the six steps (Creswell, 2007; 2009) of a phenomenological study. The analysis consisted of organizing and preparing the data for analysis, reading through the data, coding the data, describing the data, representing the data, and finally interpreting the data. This was done in order to make sense out of text and image data (Creswell, 2009).

**Significance of the Study**

Crayton, Mukamal, and Travis (2009) stated:

The U.S. has reached an important moment in its history. With record high incarceration rates, an unprecedented extension of state supervision over individuals leaving prison and a complex maze of legal barriers to reintegration, more ex-offenders than ever before are returning home in the face of daunting challenges to successful reintegration. In these circumstances, the leadership of federal, state and local governments in the reentry arena is commendable, and the level of innovation in the world of practice is impressive. (p. 41)

The significance of my study is that recommendations will be made to the Department of Veteran Affairs, Michigan Works!, MDOC, and our Workforce Development leaders, Military & Veteran Service Organizations, and will add to the literature on this topic. The recommendations might lead to best practices for educators to improve JIV experiences while they pursue employment through career technological education training or post-secondary education at a community college after being released from prison.

**Chapter I Summary**

Based on literature, we know very little about the employment-related experiences of JIVs when released from prison. We also know very little about what successes and barriers JIVs
are experiencing when they are seeking employment. It is also important to further understand what motivates JIVs when they are seeking employment. In Chapter II, I reviewed the debated literature to this topic.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The review of literature for this dissertation followed the logic of the conceptual framework in Chapter I. The literature is organized into five major topics and several points of interest within the main topics, with the goal of displaying previously researched concepts related to my topic of research. The first section focuses on Justice Involved Veterans (JIVs). The second section focuses on challenges and barriers of JIVs. The third section focuses on motivations to enlist by JIVs. The fourth section focuses on federal programs and services available to JIVs. The fifth and final topic are the successes discovered by JIVs.

The literature review includes sources from 1937 to 2015. Parolee, prisoner, JIVs, career tech education, employment, voices, recidivism, experiences, and reentry programs, were used as keyword searches to display what concepts have already been studied in relation to my topic of research.

Justice Involved Veterans

The central topic to this study is Justice Involved Veterans, or JIVs. Blodgett, Fuh, Maisel, and Midboe (2013) first referenced JIVs to a specific population that had entered the criminal justice system. I started by looking at a few recent larger scale studies, which told us about military Veterans and their relationship with the criminal justice system. It is important to understand that the military culture and crime are separate areas of study. When combined, there is very little literature that is available. The U.S. military workplace is a unique environment that causes military personnel and families to have experiences that differ from civilians. Military personnel and families are confronted with psychosocial challenges created by an intense work environment (Saltzman, Pynoos, Lester, Layne, & Beardslee, 2013). To further promote this
resilience, researchers and clinicians should understand military culture so they can better interact with Veterans in a culturally competent manner and provide information that will aid in creating supportive working environments (Yamada, Atuel, & Weiss 2013; Savitsky, Illingworth, & DuLaney, 2009). Thus, knowing how military service affects military personnel, families, and Veterans was important for this study.

To understand the population of JIVs currently involved in the criminal justice system, Carson (2015) researched military prisons in 2014, and found that the U.S. military held 1,100 persons sentenced to at least 1 year, or 1,400 persons of all sentence lengths, under the jurisdiction of military correctional authorities at yearend 2014. The sentenced population increased by slightly more than 1% from 2014 (1,070) to 2013 (1,056). More than half (54% or 580) of the prisoners had served in the U.S. Army before imprisonment. U.S. Air Force personnel made up an additional 18% of the sentenced military confined population (Carson, 2015). The Army had custody of 67% of all military personnel sentenced to more than 1 year on December 31, 2014, with an additional 32% held in the custody of the U.S. Navy. Eventually, these prisoners will exit custody and reenter into society as a parolee.

For example, Culp et al. (2013) assessed the criminal involvement of Veterans by using newspaper accounts from the New York Times and other open source data to identify homicides in which the offender was an Afghanistan or Iraq war Veteran. The Times found more than 150 cases of fatal domestic violence or child abuse in the United States involving service members and new Veterans during the wartime period that began in October 2001 with the invasion of Afghanistan. In more than a third of the cases, the New York Times determined that the offenders had deployed to Afghanistan or Iraq or to the regions in support of those missions. In
another third, it determined that the offenders never deployed to war. And the deployment history of the final third could not be ascertained.

This particular aspect of the newspaper series drew a great deal of criticism, in part because the sources of data used were perceived as less than systematic and accurate. This series and the debate that it produced once again added to the importance of the issue of whether Veterans are disproportionately involved in crime upon their return from service and specifically from combat assignments. The series also raised the question of whether media accounts of violent behavior by returning combat Veterans are simply subjective or if they foreshadow a more system-wide problem.

Culp et al.’s (2013) work used data from the “Surveys of Inmates of State and Federal Correctional Facilities” and the “Current Population Surveys from 1985 to 2004” to estimate more systematically the prevalence and nature of the offenses by military Veterans in civilian society. Their study sought to avoid some of the methodological weaknesses of earlier studies that examined the criminal behavior of returning Veterans. Specifically, the research considered whether criminal behavior, as reflected in the likelihood of imprisonment, is affected by military service, era of service, or service during wartime, after controlling for social and demographic characteristics associated with offending. They found that military service in general is not predictive of incarceration, when key demographic and social integration variables are taken into account. In the 1970’s, defendants were diverted from jail and prison if they enlisted into the military. Service during wartime was found to be inversely related to subsequent incarceration, while Veterans of the post-1973 “All Volunteer Force” were more likely to be incarcerated than were civilians and Veterans who served during the draft era.

In other research, White, Mulvey, Fox, and Choate (2012) explained the potential for
Veterans to end up in the criminal justice system as a result of physical and psychological problems that may be combat-related. However, they felt little was known about how often Veterans are arrested and incarcerated, the nature of their problems, or the extent to which their military service has contributed to their criminality. Using interview data from 2,102 arrestees booked in Maricopa County, Arizona during 2009, they examined the problems and prior experiences of arrested military Veterans, and compared Veteran and non-Veteran arrestees along a range of measures. Their results indicated that Veterans comprised 6.3% of the arrestee population, and that more than 50% of arrestee population that were Veterans reported suffering from at least one combat-related problem including physical injury, post-traumatic stress disorder, other mental health problems, and substance abuse.

White et al. (2012) also found that Veteran arrestees differ from non-Veterans on a number of key measures, most notably more frequent arrests for violent offenses and greater use of crack cocaine and opiates. They concluded that criminal justice agencies are largely oblivious to the number of Veterans—and their problems—in their courts and jails. Based on this lack of awareness, it seems reasonable to conclude that many local justice systems will be ill-prepared to handle (or even document) any sort of increase in the number of incarcerated Veterans, or to effectively respond to their problems. The authors believe that this prospect poses significant concerns for the near future, given that tens of thousands of military Veterans will soon be returning home from combat operations abroad.

**Challenges and Barriers**

The second topic is the challenges and barriers of JIVs as they seek employment after being released from prison. Within this topic are three sub topics that include: health, recidivism, and social challenges and barriers.
Health Issues

Health issues such as trauma, mental illness, and substance abuse are serious issues that affect JIVs and obtaining employment. Olenick, Flowers, and Diaz (2015) wrote that United States Veterans are a complex population with a distinct culture that includes, but is not limited to, values, customs, ethos, selfless duty, codes of conduct, implicit patterns of communication, and obedience to command. Veterans experience mental health disorders, substance use disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, and traumatic brain injury at disproportionate rates compared to their civilian counterparts. Successful Veteran reintegration into civilian life rests upon providing Veterans with training that builds on their military knowledge and skill, employment post-separation from service, and mental health programs that promote civilian transition.

Trauma. JIVs can suffer from trauma mentally and/or physically as a result of combat experiences. For my study, I focused on post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury given the prevalence of these in returning Veterans (Abraham, Ganoczy, Yosef, Resnick, & Zivin, 2014; Bagalman, 2011).

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. The Mayo Clinic (2015) defines post-traumatic stress disorder as a mental health condition that's triggered by a terrifying event — either experiencing it or witnessing it. Symptoms may include flashbacks, nightmares and severe anxiety, as well as uncontrollable thoughts about the event. Post-traumatic stress disorder is only one of many concerns faced by JIVs. In 1980, the American Psychiatric Association added post-traumatic stress disorder to the third edition of its Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III) classification. Although controversial when first introduced, the post-traumatic stress disorder diagnosis has filled an important gap in psychiatric theory and practice. From an
historical perspective, the significant change in the post-traumatic stress disorder concept was the stipulation that the etiological agent was outside the individual (i.e., a traumatic event) rather than an inherent individual weakness (i.e., a traumatic neurosis).

Although the economic crisis from 2008 has played a role in high unemployment rates among recent Veterans, mental and physical health issues are likely also to be related. In Vietnam Veterans, poorer mental health (particularly post-traumatic stress disorder) was associated with lower income, employment, and job loss (Schnurr, Lunney, & Sengupta, 2004; Vinokur, Caplan, & Williams, 1987). Similarly, Veteran Affairs enrolled Afghanistan and Iraq combat Veterans who screened positive for post-traumatic stress disorder were five times more likely to report problems finding or keeping a job than those who screened negative (Sayer, Noorbaloochi, Frazier, Carlson, Gravely, and Murdoch (2010). Longitudinal data from more than 4,000 U.S. National Guard members showed that unemployment and associated financial hardships likely intensified mental health symptoms (Riviere, Kendall-Robbins, McGurk, Castro, & Hoge, 2011), suggesting a negative relationship between unemployment and mental health.

Blodgett et al. (2015) found JIVs are a special population with unique mental health needs compared with other Veterans. In their study, prevalent estimates of mental health concerns of JIVs across 18 samples of these Veterans (1987–2013), including both incarcerated and community samples, were identified through a systematic literature search of published studies supplemented by Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans Justice Program data. Despite heterogeneity across samples and measures used, their review highlighted several prominent mental health concerns among Veterans. They found many JIVs have likely experienced at least one traumatic event, and many have post-traumatic stress disorder (prevalence from 4% to 39% across samples). At least half of JIVs have an alcohol and/or drug use disorder (estimates as high
as 71% and 65%, respectively), and other psychiatric disorders, such as depression (14%–51%) and psychotic disorders (4%–14%), is common. JIVs with the presence of one or more additional disorders (or diseases) co-occurring with a primary disease or disorder such as substance use and psychiatric disorders, are at increased risk of negative outcomes, including homelessness and violent behavior. Overall, comparisons of JIVs with other justice-involved adults found a slightly higher rate of mental health concerns among JIVs, with some indication that intravenous drug use is more prevalent. Compared with other Veterans, JIVs have consistently higher rates of mental health concerns, particularly substance use disorders.

Olusanya (2012) discussed two differing perspectives about individual differences in susceptibility to post-traumatic stress disorder after combat trauma. Some researchers maintain that a distinct linear dose-response relationship exists between the severity of combat trauma and the later development of post-traumatic stress disorder. This means the higher levels of combat exposure will predict greater odds of having post-deployment post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms. Conversely, others have questioned whether differential exposure to combat alone is sufficient to explain differences in the prevalence of post-deployment post-traumatic stress disorder. This debate has implications for military Veteran offenders who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder. In their paper, they proposed a cumulative stress model that suggests that it is the particular combination of psychosocial factors and combat exposure that interact to predict the likelihood of developing and maintaining post-traumatic stress disorder after deployment. Therefore, post-traumatic stress disorder influences post-deployment offending and antisocial behavior through this mechanism.

Olusanya (2012) noted that shifting the entire responsibility for alcohol or substance abuse, unemployment, and mental health issues onto war Veterans is clearly an inadequate
response. This blames the victim rather than addressing the complexities of the social circumstances that complicate and prolong post-traumatic stress disorder problems upon return from war. According to Olusanya, therefore, post-traumatic stress disorder-related criminal behavior is situated within a larger context of social and political marginalization that dominates the lives of most Veterans who now find themselves in the criminal justice system.

**Traumatic Brain Injury.** Traumatic Brain Injury is another health concern among JIVs. The Veterans Administration and Department of Defense define traumatic brain injury as a structural injury and/or disruption in brain function caused by an external force resulting in the onset or worsening of clinical signs immediately post event. These signs include loss of consciousness, or decreased level of consciousness, loss of memory for events immediately prior to or following the injury posttraumatic amnesia, and altered mental state alteration of consciousness (Pogoda, Iverson, Meterko, Baker, Hendricks, Stolzmann, and Lew, 2014).

Ponsford and Spitz (2015) examined the stability of employment between 1 and 3 years following traumatic brain injury to identify the variables associated with continued employment throughout this time span. Their study included 236 individuals with predominantly moderate to very severe traumatic brain injury. Participants were eligible for their study if they were employed before injury and reported their employment status at 1, 2, and 3 years following their injury as part of a longitudinal head injury outcome study. They found only 44% of participants remained employed at each of the 3 years following traumatic brain injury. There was also substantial transition into and out of employment across the 3 years. Significantly, greater instability in employment was reported by individuals who were machinery operators or laborers before injury, had a longer duration of posttraumatic amnesia, reported more cognitive difficulties, and were less mobile one year following their injury. They concluded a number of
important factors determine the likelihood of achieving stability in employment following traumatic brain injury, supporting the continued need to identify ways in which physical as well as cognitive changes contribute to employment following traumatic brain injury.

In another study, Schofield, Malacova, Preen, D’Este, Tate, Reekie, and Butler (2015) in their study of risk factors for criminal behavior and traumatic brain injury of 7,694 participants, found a modest causal link between traumatic brain injury and criminality. Overall, they said reducing the rate of traumatic brain injury, a major public health imperative, might have benefits in terms of crime reduction. Combat, criminal activity, or incarceration that may lead to a traumatic brain injury could provide an instance of reverse causation. Combat and prisons are comparatively violent places. If we can reduce the number of times that a person is exposed to war or return to prison, the likelihood of suffering a traumatic brain injury could be reduced, thus reducing the prison population or activities leading to criminal behavior.

Elbogen, Wolfe, Cueva, Sullivan, and Johnson (2015) examined how pre-traumatic brain injury variables and traumatic brain injury-related characteristics predict post-traumatic brain injury criminal arrest, using longitudinal data from the Traumatic Brain Injury Model System National Database. Data was collected from medical hospitals and rehabilitation facilities with participants who had documented traumatic brain injury and non-missing traumatic brain injury Model System data. They found post-traumatic brain injury criminal arrest was associated with gender, age, marital status, educational attainment, pre-traumatic brain injury felony, pre-traumatic brain injury drug abuse, pre-traumatic brain injury alcohol abuse, and violent cause of traumatic brain injury. In addition, they concluded premorbid variables, especially pre-traumatic brain injury felonies, were strongly linked to post-traumatic brain injury criminal arrests. The relationship between traumatic brain injury and arrest was complex, and different brain functions
(e.g., physical mobility) should be considered when understanding this association. Findings highlight that for post-traumatic brain injury criminal behavior, many risk factors mirror those of the non-traumatic brain injury general population.

The effects of Veterans’ traumatic brain injury history on employment status have not been systematically studied, but unemployment was 45% in one clinical sample of recent Veterans with mild traumatic brain injury seeking Veterans Administration care (Cohen, Suri, Amick, & Yan, 2013). Bagalman (2011) wrote that traumatic brain injury became known as a “signature wound” of Operation Enduring Freedom from October 2001 through December 2014 and Operation Iraqi Freedom from March 2003 through December 2011. Traumatic brain injury was known as the signature wound because the incidence of traumatic brain injury was higher in those conflicts than it had been in previous conflicts. His report discusses traumatic brain injury among Veterans receiving care in Department of Veterans Affairs medical facilities, with particular attention to Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom Veterans. In 2011, the Brain Injury Association of America adopted a definition of traumatic brain injury as an alteration in brain function, or other evidence of brain pathology, caused by an external force (Bagalman, 2011, p. 2). In the general population, traumatic brain injury results mainly from falls, motor vehicle/traffic accidents, assaults, and other instances in which the head is struck by or strikes against an object. In the United States each year, an estimated 1.7 million people sustain traumatic brain injury of which 1.365 million are treated and released from an emergency department; 275,000 are hospitalized, and 52,000 die as a result of their injuries (Bagalman, 2011, p. 2).

During military service, traumatic brain injury may result from the events listed above, or from improvised explosive devices, mortars, grenades, bullets, or mines (Bagalman, 2011, p. 2).
The Department of Defense reports that in 2010, a total of 30,703 service members sustained traumatic brain injury. However, a Veteran’s own behavior—whether intentional or not—may interfere with his or her ability to access the Veterans Administration health care system and thus be properly diagnosed. Some Veterans may choose not to disclose symptoms of traumatic brain injury because they believe that being diagnosed with a traumatic brain injury would affect their ability to stay in the National Guard or Reserves, or affect other future employment plans (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2008).

Combined, post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury are important factors to the study of JIVs. The empirical research on recidivism among JIVs is limited. Using the risk-need-responsivity model, Blonigen et al. (2014) conducted a systematic review of research on risk factors for recidivism among JIVs and found post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury, particularly when combined with anger and irritability issues, may be Veteran-specific risk factors for violent offending.

Elbogen et al. (2012) examined data in a national survey of 1,388 Iraq and Afghanistan war era Veterans and found that 9% of respondents reported arrests since returning home from military service. Most arrests were associated with nonviolent criminal behavior resulting in incarceration for less than two weeks. Unadjusted bivariate analyses revealed that Veterans with probable post-traumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injury that reported anger/irritability were more likely to be arrested than were other Veterans (Elbogen et al., 2012). In multivariate analyses, arrests were found to be significantly related to younger age, male gender, having witnessed family violence, prior history of arrest, alcohol/drug misuse, and post-traumatic stress disorder with high anger/irritability, but were not significantly related to combat exposure or traumatic brain injury. They also found that a subset of Veterans with post-traumatic stress
disorder and negative affect may be at increased risk of criminal arrest (Elbogen et al., 2012). Because arrests were more strongly linked to substance abuse and criminal history, clinicians also associate non-post-traumatic stress disorder factors when evaluating and treating Veterans with criminal justice involvement (Elbogen et al., 2012).

**Mental Illness**

Mental illness is another concern for many JIVs. Sherman, Larsen, and Borden (2015) conducted a systematic review of the literature on post-deployment functioning of Iraq and Afghanistan troops. In their review of literature, they found approximately half of the articles addressed mental health issues. For example, data from the Armed Forces Surveillance Center found that rates of mental health conditions among active duty service members increased by 62% between 2001 and 2011 (Sherman, Larsen, & Borden, 2015). In this decade, almost one million service members or Veterans were diagnosed with a psychological disorder either during or after deployment; almost half had more than one mental health disorder. Further, 40% of troops have deployed more than once in support of Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom (Institute of Medicine, 2014); research has documented higher rates of mental health problems among these service members than those who were deployed once both among active duty and National Guard troops.

However, post deployment impairment in six functional domains emerged in the literature review, including mental health, social and role functioning, relationship functioning and family life, spirituality, physical health, and financial well-being (Sherman, et al., 2015). Although risk factors and future trajectories vary across these domains, psychiatric difficulties are a consistent predictor of a worsened course (Sherman, et al., 2015). Implications for clinical practice are described based on the review findings. To promote wellbeing in the years ahead, it
is important that service members are supported in their various roles (such as in the classroom, the workforce, and the family).

Bond, Kim, Becker, Swanson, Drake, Krzos, and Frounfelker (2015) examined whether employment is a key to participation in community life for people with severe mental illness, especially those who have been involved in the criminal justice system. They said that although the Individual Placement and Support model of supported employment has been established as an evidence-based practice for helping people with severe mental illness attain competitive employment, little is known about whether Individual Placement and Support is effective for people with severe mental illness who have a history of arrest or incarceration. Through a randomized controlled trial, they examined competitive employment outcomes for 85 participants with severe mental illness and justice involvement who were assigned to Individual Placement and Support or to a comparison group that offered a job club approach with peer support. After one year, a greater proportion of participants in the Individual Placement and Support group than in the comparison group had obtained competitive employment (31% versus 7%). The Individual Placement and Support and comparison groups did not differ significantly during follow-up in rates of hospitalization (51% versus 40%) or justice involvement—either arrests (24% versus 19%) or incarceration (2% for both groups). They concluded that although Individual Placement and Support was shown to be an effective model for helping justice-involved clients with severe mental illness achieve employment, the outcomes were modest compared with those in prior Individual Placement and Support studies. The Individual Placement and Support model provided a useful framework for employment services for this population, but augmentations may be needed.

Abraham et al., (2014) examined the population-based reach of Veterans Health
Administration employment services to 52,542 Veterans Health Administration patients with psychiatric diagnoses. Reach of services included the percentage and characteristics of people who accessed services compared with those who did not. Using clinical administrative data, they identified patients with a psychiatric diagnosis among a random sample of all patients who received Veterans Health Administration services in one year. Among Veterans Health Administration patients with psychiatric diagnoses, they examined their likelihood of receiving any Veterans Health Administration employment services and specific types of employment services, including supported employment, transitional work, incentive therapy, and vocational assistance. They identified clinical and demographic characteristics associated with receiving employment services. Results indicated that 4.2% of Veterans Health Administration patients with a psychiatric diagnosis received employment services. After adjusting for clinical and demographic characteristics, Veterans Health Administration patients with schizophrenia and bipolar disorder were more likely to receive employment services and supported employment, than were patients with depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, or other anxiety disorders. Veterans Health Administration patients with depression and post-traumatic stress disorder were more likely to receive transitional work and vocational assistance than patients with schizophrenia.

Durcan (2012) said around 90% of criminal offenders under supervision have a mental health problem, personality disorder or addiction, and most have two or more such problems. Durcan claims one of the most effective ways of preventing reoffending and improving the life chances of an offender is through achieving and maintaining employment, however, very few people leaving prison will have employment on release from prison. Durcan described an investigation conducted by the Centre for Mental Health into employment opportunities for
offenders with mental health problems on release from prison and found that, although offenders with mental health problems are less likely than other prisoners to be included in employment programs, evidenced-based approaches such as individual placement and support offer huge potential. Durcan’s investigation identified five principles for employment programs supporting this group: employers should play an instrumental role in creating opportunities; recruitment should be pragmatic, based on attitude and ‘‘character’’ rather than qualifications or health status; support should be offered to employees and their employers/managers for as long as they need it; opportunities for ‘‘pre-employment’’ and ‘‘in work’’ skills development should be linked to real employment opportunities; and criminal justice and other statutory agencies should facilitate effective pathways to real work and skills development.

Substance Abuse

Another health related barrier JIVs face is substance abuse. Schultz, Blonigen, Finlay, and Timko (2015) wrote that criminal justice involvement among Veterans is a critical and timely concern, and little is known about criminal histories and clinical characteristics among Veterans seeking treatment for substance use disorders. Schultz’s et al. study examined criminal typology, clinical characteristics, treatment utilization, and 12-step group participation among Veterans (N = 332) at intake to substance abuse disorder treatment at the Department of Veterans Affairs and 6 months and 1 year post-intake. Schultz et al. used cluster analysis that yielded three types of criminal histories: mild—(78.9%), moderate (13.6%), and severe (7.5%)—distinguished by type of offense, number of convictions, and number of months incarcerated. Schultz et al. found at intake, participants with mild criminal histories reported more alcohol problems and fewer legal and employment problems than participants with moderate and severe criminal histories. Participants with severe criminal histories were most likely to attend a 12-step meeting
in the year post-intake, but all groups had high attendance. When only participants who had attended at least one meeting in the year post-intake were compared, participants with mild criminal histories worked more steps and were more involved in 12-step practices. All groups improved between baseline and follow-up and did not differ at follow-ups on substance use or other clinical outcomes. Schultz et al. found treatment utilization and group attendance, but not baseline criminal history, as significant predictors of improved substance use problem severity at follow-up. Outpatient treatment and 12-step group attendance appear to be important components of recovery for Veterans with varying criminal histories.

Meshberg-Cohen, Reid-Quinones, Black, and Rosen (2014) compared the responses of 33 Veterans with substance abuse problems and 51 without, to questions about work's significance and its relationship to disability payments. T- and chi-square tests were conducted to determine if Veterans with substance use problems differed from the others on work-related attitudes and perceptions of the relation between work and Veterans' benefits. They found Veterans endorsed high levels of agreement with statements that working would lead to loss of benefits. Veterans with substance use agreed more strongly that they would rather turn down a job offer than lose financial benefits. The greater preference for disability payments among substance-using Veterans may reflect a realistic concern that they are particularly likely to have difficulty maintaining employment. The widespread concern among Veterans that work will lead to loss of Veterans Administration disability payments is striking given the ambiguity about how likely loss of benefits actually is, and should be addressed during the service-connection application process.

In a study that examined the dynamic criminogenic need changes across a 12-month period, Wooditch, Tang, and Taxman (2013) found changes were the best predictors of criminal
offending and illicit drug use among a sample of 251 drug-involved probationers who participated in an intervention. Probationers had significant changes in several need areas, and treatment participation moderated some changes. They found probationers who had improved work performance had the greatest reductions in offending. These findings suggest that certain dynamic need changes may be more important than others (substance use, antisocial cognition, antisocial associates, family and marital relations, employment, and leisure and recreational activities during probation) and its impact on offending and drug use among drug-involved probationers.

Weaver, Trafton, Kimerling, Timko, and Moos (2013) evaluated the prevalence and types of criminal arrest among 99,512 male Veterans in substance use disorder treatment across 150 Veterans Administration facilities from 1998 to 2001. Participants were assessed with the Addiction Severity Index, which includes detailed information about lifetime criminal activity. A majority of the patients (58.2%) had three or more previous arrests, with 46.0% reporting one or more criminal convictions. Criminal arrests were frequent and varied. A majority of patients (69.3%) had at least one arrest that was not due to drug possession, drug sale, or intoxication. Nearly 24% reported at least one arrest for a violent crime. Patterns of arrest for specific crimes varied across substance use disorder diagnostic categories. Screening for specific types of offending is informative and viable. They concluded existing Veterans Administration substance use disorder treatment is a potentially under recognized point of intervention for JIVs.

When considering the outcomes between substance abuse interventions and employment, Evans, Hser, and Huang (2010) examined primary data collected on 1,453 offenders by 30 programs during 2004 to explore the characteristics, employment services utilization, and outcomes of those who did and did not receive employment services while in drug treatment in
California. One-year outcomes were mostly similar across groups, however, increases in the proportion of offenders employed, receiving income from employment and family or friends, and being paid for work were significantly greater among the received-employment-services group, and a greater proportion of this group also completed drug treatment. Employment services utilization was less likely for persons recruited from outpatient settings and more likely with greater severity of family/social problems and desire for services.

**Recidivism**

Another concern to JIVs is returning to prison. Recidivism (i.e., rearrest, reconviction, or reincarceration for a new crime or violation of the terms of one’s parole or probation) is remarkably common among JIVs. Recidivism refers to a person's relapse into criminal behavior, often after the person receives sanctions or undergoes intervention for a previous crime (National Institute of Justice, 2015). In states such as Michigan, recidivism is measured by criminal acts that resulted in rearrest, reconviction or return to prison with or without a new sentence during a three-year period following the prisoner's release (National Institute of Justice, 2015).

The Pew Center of the States (2011) surveyed every state’s department of corrections with the aim of creating a single source of state-level recidivism data. This survey, conducted with assistance from the Association of State Correctional Administrators asked states to provide recidivism rates for the 36 months following an offender’s release from prison. In the Pew survey, states were asked to specify whether an individual was returned to prison for a new criminal conviction or for a technical violation of the terms of his or her supervision. The Pew survey sought estimates of recidivism for two cohorts of prisoners, those released in 1999 and for a second group released in 2004. The Pew survey found more than four in ten offenders nationwide return to state prison within three years of their release despite a massive increase in
state spending on prisons, according to this 2011 report. The Pew report found states today spend more than $50 billion a year on corrections, yet recidivism rates remain stubbornly high. In addition, the Pew report found 33 states responded with data for the 1999 release cohort, and 41 states provided data for offenders released in 2004, allowing for an analysis of recidivism trends in almost three-dozen states that represent 87 and 91 percent of all releases from state prison.

Durose, Cooper, and Snyder (2014) found, in a study of prisoner records supplied by the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs Bureau of Justice Statistics National Corrections Reporting Program including 404,638 persons released in 2005 from state prisons in 30 states, that recidivism patterns found about two-thirds (67.8%) of released prisoners were arrested for a new crime within 3 years, and three-quarters (76.6%) were arrested within 5 years. Durose et al. found that within 5 years of release, 82.1% of property offenders were arrested for a new crime, compared to 76.9% of drug offenders, 73.6% of public order offenders, and 71.3% of violent offenders. In addition, Durose et al. wrote that more than a third (36.8%) of all prisoners who were arrested within 5 years of release were arrested within the first 6 months after release, with more than half (56.7%) arrested by the end of the first year. Even more concerning, Durose et al. found two in five (42.3%) released prisoners were either not arrested or arrested once in the 5 years after their release. In the study, Durose et al. found a sixth (16.1%) of released prisoners were responsible for almost half (48.4%) of the nearly 1.2 million arrests that occurred in the 5-year follow-up period. Durose et al. estimated 10.9% of released prisoners were arrested in a state other than the one that released them during the 5-year follow-up period. Finally, Durose et al. found within 5 years of release, 84.1% of inmates who were age 24 or younger at release were arrested, compared to 78.6% of inmates ages 25 to 39 and 69.2% of those age 40 or older.

It has been estimated that nearly 68% of incarcerated prisoner’s recidivate within 3 years.
from their release (Langan & Levin, 2002). The theoretical problem of recidivism consists of the risk, needs, and responsivity and the political leadership that drives the agenda of what programs are used to treat JIVs. There is strong support for using general risk assessment tools to assess this group’s risk of recidivism. Preliminary evidence indicates that cognitive-behavioral programs targeting general risk factors are more effective than psychiatric treatment alone. However, there is as yet no direct support for the applicability of the three core risk, needs, and responsivity principles to treat this population (Skeem, Steadman, & Manchak, 2015).

In their review of literature, Harrison and Schehr (2004) analyzed ex-offender vocational guidance and placement programs documents contrasting their views regarding their success and failures, and the reasons for recidivism. They researched five topics: (a) the relationship between unemployment status and criminal behavior, (b) the effectiveness of vocational guidance and placement programs in reducing recidivism, (c) the role that employment plays in the success of a supervision program, (d) components and services that have been included in programs with a successful record of reducing recidivism, and (e) those criteria used to determine a “successful” vocational guidance and assistance program. They argued that sustainable employment is critical to the success of a supervision program, and an ex-offender’s avoidance of recidivism. Therefore, resourceful vocational guidance and assistance programs that include financial assistance and follow-up services are more effective than incarceration for some offenders in deterring perpetual recidivism.

Gendreau, Little, and Goggin, (1996) used meta-analytic techniques to determine which predictor domains and actuarial assessment instruments were the best predictors of adult offender recidivism. One hundred and thirty-one studies produced 1,141 correlations with recidivism. These researchers found the strongest predictor domains were criminogenic needs, criminal
history/history of antisocial behavior, social achievement, age, gender, race, and family factors. Less robust predictors included intellectual functioning, personal distress factors, and socioeconomic status in the family of origin. Among the practical data that is lacking is the rate of recidivism and the lived experiences among Veterans seeking employment.

**Social**

The last challenge I discuss is the social obstacles that may face JIVs. In one study, Cerda, Stenstrom, and Curtis (2015) found 121 respondents who were recruited online to investigate the barriers to successful reentry of former offenders. Cerda et al.’s study was important to better prepare inmates for community integration, especially since a former criminal history can deter employability and contribute to the high unemployment rate of this population. The research by Cerda et al. experimentally manipulated the effects of two offender characteristics, type of offense and work qualifications, on the perceived employability of a hypothetical job applicant. Four different components of employability were also assessed using mediational analysis to test the underlying reasons or justifications for why the offender characteristics impact employment. Results indicate the separate moderating effect of each offender characteristics (type of offense and work qualifications) and the mediating effect of components of employability (basic skills, thinking skills, personal qualities, and dangerousness) for work qualifications. This is important because these issues pertaining to employability of former offenders are crucial because lack of employment is a major barrier released offenders face when reentering into the community.

One example of a barrier faced by JIVs is stigma. Goffman (1963) defined stigma as “an attribute that is deeply discrediting” (p. 3) and wrote that, “by definition . . . we believe the person with a stigma is not quite human. On this assumption we exercise varieties of
discrimination, through which we effectively, if often unthinkingly, reduce his life chances” (p. 5). Decker, Spohn, Ortiz, and Hedberg (2014) completed a three-year study of the impact of a prison record on gaining employment. They included two separate experiments and an employer survey in their research. The first involved the submission of more than 6,000 online applications for entry-level jobs. The second experiment sent individuals (auditors) to apply for 60 jobs in-person. This allows them to compare the results of two different methods of job applications. The third research method was a survey conducted among 49 employers, all of who were included in the second experiment.

Consistent with prior research, Decker et al. (2014) found differences by race/ethnicity, with blacks and Hispanics generally faring more poorly than whites. Decker et al. found differences for the online application process were not as large as for the in-person process, but, nonetheless, they did find that a prison record has a dampening effect on job prospects, particularly in the low-skill food service sector, where ex-prisoners are likely to seek employment during reentry. Decker et al. found the employer survey revealed strong effects for criminal justice involvement, with employers expressing preferences for hiring individuals with no prior criminal justice contact. Decker et al. reported employers associated prior prison time with a number of negative work-related characteristics including tardiness and inability to get along with co-workers.

Decker et al. (2014) concluded their report with a number of policy recommendations regarding the job preparation, application, and interview process. In particular, they highlighted the importance of preparing individuals in prison for the online world of job applications and résumé creation. This, like other aspects of the reentry process, should be done as early as is feasible, but certainly before release from prison. It is also important that former prisoners
expand their network of contacts to increase their awareness of jobs and the process associated
with applying for those jobs. They believe it is important for job applicants with a prison record
to be prepared for a good deal of failure, as fewer than ten percent of their testers received a
callback. Former prisoners are more likely to gain employment if they are judged on the merits
of their qualifications, excluding their prior imprisonment. For this reason they believe that
efforts to remove “prior arrest” or “conviction” from initial job applications should be supported.

LeBel (2011) found in his review of literature on prisoner reentry, that the research has
largely neglected the perspective of formerly incarcerated persons concerning the stigma and
discrimination they face in society. Through a purposive and targeted sampling technique he
recruited male and female formerly incarcerated persons from New York City and Upstate New
York. Sampling was aimed at recruiting adults, age 18 and older, who were currently receiving
prisoner reintegration services of some kind. Participants were recruited from six organizations
providing a variety of services (e.g., counseling, drug/alcohol treatment, education, job readiness
and training) to former prisoners. The purpose of his study was to address this gap by examining
whether formerly incarcerated persons perceive themselves to be discriminated against due to
different reasons (former prisoner, race/ethnicity, past drug/alcohol use, lack of money, gender,
religious beliefs, HIV positive, diagnosed mental disorder, physical disability, and sexual
orientation), and if those perceptions were related to self-esteem. His findings indicate the vast
majority of men and women felt discriminated against for one reason, with most indicating
multiple reasons. Moreover, his findings provide support for past research indicating that
perceptions of discrimination are negatively related to self-esteem, which affects the
psychological well being of a parolee during the reentry process.

Kascheyeva (2007) wrote that rather than enacting its own legislation prohibiting
misplaced focus on criminal records in hiring decisions, one state relies on the limited and selective protections afforded to ex-offenders by federal statutes such as Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Equal Protection and Due Process Clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment. She discussed the current status of the tort of negligent hiring in Michigan and illuminates its evasive and unpredictable contours. She also described available federal safeguards against records-based discrimination, and familiarizes readers with the Michigan approach towards availability and use of criminal records in private and public employment and licensing. She then offered an analysis of suggested legislative alternatives addressing the issue of ex-offenders' employment, including court-issued orders restoring ex-offenders' rights; supporting ex-offender anti-discrimination statutes; protecting employers' business judgment; and granting employers free access to applicants' criminal records, except for the records of arrests. Lastly, she suggested the creation of a wage subsidy program for ex-offenders and the establishment of an intermediary organization facilitating both ex-offenders' and employers' needs at hiring.

Kascheyeva (2007) further suggested three measures to assist ex-offenders with obtaining meaningful employment. Kascheyeva recommends the state should concentrate first on affording ex-offenders a meaningful chance to obtain full-time employment. The indeterminate status of the law of negligent hiring, pervasiveness of employment-related collateral consequences imposed on ex-offenders, and the insufficiency of federal protections substantially impair ex-offenders' chances to find their way out of the vicious vortex. Under these circumstances, Kascheyeva wrote a prompt action by the state to protect ex-offenders from records-based discrimination and to incentivize employers to hire ex-offenders becomes indispensable. Next, while the list of the desired measures to protect ex-offenders is extensive the critical ones she
endorsed provides a convicted individual with a chance to petition a court for timely relief from civil disabilities; ban records-based discrimination; clearly delineate the scope of duty in the negligent hiring cases; and supply transitional employment opportunities for ex-convicts. Last, Kascheyeva recommended remedies to assist employers in hiring ex-offenders and avoiding unwarranted liability by saying;

This complexity of measures is in sync with the holistic approach to ex-offender rehabilitation prevalent in the literature and adopted in the progressive U.S. jurisdictions that allows employers to err on the side of caution and the resulting employment discrimination against people with criminal records. These measures reflect the principles of proportionality and individualized justice lost in the years of the tough-on-crime political discourse. Lastly, and most importantly, these measures represent the necessary step in effecting a fundamental change in our society's attitudes towards those who have once made a mistake. (p. 1108)

One last point should be mentioned about the perception of supervising offenders in the community. Gunnison and Helfgott (2011) found that within the institutional correctional literature, much has been written and explored about the differences in authority between correctional officers, inmates, and between ex-offenders and community corrections officers (CCOs). The emerging literature in the correctional field suggests that ex-offenders perceive CCOs as being socially distant from them and have doubt as to whether CCOs are genuine in their attempts to assist the ex-offenders in reintegrating back into the community. Using qualitative data from a sample of 132 federal and state corrections officers in Seattle, Washington, their investigation advances previous research by examining officers’ perceptions of social distance with their clients. They found that CCOs attribute offenders’ beliefs about
social distance to offender deflection of responsibility. In addition, CCOs reveal that officer training does not specifically focus on the social distance issue. The findings from the current study coupled with previous findings by Helfgott (1997) suggest that social distance is an issue that may hinder the reentry success for some offenders.

JIVs face many challenges and barriers as they seek employment after being released from prison. Their health, recidivating, and the social obstacles each have their own implications to their successful reentry into a law-abiding citizen. It is important to remember that cognition, choices, and perceptions play an important role in a system thinking of prisoner reentry of JIVs.

**Motivations to Enlist**

The third topic of my literature review examines JIVs motivations to enlist in the military and if those motivations have changed regarding post-release employment as a civilian. Within this topic are two sub topics related to my study including: institutional and occupational motivations to enlist. Institutional motivations include the customary reasons such as duty, honor, and patriotism. Occupational reasons include career motivations for financial compensation or the benefits to supplement wages.

It is important to know the different cultural perspectives from those that have been incarcerated and have served in the military. Hall (2011) noted that acknowledging and understanding the many unique characteristics of the general military are essential before attempting to intervene and work with this unique culture. She said that unless we understand how these characteristics impact the military family and lead to the need for stoicism, secrecy, and denial, we cannot work effectively with the military service members or with their families. In addition, unless we understand their language, their structure, why they join, their commitment to the mission, and the role of honor and sacrifice in military service, we will not be
able to adequately intervene and offer care to these families. This care must come from within the military framework and be consistent with the worldview of their culture. She references Fenell (2008) who pointed out that while there are “cultural, religious and ethnic diversity within the military, the military is a culture in its own right” (p. 8). This is important because Hall (2008) wrote that it is the responsibility of ethical practitioners to be well versed in three multicultural competencies which include (a) becoming aware of our own behavior, values, biases, preconceived notions, and personal limitations; (b) understanding the worldview of our culturally different clients without negative judgment; and (c) actively developing and practicing appropriate, relevant and sensitive strategies in working with our culturally diverse clients.

It is essential to consider the second competency of understanding the unique worldview and culture of JIVs in order for criminal justice policy makers to work to the best of their ability with this culturally diverse population. Moskos (1977) was the first to research two models (institutional and organizational) of why people enlist in the military. In this article Moskos launched the hypothesis that with the abolition of enlistment in 1973 the U.S. military gradually developed from being a value based organization with institutional characteristics, to increasingly resembling an organization characterized by a market mentality where the military must have something to offer. The model proposed by Moskos is often referred to as the Institutional/Occupational (I/O) thesis. Moskos (1986) then published an update of the I/O thesis in 1986, in which he explained that the I/O thesis was presented to advance a comprehensive understanding of trends in military organization. Since it was presented in 1977, the I/O thesis by Moskos has generated a growing body of research, also in Europe despite the theory being based on conditions in the U.S. In the update, Moskos attempted to make the theory more useful for cross-national analysis; he explained “the I/O thesis assumes a continuum ranging from a
military organization highly divergent from civilian society to one highly convergent with civilian structures” (pp. 377-378). The essential differences between the Moskos institutional and occupational model are that the first is based on normative values, while the second is based on a “marketplace economy.”

An institution is legitimated in terms of values and norms: that is, a purpose transcending individual self-interest in favor of a presumed higher good. Such values are captured in such mottoes as ‘duty,’ ‘honor’ and ‘country’ (Moskos, 1986, p. 378). An occupation is defined in terms of the marketplace. Supply and demand rather than normative consideration are paramount (p. 379).

Moskos (1986) goes on to argue that to the degree one’s institutional membership is congruent with notions of self-sacrifice, is to the degree it will usually enjoy high esteem from the larger society, where prestige in an occupational model is based instead on level of compensation. Next, payment in the institutional model is essentially based on rank and seniority, while compensation in the occupational model should be linked directly to skill differences and skill level of individual members. According to Moskos, this means that the military institution is organized vertically, whereas an occupation is organized horizontally. Moskos explains further that people in an occupation tend to feel a sense of identity with others who do the same sort of work and receive similar pay, while the horizontal model that applies to an institution entails that it is the organization one belongs to which creates a feeling of shared interests. Moskos wrote that traditionally with the Armed Forces, it is the fact of being part of the services that has been more salient than the different jobs that military members do. What Moskos then follows by writing that role commitment in an institutional military tends to be diffused, and means that members are expected to perform tasks not limited to their military
specialties. Conversely, Moskos found that in an occupational military role commitment tends to be job specific. A consequence of these differences is that an institutional military tends to evaluate its personnel in ‘whole person’ categories and relies heavily on qualitative and subjective evaluation, while “an occupational military tends toward judgments relating to specific performance standards and prefers numerical or quantitative evaluations” (p. 381).

Taylor, Clerkin, Ngaruiya, and Velez (2015) examined Moskos’ Institutional–Occupational model against the large body of cross-nationally validated research on public service motivation. They found that in their sample, the public service motivation construct is positively correlated with institutional motivations that reflect Moskos’ insights. They also found evidence that the four dimensions of public service motivation (Attraction to Public Participation, Commitment to Public Values, Self-sacrifice, and Compassion) may offer a more nuanced way to attract and retain soldiers. They call for a greater dialogue between scholars focused on public service motivation and researchers interested in recruitment and job performance in the armed forces.

Griffith (2008) also studied the motivations of American youth and active-duty soldiers to serve in the military. Institutionally motivated soldiers were more likely to plan to remain in military service, would report for duty so they did not let their buddies and family down, and believed in the mission and service to the country. In contrast, materially (occupationally) motivated soldiers were less likely to remain in reserve military service if deployed overseas, more likely to report for duty to meet contractual obligations and to avoid disciplinary actions, but less likely to report to serve the country. These factors have implications for the level of commitment and combat readiness of soldiers.

Adding to this, Eighmey (2006) examined survey responses of American youth obtained
via 2001, 2003, and 2004 Department of Defense Youth Polls. Factor analyses of reasons for joining the military yielded seven distinct “motivational themes,” including: fidelity (faithfulness to goals and to people who share the same goals); risk (willingness to make personal sacrifices); family (desire to be near family and have their approval); benefits (having good pay and satisfying working conditions, acquiring useful job skills, and having job security); dignity (receiving and giving respect toward coworkers); challenges (having physical challenge); and adventure (having travel opportunities).

Eighmey (2006) also associated the tangible, self-serving themes of benefits, dignity, challenges, and adventure with Moskos’ occupational orientation. He found occupational considerations were seen as extrinsic, market-driven benefits such as pay, acquisition of skills leading to career advancement, and job security. Institutional considerations have been seen as intrinsic benefits derived from the distinguishing core values of the organization. As revealed by the factor analysis results for all three Youth Polls, the leading factors relating to military service appear to be value driven themes that could be said to reflect larger social or institutional perspectives. The rating-scale items that address the more material concerns of pay and specific job benefits were generally found among the secondary themes in the factor analysis results. The point here is, with youths values trump pay for reason to enlist. This was interesting to study if the values still remained as a reason to work after being released from prison as opposed to pay.

Finally, Woodruff, Kelty, and Segal (2006) examined enlistment motivations among Army active-component combat soldiers. Using factor analysis, four broad enlistment motivations were identified: institutional (desire to serve, be patriotic, be adventurous, be challenged, and be a soldier); future-oriented (desire for a military career and money for college); occupational (need to support family and best choice available); and pecuniary benefits
(desire to repay college loans and receive bonus money). Soldiers who reported high enlistment propensity were more likely to have institutionally-based motivations for joining and continuing military service. Unfortunately, there are very few recent studies to be found with the institutional/occupational models of enlistment of JIVs, which is why my study is important to add to the current literature.

**Services**

The fourth topic I discuss covers the Federal services available to JIVs as they seek employment after being released from prison. Although there are many benefits available to Veterans, my study focused on the educational benefits available to JIVs. These benefits consists of the career technical education, training, vocational rehabilitation, and employment opportunities available to them that are not as available to civilians. The programs for this study include Health Care for Reentry Veterans, Veteran Justice Outreach Initiative, Veterans Court programs, and Priority of Service. It is important to JIVs to understand the Veteran benefits available to them. My study was not intended to evaluate specific intervention programs for JIVs. Instead, I researched the experiences of JIVs, as they are made aware of the program availability within their community when released. For their service, JIVs are offered many benefits that can assist them with obtaining employment after their service. It is important for us to remember that the type of discharge one receives can affect the eligibility for Veterans Administration benefits.

If one serves in the military, they are entitled to certain Veteran benefits. These benefits can range from education to retirement. However, the way one leaves the military can have a great effect on your benefits. Soldiers receive a discharge after they complete their military service. The discharge means that these have been released from obligation to serve. There are multiple
types of discharges. Many benefits will depend on what type of discharge one receives. Types of service discharges include: honorable, general under honorable conditions, other than honorable, bad conduct, dishonorable, and entry-level separation discharge.

The best type of discharge one can receive is an *honorable* discharge. This means that the Veteran has met the conduct and performance standards of the military, and is eligible for most Veteran benefits if receiving this discharge. Some benefits actually require an honorable discharge, including: GI Bill education benefits, Military health insurance, Military retirement, and Military travel benefits. The second best type of discharge one can receive is a *general* discharge under honorable conditions, meaning a Veteran’s performance was satisfactory, but fell a little short in expected military duty and conduct. Some examples include failure to meet fitness and weight standards, failure to progress in training, and minor discipline problems. Just like an honorable discharge, one is eligible for most Veteran benefits if receiving a general discharge. However, certain specific benefits, such as GI Bill education benefits, are only reserved for service members who receive an honorable discharge (Military Law, 2017).

An *other than honorable* discharge means that a Veteran has had some serious departures from the conduct and performance expected of a service member. Some examples of when one may receive this discharge include: abuse of authority, serious misconduct that endangers other members of the military, or use of deliberate force to seriously hurt another person. One probably would not be eligible to receive most Veteran benefits if receiving an other than honorable discharge. The Department of Veterans Affairs (Veterans Administration), which provides most of the Veteran benefits, will examine the circumstances of an other than honorable discharge to determine whether one is eligible or not. A *bad conduct* discharge is a punitive discharge that is imposed by court-martial. A court-martial is a criminal trial that's conducted by
the military. One is not entitled to any Veteran benefits if he receives a bad conduct discharge from a general court-martial. The Veterans Administration determines whether one is eligible for benefits if receiving a bad conduct discharge from a special court-martial. The worst discharge one can receive is a *dishonorable* discharge. This usually means that one committed a very serious crime. Examples include desertion, rape or murder. One can only receive a dishonorable discharge if convicted at a general court-martial. All Veteran benefits are lost with this discharge.

If one does not fit in the military, you may receive an *entry-level separation*, which means one does not belong in the military, but the service is not considered good or bad. An entry-level separation is rare and can only be given within the first 180 days of service. No benefits are earned with this discharge.

Despite their circumstances, some JIVs may be eligible for Veterans Administration benefits. For this study, I researched the Veterans Administration benefits related to post-secondary education and training, and employment assistance.

**Benefits**

There is little literature available pertaining to JIVs experiences and reentry. However, Garland, Wodahl, and Cota (2015) found there was a lack of public support for prisoner reentry initiatives that could undermine the sustainability of prisoner reentry as a large-scale movement. In their study, they found that no multivariate, explanatory analyses of the correlates of support for prisoner reentry policies could be found. This omission is due in part to the absence of clear psychometric measures to assess support. Their study examines the data obtained from a sample of residents in a Midwestern state to determine the dimensionality of support for prisoner reentry interventions using both exploratory factor analysis and ordinary least squares regression. They identified the following three-factor structure: (a) support for transitional programs aimed at
building skills and knowledge to handle the obstacles of the prison-to-community transitional process, (b) support for post-release transitional housing units, and (c) opposition to denying offenders housing opportunities.

In a different study, Crayton et al., (2009) stated that “when addressing reentry, there are two overarching goals: to promote public safety and to reintegrate inmates” (p. 39). They found in New York City, then Mayor Bloomberg supported the creation of the New York City Justice Corps, providing transitional employment for young adults returning home from prison and jail in two New York City neighborhoods most impacted by incarceration and reentry. In each location, a local organization brings together young people with their community to identify community improvement projects the NYC Justice Corps members can execute while developing hard skills that ready them for the labor market (Crayton et al., 2009).

Another benefit to JIVs is their access to career technical education. Gordon and Weldon (2003) examined recidivism rates of inmates who participated in educational programs during the time they were incarcerated at Huttonsville Correctional Center in West Virginia. The Education Department at Huttonsville Correctional Center provided files pertaining to inmates who were enrolled in educational programs during 1999-2000. Vocational completers had a recidivism rate of 8.75%, inmates who participated in both GED and vocational training reported a recidivism rate of 6.71%, and non-educational participants had a recidivism rate of 26%. GED and vocational training programs had a positive effect on reducing recidivism. Overall, participation of the incarcerated in correctional education programs appeared to have reduced recidivism. The combination of career and technical education along with incarceration for the qualified inmate may help to increase the safety of society when the offender is released.

In a similar study, LePage, Lewis, Washington, Davis, and Glasgow (2013) studied the
effect of three methods of vocational assistance on competitive employment over a 6 month follow-up period: (1) basic vocational services, (2) self-study using a vocational manual designed for formerly incarcerated Veterans, and (3) a group led by vocational staff using the vocational manual. They evaluated 111 Veterans for time to obtain, and total time of, competitive employment. The group format was expected to be superior to the self-study, and the self-study superior to basic services. Their findings indicate that the group format was associated with quicker employment and more total employment than the basic and self-study conditions for that population.

In a previous study, Kehrer and Mittra (1975) found that of 6,039 inmates, 1,521 Veterans were identified in eight Pennsylvania correctional institutions that took advantage of Veterans' educational benefits. A stratified random sampling was made to estimate percentage of bad conduct, dishonorable, and undesirable discharges; percentage with Army service; average duration of active duty; average minimum sentence length; average educational grade level; percentage of blacks; number of prior offenses; and offense types. They found 100% sampling indicated military service by war era and eligibility/non-eligibility for GI educational benefits. The average age for Veterans was 33.6 years with a 10th-11th grade level of education; total inmate population age was 27 years with a fifth grade educational level. Approximately 54.4 percent Veteran-inmates attended small group benefits briefings. The most prevalent request for assistance was institutional skill training/education.

**Post-Secondary Education and Training.** Another benefit to JIVs is post-secondary education and training. Duwe and Clark (2014) evaluated the effectiveness of prison-based educational programming by examining the effects of obtaining secondary and post-secondary degrees on recidivism and post-release employment outcomes among 9,394 individual offenders.
released from Minnesota prisons between January 2007 and December 2008. They found that obtaining a secondary degree in prison significantly increased the odds of securing post-release employment, but did not have a significant effect on recidivism or other employment measures such as hourly wage, total hours worked, or total wages earned. These researchers also found that earning a post-secondary degree in prison, however, was associated with greater number of hours worked, higher overall wages, and less recidivism.

In her study of parolees in college, Potts (2011) studied 11 parolees’ phenomenological experience participating in the community college element of a reentry program. This reentry program was located in a Midwestern county and the community college experience included a set of courses developed by the community college’s counseling department on a case-by-case basis. The classes ranged from general education classes, to highly specific science courses, or trade program classes. She found that for parolees enrolled in community college, goals for the future include completing the college program and obtaining (better) employment.

Owens (2009) found, via his open-ended interviews with a sample of 17 formerly incarcerated persons in New York City and through thematic content analysis of data gathered, that the credentials and skills acquired through college participation helped these formerly incarcerated individuals successfully face the challenges of reentry. Although stigma, overt discrimination, and a shrinking low skilled labor market form notable challenges to reentry, studies such as Potts (2011) suggest that the college experience helps former prisoners successfully avoid recidivism.

A major barrier for parolees seeking education is a result of funding and financial assistance. The Higher Education Act provides that students, such as JIVs, who are incarcerated in a Federal or State penal institution are not eligible to participate in the Federal Pell Grant.
program, which provides need-based grants to low-income undergraduate and certain post-baccalaureate students to promote access to post-secondary education. This restriction prevents many otherwise eligible incarcerated individuals from accessing financial aid and benefiting from post-secondary education and training. As part of the Obama Administration’s commitment to create a fairer, more effective criminal justice system, reduce recidivism, and combat the impact of mass incarceration on communities, the Department of Education announced the Second Chance Pell Pilot program to test new models to allow incarcerated Americans to receive Pell Grants and pursue the post-secondary education with the goal of helping them get jobs, support their families, and turn their lives around (United States Department of Education, 2015). On August 3, 2015, the Department of Education released a Federal Register notice inviting institutions of higher education to apply to participate in a new institutionally-based initiative under the Experimental Sites Initiative, which tests the effectiveness of statutory and regulatory flexibility for institutions of higher education’s that disburse federal student aid. This initiative will allow participating institutions of higher education’s, in partnership with one or more Federal or State penal institutions, to provide Federal Pell Grant funding to otherwise eligible students who are incarcerated and who are eligible for release back into the community, particularly those who are likely to be released within five years of enrollment in the program (CSG Justice Center, 2015).

In their report, Karpowitz et al. (1995) illustrated the overwhelming consensus among public officials that post-secondary education is the most successful and cost-effective method of preventing crime. The United States Government has resumed its long-standing policy of releasing a fraction of Pell Grants to qualified incarcerated Americans in some states as a pilot. As proven by the government studies cited in this memo, its impact was enormously positive.
Resuming this policy to all states would slash rates of recidivism and save those states millions of dollars. Another benefit to JIVs is the recent re-emergence of their eligibility to the Pell Grant. First authorized through the Higher Education Act of 1965, the Pell Grant program is intended to be a basic source of financial aid for needy undergraduate students. The program provides qualifying undergraduates with monetary support for educational purposes, which does not have to be repaid. In its 2005 report, the Library of Congress noted the Pell Grant program is the single largest source of grant aid for post-secondary education assistance funded by the federal government. In that year, more than 5.3 million people received Pell Grant aid (Mercer, 2005). However, students who are incarcerated in a federal or state penal institution remain ineligible for Pell Grants in most states.

Tewksbury and Taylor (1996) collected data from surveys sent to directors of adult education programming in all fifty states including the District of Columbia in the fall of 1995. Of the 46 responses, the results found the elimination of the Pell Grant funding for incarcerated students in the 1995-96 academic year had profound effects on the post-secondary correctional education programming throughout the nation. In one year, the number of correctional systems offering post-secondary correctional education programming dropped from 82.6% (N=38) in 1994-95, to 63% (29) in 1995-96. Most often, the directors reported that such funding loss either led to a significant decrease in the number of enrolled students (31.6% of systems) or reported that all post-secondary correctional education programming had been or was to be immediately eliminated (23.7%).

Welsh (2002) examined access, quality, success, state commitment, and maturity in the post-secondary educational programs for state inmates before and after the elimination of Pell Grant eligibility and in the projected future as perceived by the state directors of correctional
education. She sent surveys to the directors of post-secondary correctional education in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, and received 44 (86%) completed surveys. She found directors of correctional education perceived that state commitment to post-secondary correctional education has declined since Pell Grant eligibility was eliminated for inmates. The results of that study confirmed the importance of funding for post-secondary correctional education programs. Proponents of the 1994 Omnibus Crime Bill contended that prisoners receiving Pell Grants took money away from law-abiding students who had to struggle to pay for college without the assistance of the same grant.

**Post 9/11 Veteran Benefits.** Another benefit to JIVs is their access to the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act. In their testimony before the Committees on Veterans’ Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity House of Representatives on March 17, 2015, Gonzalez, Miller, Buryk, and Wenger (2015) reported on the Department of Veterans Affairs’ administration of its education programs, and the educational and training needs of our post-9/11 Veterans.

Gonzalez et al. (2015) found the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act represented the largest expansion of Veterans’ education benefits since their origin with the enactment of the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944. These modern bills reaffirmed President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s declaration upon signing the original legislation that educational benefits are an integral way to support service members’ transition into civilian life and compensate them for the sacrifices made during military service. Educational benefits have also historically helped to recruit and retain individuals for voluntary military service; service members consistently acknowledge the importance of education benefits in their enlistment decisions. For example, 62% of service members responding to the 1999 Active-Duty Survey
selected education benefits as the primary reason for enlisting in the military and 74% of active-duty military and Veterans responding to a 2014 survey indicated that “receipt of educational benefits” was either an “important” or “very important” reason for joining the military. The most popular and generous educational benefit available today is the Post-9/11 GI Bill, which took effect in August of 2009. With over one million users as of 2014, it significantly increased the higher-education benefits available to those who served on active duty in the U.S. armed forces after September 10, 2001. With over two million total post-9/11–era Veterans and planned military year end strength reductions in the coming years, usage of the program will likely continue to grow both in participation and cost. It is therefore vital that military personnel and Veterans understand and are able to access educational benefits in order to successfully reach their educational goals and earning potential specific to JIVs that civilians are not eligible for.

For example, Steele, Salcedo, and Coley (2010) found via their study involving the collection of focus group data from student Veterans and other GI Bill beneficiaries— including active-duty service members and eligible dependents—on four or five college campuses in each of three states that were home to large numbers of Veterans: Arizona, Ohio, and Virginia. Because they were interested in variation among different institution types, including two-year and four-year public institutions, as well as for-profit and nonprofit private institutions, they conducted focus groups and campus administrator interviews at an institution of each type in each of the three states.

Steele et al. (2010) later gathered data from a larger pool of GI Bill–eligible students and administered an online survey to a geographically diverse sample of 564 current and former service members and dependents that had previously registered for online student Veterans’
forums led by American Council of Education; 230 eligible individuals who were currently enrolled in a higher education institution completed the survey. The survey questions addressed the perceptions and experiences of students eligible for the new GI Bill, but in less depth than the focus group discussions. The analysis therefore combined responses from the survey and focus groups, with an emphasis on the latter. Finally, because they also were interested in reasons why eligible Veterans might not be using their education benefits, they conducted interviews with eight non-enrolled Veterans located through the online survey and through an online advertisement. Steele et al. found the Post-9/11 GI Bill did appear to influence the higher education choices of some eligible service members, Veterans, and dependents who took part in the study: approximately 24% of survey respondents and a substantial share of focus group participants reported that the existence of the new GI Bill had driven their decision to enroll in higher education; about 18% of survey respondents and a small share of focus group participants (mainly concentrated in private institutions) said the new GI Bill’s existence had driven their choice of higher education institution.

Gonzalez et al. (2015) characterized the types of educational benefits available to Veterans from federal sources. They then discussed the potential difficulties Veterans could have in navigating and accessing those benefits, the challenges Veterans face in completing college degrees, and how “non-traditional” students could serve as a benchmark to measure Veterans’ educational progress. They concluded with making the following recommendations to Congress on how to improve access to higher education opportunities for the newest generation of Veterans: (1) Promote service members’ use of Department of Defense programs prior to their departure from the armed forces; (2) Facilitate and encourage Veteran Affairs, Department of Defense, and Department of Education collaboration to develop education assistance policies; (3)
Support the development of an integrated online military and Veteran federal educational benefits system that would track individuals’ use of benefits across departments; and (4) Improve data collection and research on longer-term outcomes of users of educational benefits.

**Employment Assistance.** In another study, Sayer, Carlson, and Frazier (2014) wrote that returning to or acquiring civilian employment is a major reintegration milestone for Veterans. Unfortunately, a large number of Veterans returning from the current wars experiences difficulty in this important area. Sayer, Noorbaloocchi, Frazier, Carlson, Gravely, and Murdoch (2010) reported that 25–41% of Afghanistan and Iraq combat Veterans who used Veterans Administration healthcare experienced some-to-extreme productivity problems after deployment (e.g., problems keeping a job; completing the tasks needed for home, work, or school). National data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics have shown that although below the national rate, the unemployment rate for male Veterans was 5.2% in 2014. The rate for female Veterans was 6.0%. Further, among the 573,000 unemployed Veterans in 2014, 59% were age 45 and over. And 37% were age 25 to 44, and 4% were age 18 to 24. Veterans with a service-connected disability had an unemployment rate of 5.9% in August 2014, the same rate as for Veterans with no disability. Nearly 1 in 3 employed Veterans with a service-connected disability worked in the public sector in August 2014, compared with nearly 1 in 5 Veterans with no disability (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). Vietnam Veterans also experienced employment-related difficulties, resulting in lower lifetime earnings than among demographically comparable non-Veterans (Angrist, 1990).

McDonough et al. (2015) found some JIVs might face challenges due to human capital deficits such as lack of education and vocational experience. Addressing these deficits in addition to improving job-readiness skills that will prepare a JIV for work can lead to successful
employment outcomes. In particular, preparing JIVs for the job application and interview process and discussing appropriate workplace behavior and attitudes may be beneficial. This pre-employment preparation is an important component of employment-related services for JIVs and should build upon the skills many JIVs possess from their military training.

**Programs**

Besides the benefits to Veterans, there are also many state and federal programs offered specifically to JIVs to help them obtain employment. It is important to note that inside a correctional facility, there are usually no Veteran designated or specific programs. State correctional facilities have prisoner organizations such as the Vietnam Veterans of America, but there are no specific Veteran programs and services available to them. The closest programming available to meet the needs of a Veteran is something like the Michigan Prisoner Reentry Initiative (MPRI). The programs that were explored for this study include Health Care for Reentry Veterans, Veteran Justice Outreach Initiative, Veterans Treatment Court programs, and Priority of Service.

From the United States Department of Veterans Administration website (2015), the **Health Care for Reentry Veterans program** is designed to address the community re-entry needs of incarcerated Veterans. Health Care for Reentry Veterans services include: outreach and pre-release assessments services for Veterans in prison; referrals and linkages to medical, psychiatric, and social services, including employment services upon release; and short term case management assistance upon release. Health Care for Reentry Veterans provides information to Veterans while they are incarcerated so they may plan for re-entry themselves. In addition, there are many state-specific resource guides, which identify steps that Veterans can take prior to their release.
The VJO initiative is designed to help Veterans avoid unnecessary criminalization of mental illness and extended incarceration by ensuring eligible JIVs receive timely access to Veterans Administration health care, specifically mental health and substance use services (if clinically indicated) in local courts and jails, and liaison with local justice system partners. Part of the Veteran Justice Outreach is the development of Veterans Treatment Courts. Veterans Treatment Court’s began in 2008, following Judge Robert Russell’s establishment of a Veterans Treatment Court in Buffalo, New York (Russell, 2009). In a recent phone study, Johnson et al. (2016) inventoried U.S. Veterans’ courts to provide descriptive information on the current status of their various elements. They identified which items were most predictive of a court’s percentage of Veterans terminated from their program through a linear regression. They found the following were associated with higher rates of termination from the Veterans’ court program: (a) programs that offered phase progression based on measurable goals, (b) programs that conduct frequent drug and alcohol testing, and (c) programs for which sanctions are more severe for failing immediate goals (sobriety) versus long-term ones (completion of training). The following were associated with lower rates of termination from the Veterans Treatment Court program: (a) programs in which later phases permit less stringent testing, (b) programs utilizing behavioral contracts, (c) programs utilizing brief incarcerations. Since 2008, there has been considerable growth in Veterans Treatment Court. As an example of these courts’ rapid progress, there were 24 Veterans’ courts in January 2010 (Clark et al., 2010), 168 by December 2012 (Clark et al., 2014), and over 300 courts in more than 35 states as of January 1, 2014 as reported by Johnson et al. (2016).

Schaffer (2015) studied re-entry services for military Veterans in the criminal justice system through the Incarcerated Veteran Outreach Program. The Incarcerated Veteran Outreach
Program was a precursor to the Veteran Justice Outreach. Veterans for their study were explored as a subgroup of the general inmate jail populations in southern Ohio based upon Veteran’s status, military discharges, service-related injuries, treatment needs, pre-release planning, and re-entry services. Veterans reported having psychosocial problems, diverse levels of criminality, criminogenic needs, and significant episodes of homelessness. A sample of 399 incarcerated Veterans in state prison, county jails, and community corrections setting were identified and completed the psychosocial pre-release assessment. Their average age was 44.6; they were more likely to be White males, divorced, most honorably discharged, and were represented in the following eras: 34% Vietnam, 35% post-Vietnam, 26% Persian Gulf War, and 5% Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation Enduring Freedom. His findings encourage the development of a re-entry outreach model and strategies such as the Veteran Justice Outreach and Health Care Reentry for Veterans to prevent episodes of criminal recidivism.

Blue-Howells, Clark, van den Berk-Clark, and McGuire (2013) found, via their interviews with field specialists, how “cross-institutional collaboration can overcome local challenges to implementation of a national mandate, in order to support those who strive for a more productive life back in the community” (p. 52). They say Veterans are a significant subpopulation in criminal justice populations, comprising between 9% and 10% of arrestee, jail, prison, and community-supervision populations. In order to address the needs of JIVs, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans Justice Programs offer services to Veterans at multiple points in their involvement in the criminal justice system. Within the context of the Veterans Administration’s national mandate to develop Veterans Justice Programs, Blue-Howells et al. presented best practice case examples using the Sequential Intercept Model as the intervention frame, and discusses each in context of a community psychology framework for innovation.
dissemination. The case examples demonstrate how central program guidance is adapted locally to meet the national mandate using strategies that fit the local environment, illustrating the innovations in action orientation, boundary spanning, and flexibility of organizations. Their review provided examples of creative reinvention that expand on the mandate and work to meet local needs.

In my study, I researched how parolees access the *Priority of Services* available to them. *Priority of Services* for Veterans requires program operators to give first consideration for participation in a program to those Veterans and eligible spouses who meet the eligibility criteria for that program. The Jobs for Veterans Act, PL 107-288, signed into law on November 7, 2002, requires that there be priority of service for Veterans and eligible spouses in any workforce preparation, development, or delivery program or service directly funded in whole or in part, by the U.S. Department of Labor (38 U.S.C. 4215). The Priority of Service regulations, codified at 20 CFR 1010, were issued December 19, 2008 and require qualified job training programs to implement priority of service for Veterans and eligible spouses, effective January 19, 2009 (United States Department of Labor, 2015).

My review of literature found that there are no studies that speak of Priority of Service of employment and training programs available to JIVs, which tells me there is an awareness issue of its availability or access within the correctional populations. For example, West and Kregel (2014) provided an overview of 27 federally-funded employment services and supports that can be accessed by Veterans with disabilities, including those designed to meet the needs of the disabled Veteran population specifically, the Veteran population in general, and the disability population in general. The purpose of their study was to present a comprehensive cataloging and review of all employment resources those Veterans with disabilities could access in pursuit of
wage and self-employment. They found employment services for Veterans with disabilities are hindered by a lack of basic information on program participation, performance outcomes, and Veterans’ satisfaction. In general, their review found that many of the federal programs have little or no readily available data regarding the numbers of Veterans, and none for JIVs with disabilities served or their employment outcomes. Lack of sufficient data does not allow rigorous evaluations of program effectiveness. Finally, multiple reports have documented a lack of coordination within and between federal agencies related to existing Veterans employment services. Poor coordination has led to duplicated efforts, confusion on the part of those in need of assistance, and poor outcomes.

**Successes**

The fifth and final topic is a review of previous research on the successes of JIVs as they seek employment after being released from prison. As stated in the second topic, there are many challenges and barriers that a JIV faces when reentering the workforce. What is often overlooked are the successes shared from the voices of JIVs. Morally, we are obligated to encourage or help those that traditionally cannot help themselves such as JIVs. One theme that resonates with Burns’ (1978) transformational leadership model is it should be more than wielding power or manipulating others, it is a moral effort. Power, purpose, relationship, motives and values are essential to the leadership of prisoner reentry because the leader is engaged ultimately in lifting the morals of the JIV; in elevating the JIV from a lower state to a higher state. To Burns, the moral component to leadership is most concerning. Within this topic are two sub topics that are related to my study including: institutional and individual. Institutional successes are the improvements our leadership entities have made to policies, programs, or technology to better serve our JIVs and the stakeholders involved with their employment opportunities. Individual
successes are the accomplishments we know of from our JIV stories that can act as models for others to follow.

Institutional

In a perceived negative environment such as a correctional facility, it is important to focus on the positive institutional accomplishments correctional leaders have made to reduce our corrections population. From their website, the Whitehouse (Office of the Press Secretary, 2015) posted that the Veteran Affairs (Veterans Administration) have reached more than 100,000 JIVs through direct outreach in prisons, jails, and criminal courts – including over 1,000 state and federal prisons, and the estimated 168 Veterans Treatment Courts. The purpose of this outreach is to connect Veterans with needed mental health, substance abuse, and other clinical services, where possible as an alternative to incarceration.

The Veterans Administration also revised its administrative policy that limited Veterans Administration prison outreach to the six months prior to a Veteran’s release. The revised policy allows for assessment and release planning with incarcerated Veterans earlier than six months before release, thus enhancing the odds of successful reentry. The Veterans Administration has built a web-based system that will allow prison, jail, and court staff to quickly and accurately identify Veterans among their inmate or defendant populations. Called the Veteran Reentry Search Service the system will also prompt Veterans Administration field staff to conduct outreach to the identified Veterans.

The Veterans Administration produced a brief outreach video intended for Veteran jail and prison inmates, and distributed it for viewing in all state and federal prisons, as well as more than 500 local jails (and counting). Titled “Suits” the video (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, 2012) was directed by an Operation Iraqi Freedom Veteran. It encourages incarcerated
Veterans to use their time wisely by taking an active role in the reentry planning process, and informs them how to contact a Veterans Administration outreach specialist for help. And last, the Veterans Administration expanded eligibility for its health care services to include Veterans in halfway houses, work-release centers, or other reentry-focused correctional settings. These Veterans must often waive access to health care from the incarcerating authority to participate in such programs.

**Individual**

There are many individual successes worth mentioning as well. Despite the employment challenges and barriers faced by JIVs, there are many success stories that often fail to make it to the public’s attention. For example, LeBel, Richie and Maruna (2015) found in their study that many of the staff members working for prisoner reentry programs are formerly incarcerated persons themselves. Moreover, criminologists have written that the strengths-based role of the “wounded healer” or “professional ex-” is exemplified by released prisoners who desist from a deviant career by replacing it with an occupation as a paraprofessional, lay therapist, or counselor. Despite these observations, there is a paucity of research about formerly incarcerated persons employed by agencies that provide reentry-related programming. Their study begins to fill this gap by examining whether, how, and why the staff members of prisoner reentry programs differ from the clients. Characteristics of formerly incarcerated persons thought to be related to desistance and reconciling a criminal past such as overcoming stigma, prosocial attitudes and beliefs, active coping strategies, psychological well-being, and satisfaction with life are examined. Findings support the notion that the wounded healer or professional ex- role is related to desistance and can potentially transform formerly incarcerated persons from being part of “the problem” into part of “the solution” to reduce crime and recidivism much like recovering
alcoholics who now do counseling for active alcoholics.

In one study, Tripodi, Kim, and Bender (2009) analyzed administrative data from a random sample of 250 Texas male parolees released from prison between 2001 and 2005. They found that although obtaining employment is not associated with a significant decrease in likelihood of reincarceration, it is associated with significantly greater time to reincarceration. Thus, among parolees who are reincarcerated, those who obtain employment spend more time crime-free in the community before returning to prison. Their article argued that increased time crime free is an indicator of positive behavior change that should be supplemented with clinical interventions to help formerly incarcerated persons maintain the initial motivation associated with employment, which applies to JIVs as well.

In another study, Shivy, Wu, Moon, Mann, Holland, and Eacho (2007) used consensual qualitative research methods to analyze data from two focus groups: one with six male and one with nine for female nonviolent felony offenders, all of whom were receiving services at day reporting centers, which offered a nonresidential form of community corrections. Attendees discussed their reentry experiences, and 11 domains were identified, encompassing ex-offenders’ needs for education, training, and practical assistance; challenges in obtaining and maintaining a job; and available support, including personal networks and resources from the correctional system. Their findings suggested that counseling professionals should attend to ex-offenders’ social networks, including social aspects of the workplace, as such networks can offer support or represent a liability for individuals in transition. Substance abuse issues impact ex-offenders’ social viability as well as their career-related reentry attempts. Finally, career development practitioners should understand the internal and external impacts of the stigma associated with incarceration.
To gain a better understanding of employers’ views about hiring ex-offenders, Fahey, Roberts, and Engel (2006) conducted a review of the national research literature and held four focus groups with 28 employers in the greater Boston area. Drawing from various industries, the focus groups were divided between employers that had hired ex-offenders and those that had not. At the end of their project, they re-convened the project advisory group, along with other practitioners and policymakers, to review the focus group findings and provide recommendations and next steps for inclusion in their report.

Fahey et al. (2006) found employers’ primary interest is their business, its customers, and employees. Most employers reported that a hiring decision depends on the individual circumstances of each case, including the type of job and the specific factors in the applicant’s history. For instance, an employer in financial services would not hire someone with a history of embezzlement, and employers in health services were not likely to hire someone with a drug conviction—especially if they might have access to medications. Employers indicated that a candidate with a criminal history is generally going to be less attractive than one without, so ex-offenders have more obstacles to overcome. In particular, many employers did not want to be the first to employ a recently released offender; rather they were more comfortable considering someone who had already established a positive track record after release. They found some as “evidence of rehabilitation” described the completion of transitional employment.

Fahey et al. (2006) further found that the three support services and incentives that employers rated as having the most positive impact on hiring were: completion of a transitional employment program after release, general work training, and specific job skills training. Although employers consider technical skills to be important in the selection process, they reported non-technical (“soft”) skills as being most important. These soft skills include good
communication and interpersonal skills, ability and willingness to learn, attention to detail, reliability, and showing up for work on time.

Fahey et al. (2006) also found that most employers were unaware of the tax incentives, bonding programs, and intermediary organizations currently in place to facilitate employment of returning offenders. Employers generally seem interested in the support systems that seek to bridge the gap between ex-offenders and prospective employers, but need to know more about the programs and how they fit with their needs. Although many employers would like to give a qualified ex-offender a second chance, they are averse to taking risks that they feel could threaten their workplace or reputation. Over half of participating employers rated greater protection from legal liability as having a very positive impact on their likelihood of hiring an ex-offender; however, many are also skeptical that this could be effectively implemented. Moreover, some employers feel that protection of reputation and client base is of even greater concern than legal liability, which would apply to JIVs as well.

In another study, Uggen (2000) said sociologists have increasingly emphasized "turning points" in explaining behavioral change over the life course. Is work a turning point in the life course of criminal offenders? If criminals are provided with jobs, are they likely to stop committing crimes? Prior research is inconclusive because work effects have been biased by selectivity and obscured by the interaction of age and employment. Uggen’s study included 3,000 individuals and produced more refined estimates of previous studies by specifying event history models to analyze assignment to, eligibility for, and current participation in a national work experiment for criminal offenders. Age was found to interact with employment to affect the rate of self-reported recidivism: those aged 27 or older were less likely to report crime and arrest when provided with marginal employment opportunities than when such opportunities are not
provided. Among young participants, those in their teens and early twenties, the experimental job treatment had little effect on crime. Work thus appeared to be a turning point for older, but not younger, offenders.

Dirkx, Kielbaso, and Corley (1999) found through the use of in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis over a nine-month period as part of site visits made to 15 different correctional facilities in Michigan that provided one or more vocational programs. Facilities were selected on the basis of geographical location, type of programs offered, and level of security. A total of 47 programs were visited, representing nine different vocational areas and pre-release programs. In-depth interviews were conducted with facility, regional, and central office administrators, vocational teachers, and potential employers.

Dirkx et al. (1999) found that much work remained to be done with respect to the overall goal of helping inmates develop more marketable skills, to improve the overall effectiveness of vocational programming within the Michigan Department of Corrections. They wrote the Michigan Department of Corrections needed to foster a strong and consistent vision for vocational education throughout its facilities. A number of current policies adversely affected vocational programming, in terms of inmate participation, completion of programs, updating technology, materials, and resources, and determining program outcomes. A lack of explicit and formal partnerships with employer groups and educational agencies external to Michigan Department of Corrections contributed to problems of communication, cooperation, and currency and standardization of curricula. Progress plotters (or transcripts) did exist for many programs, but the quality of those plotters and their use varied considerably both across programs and facilities, as did instructional materials and resources available to the program instructors. In addition, the levels of hands-on, work-based or contextual learning also varied but in most cases
were modest at best. Many programs also suffered from out-of-date or nonfunctional technological resources. Finally, few programs had on-going continuous program improvement processes in place or procedures for obtaining information on their students once they left the prison system. Due to a variety of factors, most vocational programs experienced relatively low completion rates.

Although these figures do not specify JIVs, it is important to note the progress in the state and the Michigan Department of Corrections has been made to employment reentry programs over the last 40 years. For example, Borus, Hardin, and Terry (1976) interviewed 266 parolees for six weeks in 1974 from the Michigan Comprehensive Offender Manpower Program, a project funded by the U.S. Department of Labor and conducted by the Michigan Department of Corrections. They found the Comprehensive Offender Manpower Program was a failure. While a high unemployment rate, such as the statewide average of nearly 10%, might have deprived the Comprehensive Offender Manpower Program of any visible beneficial effects on the average, a positive effect should have emerged in some cities with seemingly low unemployment rates, but none did. Most of the local Comprehensive Offender Manpower Program offices had sufficient autonomy and diversity in operations so that at least one office should have shown a significant positive impact on its clients, but none did. Borus et al. (1976) thus were left with serious questions about the very concept of a Comprehensive Offender Manpower Program --that of helping the ex-offenders by offering them job-placement services. From 1976 to 2015, governmental leadership in states such as Michigan has placed an emphasis on employment readiness to reduce recidivism and have shown improvement over the years.

There are many positive changes being made to address the stigma a parolee experiences related to a felony conviction when trying to obtain employment. For instance, in another
demonstration of leadership in Michigan, Governor Snyder approved Public Act No. 359 into law on January 1, 2015. Specifically, the law requires the Michigan Department of Corrections to give the prisoner documents regarding his or her criminal convictions; his or her institutional history, including any record of institutional misconduct, whether he or she successfully completed programming provided by the Michigan Department of Corrections or a contractor, or obtained a GED or other educational degree, and his or her institutional work record; and other information the Michigan Department of Corrections considered relevant (Public Act 359, 2014).

In addition, the Michigan Department of Corrections will have to issue a certificate of employability (Public Act 359, 2014) to a prisoner who successfully completes a career and technical education course; has no major misconducts during the two years immediately preceding release; has not more than three minor misconducts during the two years immediately preceding release, and receives a silver level or better on the National Work Readiness Certificate, or a similar score as determined by the Michigan Department of Corrections on an alternative job skills assessment test administered by the Department. Public Act 359’s certificate of employability will be issued only within 30 days before the prisoner was released on parole from a correctional facility and would be valid for four years after the date of issue unless the Michigan Department of Corrections revoked it. The Department would have to revoke a certificate of employability if the prisoner commits any criminal offense during the 30-day period before release, and could revoke it if the prisoner had any institutional misconduct during that period. The Michigan Department of Corrections will have to revoke the certificate of a person who commits a felony after receiving it and was then placed under the Michigan Department of Corrections jurisdiction for committing that felony.

A certificate of employability is a benefit because it makes a person with a felony more
marketable to the employer. The certificate is evidence of a person’s due care in hiring or other activities regarding the holder of the certificate. It specifies that a certificate of employability would establish that an employer did not act negligently in hiring a person if a claim against the employer required proof that the employer was negligent by disregarding a prior criminal conviction. However, the bill does not relieve an employer from a duty or requirement established in another law concerning a background check or verification that an individual was qualified for a position, and does not relieve the employer of liability arising from failure to comply with any such law. The bill also does not create any affirmative duty or otherwise alter an employer’s obligation to or regarding an employee with a certificate of employability issued under the Corrections Code.

In a recent study, Ramakers, Van Wilsem, Nieuwbeerta, and Dirkzwager (2015) studied 221 previously employed prisoners. They wanted to know to what extent ex-prisoners return to their pre-prison job and identify factors that facilitate or hinder this outcome. Data from a longitudinal study of male Dutch pretrial detainees, who entered a Dutch detention facility between October 2010 and March 2011, were born in the Netherlands, between 18 and 65 years old and did not suffer from severe psychological problems. They were analyzed to examine whether those who were employed at the time of arrest returned to their pre-prison employer, found new employment, or remained jobless in the first half-year following prison. A positive finding showed that one in three employed ex-prisoners found employment through their previous employer. The findings emphasize the relevance of recent employment ties for successful reintegration.

It is important to understand the post-release employment-related experiences of parolees, and if possible to track the experiences at different times upon release. In one study
using a causal framework, Visher, Deus-Sherrill, and Yahner (2011) examined the employment experiences of a multistate sample of former prisoners, and identified the individual factors influencing the likelihood of employment after release from prison, using data gathered from interviews with prisoners before and at multiple times after release. Their findings indicated that consistent work experience before incarceration, connection to employers before release, and conventional family relationships improved employment outcomes after release.

Kleykamp (2007) examined the effect of prior military service on hiring for entry-level jobs in a major metropolitan labor market. Her research employed an audit method in which resumes differing only in the presentation of military experience versus civilian work experience were faxed in response to an advertised position. The results suggest that employers exhibit preferential treatment of black military Veterans with transferable skills over black non-Veterans. Veterans with traditional military experience in the combat arms do not experience preferential treatment by employers, regardless of racial/ethnic background. Her findings suggest a possible mechanism generating the post-military employment benefit among blacks found in prior observational studies. A Veteran premium in hiring may stem from the concentration of blacks in military occupational specialties with a high degree of civilian transferability, combined with employer preferences for military Veterans with such work experience over their non-Veteran peers.

Another individual success is the opportunity for JIVs to be self-employed. As a theory, entrepreneurship has been portrayed in criminology in a variety of ways in the past. For example crime has been considered as a career and in particular the professional thief has been considered an entrepreneur (Sutherland, 1937); Anomie (Merton, 1938); and opportunity theory (Cloward & Ohlin, 1960) played a part in the generation of the Poverty Program in the United States.
Moreover, Bell (1953, 1960) wrote of the “Crooked Ladder of Crime” as diversion to entrepreneurial advancement. This emphasis led to entrepreneurship generated programs which failed and, like rehabilitation, these efforts have been generally abandoned.

It is possible to use one’s criminal past to benefit others when released from prison. Research on persons exiting deviance has centered on identifying the processes whereby they abandon the behaviors ideologies, and identities associated with their specific career by replacing them with more conventional lifestyles and identities. Brown (1996) suggested that relinquishing the behaviors and lifestyles associated with a particular deviant career does not always imply total abandonment of a deviant identity. The central tenets of Ebaugh's (1988) model of role exit were applied and adapted to provide an alternative conceptualization of exiting deviance. Drawing on data gathered through introspection and open-end interviews with 35 “professional ex’s” currently employed in a variety of community state, and private institutions providing treatment to individual’s with drug, alcohol, and/or eating disorder problems four central stages of this specific exit process. Preliminary analysis suggested that professionalizing rather than abandoning deviant identity facilitated exiting deviance.

In January 2012, the U.S. White House Office of National Drug Control Policy asked RAND (2014) to generate national estimates of the total number of users, total expenditures, and total consumption for four illicit drugs from 2000 to 2010: cocaine (including crack), heroin, marijuana, and methamphetamine. They found drug users in the United States spend on the order of $100 billion annually on cocaine, heroin, marijuana, and meth. Drug dealers, and their employees, often display the same entrepreneurial and managerial skills as successful owners and employees of legitimate business operations. If entrepreneurial “propensity” or “aptitude” is an attribute that some people possess to a greater degree than do others, and if a portion of our
nation’s prison inmates possess this attribute, then entrepreneurial or self-employment training for soon-to-be-released inmates and recently-released ex-convicts would be a potentially valuable component of our nation’s social policy efforts, and might result in a lowering of recidivism rates with resultant benefits for society.

As one example, the Prison Entrepreneurship Program is a Houston-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. From their website (2015), Prison Entrepreneurship Program is an innovative program that connects the nation’s top executives, Master of Business Administration students, and politicians with convicted felons. Established in 2004, their entrepreneurship boot camp and re-entry programs are proven solutions for reformed inmates who thrive on challenge and accountability. The total projected impact from Prison Entrepreneurship Program programs in year one is $1,046,767. For example, in 2011 Texans saved $5 million on each group of 100-released graduate, a 10-time return on investment. After costing the state over $20,000 per year as an inmate, their released graduates now pay an average of $7,000 - 10,000 per year in payroll, sales and income taxes—and they spend approximately $8 million a year in local economies. In subsequent years, the total projected impact from Prison Entrepreneurship Programs was $942,969 annually.

**Chapter II Summary**

The literature review included research about Justice Involved Veterans (JIVs), their challenges and barriers, their motivations to enlist in the military, the Federal benefits and programs available exclusively to them, and a few success stories. Overall, the literature on the voices of JIVs within employment-related experiences is lacking. More literature exists for prisoners released as civilians, than JIVs. The literature also shows that JIVs are underrepresented in current research and warrants additional attention. Chapter III profiles the
methods used in my study.
CHAPTER III

METHODS

This qualitative study examined JIVs regarding their post-release employment-related experiences. The purpose of this study was to describe and understand the post-release employment-related experiences of 10 JIVs released from a Midwest State Department of Corrections. This was the focus of my study, to learn how JIVs described their employment-related experiences as they reentered society and to determine the common themes that existed among them.

Describing the meaning of the lived experiences of JIVs will help inform corrections administrators and legislative policy makers about the JIV perspective, a world unknown to law-abiding citizens that have never served in the military or been incarcerated. The intended audiences for this study include vocational educators inside and outside correctional departments, Veterans Administration and non-Veterans Administration practitioners and service providers, criminal justice professionals, researchers and program evaluators, and leadership across all of these domains.

This proposed study is guided by two key research questions:

1) How do Justice Involved Veteran’s (JIVs) experience post-release employment-related issues including:
   a. the services and programs available to them;
   b. successes when seeking employment; and
   c. barriers and challenges?

2) What role does the experience of, and identity associated with, having served in the military play in their post-release employment-related issues?
There is a significant body of research on parolees, but not on JIVs specifically. Through these questions, this study helps fill some of the void that exists with JIVs.

**Research Design and Rationale**

As noted in previous chapters, it is important to understand the shared post-release employment-related experiences of JIVs, so that lessons can be learned from the phenomenon. The best way to learn about post-release employment-related experiences is through naturally occurring research (Lynch, 2006), and the best way to the post-release employment-related experiences of JIVs is through a natural holistic study (Lewis, 2006). Therefore, I utilized a phenomenological methodology research design for this study. The type of problem best to study in this form of research is one that is important to understand several individuals' shared experiences of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007).

Marshall and Rossman (2011) defined a phenomenology study as one that “seeks to explore, describe, and analyze the lived experience” (p. 19). They go on to describe this approach as one where the researchers typically use in-depth interviews with individuals to explore the experience or phenomenon that one is studying. They also include that these experiences give understanding of a developing or developed worldview (p. 148). One difference that defined this study as a phenomenology over a narrative study is that within a narrative there only needs to be one who is interviewed. In this study, 10 participants were interviewed, and it is from their individual experiences that a common phenomenon was explored.

Creswell (2013) described a phenomenology to have philosophical underpinnings, more specifically a “philosophy without presuppositions” (p. 77). My study explored the meanings and essence of JIVs and their post-release employment-related experiences. There were no
predetermined assumptions; there was only a finding out of what was experienced by the participants. Creswell also noted that the “essence” of an experience has both a textural description and a structural description (p. 80). My study’s design looked at both what the participants experienced and how they experienced it in terms of the conditions, situations, or context of their post-release employment-related experiences. This study looked at the JIVs post-release employment-related experiences and explored this phenomenon through both the “what” and “how” of their experiences. This created an understanding of the essence of JIVs post-release employment-related experiences so that we could obtain a better understanding of the meaning of those experiences.

**Reflections on My Identity**

As the researcher, I have some experience with corrections and employment-related experiences of felons. Examining introspection as a sociological process, I was able to generate interpretive materials from my own understanding and the lived experience and emotions of working in a correctional facility (Ellis, 1991). Social science researchers too frequently neglect “at hand” knowledge and expertise that they alone possess in the engineering of their research ventures. They often ignore or treat as ancillary their own unique biographies, life experiences, and situational familiarity when these could opportunistically serve as important sources for research ideas and data (Reimer, 1977).

Since I entered into corrections professionally, the spring of 1996, I have been a part of five different correctional facilities of different security levels. Each facility is much different than the other. I have been in a multilevel medium security facility that houses convicted felons in single and dual capacity living quarters with segregation units. I currently work in a multilevel-security facility with two man cell conditions with controlled prisoner movement. I
also work at a secure level one facility with open cube design free movement population. I have also worked with the parole board and parole agents placing prisoners into community supervision. My experience has been with the full spectrum of the criminal justice system consisting of law enforcement, the courts, and corrections.

I have seen prisoners and parolees in their different capacities. I have been a corrections officer, special activities director, classification director, resident unit manager, and departmental specialist, all of which require direct prisoner supervision. I have also been a substance abuse instructor and a cognitive skills teacher. As a classification director, I supervised all the prisoner work assignments in a secure level I correctional facility. I monitored and evaluated prisoners’ successes and failures when assigned to an institutional work assignment. I encouraged prisoners to grow, develop, and establish cultures that help them establish the pro-social skills to transition into community employment when released. I have noticed, especially while on parole, that correctional staff are one of the reasons that a prisoner finds employment when released to community supervision. This has also been supported by the literature.

One of the facility’s I am currently employed at releases prisoners to community supervision under parole status. Being connected with the field office administration and parole officers allows accessibility for data collection. I know these participants’ lived experiences while incarcerated professionally as well as the design and workings of community supervision itself before they are released. I have been in the prison setting with JIVs and now as an observer in community placement. However, this study is significant in that it informs the literature of how and what the JIVs experience as they search for post-release employment. I am also familiar with the offender database systems and have tracked parolees' behavior within those systems on a regular basis for 15 years. Due to my background with this population, I have a
heightened awareness of their communication styles and the possibility that parolees might not be completely honest with me throughout the study. I was able to filter the information throughout the interviews and place little weight on statements made that appear disingenuous. Sincere statements held more weight than statements that seemed less sincere. I have daily contact with key staff at parole offices and from the workforce development agency at Michigan Works! offices who have counseled and enrolled JIV parolees for employment. From our meetings, I have learned the flow of services for parolees in the community and the various programs and benefits available to them.

Because of my personal or professional background, and because of what I have learned in the literature review, I have learned that post-release employment is needed today more than ever before. Employment as a parole requirement has been around for some time and there is vast research on its effect on recidivism. Nobel-prize winning economist Amartya Sen (as cited in Forstater, 2001) has pointed out that there are three different aspects to employment: the income aspect—employment provides income security for the employed; the production aspect—employment results in increased production of goods and services; and the recognition aspect—the employed person is engaged in a worthwhile activity. I assume that when parolees are employed at productive jobs, the parolee employed has income and recognition, and the community is safer. However, post-release employment is needed to reduce recidivism, not only in America, but also around the world. To increase post-release employment of JIVs in our community, there are employment service programs and benefits available to them that are often underutilized. These programs and benefits are available from the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs all of which are inclusive to JIVs.
I assumed from the research and from my own background that these programs and benefits aim to assist employment opportunities of JIVs. And I believed that they do and continue to do so as employment of post-release JIVs. There are multiple leadership theories, but due to assumptions, I have narrowed the leadership theories to structural, formal, and political leadership theories (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Bush, 2011). The assumptions of structural and formal theories emphasize the official and structural elements of the Michigan Department of Corrections. In addition, there is a focus on pursuing the institutional objectives through rational approaches. Last, they are “normative” in that they present ideas about how parolees ought to behave. The political theory assumes the Michigan Department of Corrections reads developing situations and analyzes the interests of parolees, understands how these interests contribute to post-release employment, and appreciates the respective power relations that exist or that are emerging in state government.

I learned that post-release employment services of JIVs are under-utilized and can be shared with other correctional facilities. Therefore, as a correctional leader, I am responsible for building capacity within my facility by using employment programs as a first-change agent for parolees before they are released. In order to build this capacity, I learned via this study that employment services and the practice of post-release programs are viable in the community setting so that we can obtain a better understanding of the meaning of those experiences.

**Population, Sample and Site**

The context of this study is to investigate the post-release employment-related experiences of 10 JIVs in one region of a Midwestern state. Creswell (2013) described a phenomenology as a study that examines the experiences of individuals as they interact with the phenomenon (p. 82). In my study, this phenomenon is the process of obtaining employment and
the programs and benefits accessed by the parolee post-release. As shown in the conceptual framework, this setting allowed for this phenomenon to occur wherein the participants and I as the researcher, collected data (via interviews) to arrive at the essence of this phenomenon.

Marshall and Rossman (2011) described the significance of the site selection or setting to be an important guide for the researcher. It can be determined by the research questions either specifically or globally (pp. 99-100). They also go on to describe the positive and negative aspects of researching in the researchers own setting. For the purpose of this research design, the setting for the individual interviews took place in a safe environment for both the participant and the researcher and by tele-conference. However, to build trust with my participants I allowed them to make suggestions on potential safe locations as well. The setting criteria matches that recommended by Marshall and Rossman in that it (a) allowed relative ease of access, (b) there was reduced time expenditure, and (c) there was a built up trust with the participants (p. 101).

Ease of access means that I went to a location easily reached by the participant since transportation was a barrier. Or, to reduce the time for travel, tele-conferences were primarily used as an option. Finally, there was trust with the participants in that I am a known person from the Michigan Department of Corrections, but have no determining effect on the status of their parole. There was already a relationship of trust built in from shared experiences of a correctional facility. The ease of access and my own-bracketed experience allowed for more analysis of this experienced phenomenon.

I obtained approval from the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board and the Michigan Department of Corrections in order to conduct my study. According to the Office for Human Research Protections, persons living in the community and sentenced to community-supervised monitoring, including parolees, are not considered prisoners since they are not
detained in a treatment center as a condition of parole (Citiprogram, 2015), however, per Michigan Department of Corrections policy directive #01.04.120 “Research Involving Corrections Facilities Or Offenders” another proposal was required to be submitted for approval following the protocol established within the policy directive.

Once Human Subjects Institutional Review Board and Michigan Department of Corrections approvals were secured, I began my recruitment process. The recruitment process began with sending a recruitment flyer to parole agents, Disabled Veterans’ Outreach Program Specialists from Veterans’ Employment Services at Michigan Works! offices, representatives from the following national organizations: the National Association of State Workforce Agencies; National Association of Workforce Boards; and several Veterans’ service organizations (including the Disabled American Veterans, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, the American Legion, and Vietnam Veterans of America to post where JIVs were able to view (see Appendix B). I included a copy of the approval letters, study consent form, and a description of the project requesting that the parolees be a part of my study for one 60-90 minute interview with the postings. From the posting, I recruited 10 parolees for the study.

Next, I made contact with each JIV who responded from the postings. I mailed the "Letter of Invitation for JIV Participation" (see Appendix C) to each on the list for my study recruitment with a consent form. I conducted a “Follow-up Phone/Email Script for Participation” when talking to the potential study participants (see Appendix D). An opportunity to talk by phone about the study was provided to all the program participants if they had any questions before deciding to participate or not.

One point of concern was that some parolees might have felt pressure to do this study because they may feel that it is a condition of parole. The invitation letter and the consent form
clarified that there is no pressure to be a part of this study, and the invitation letter was not be sent to any parolee that was formerly incarcerated at a Correctional Facility where I directly supervised them to reduce any chance or likelihood of bias from the selection process. Also, the information letter and consent form had the lead investigator’s and Human Subjects Institutional Review Board’s contact information, should they needed to ask questions or discuss any issues.

I set up an in-person interview time with the 10 JIVs. I obtained signed Human Subjects Institutional Review Board consent forms from each parolee prior to interviewing the participants (see Appendix E). All 10 JIVs participated in one 60-90 minute interview. All interviews took place in a safe environment for both the participant and the researcher. I was be able to gain access to this group since I have an established working relationship with the Michigan Department of Corrections and local parole offices to help gain access to the subjects. The setting for two interviews was within the Michigan Works! conference room, one at a coffee shop, and the remaining were conducted via telephone interview to ensure a neutral, safe place to interview the subjects. The subjects that participated in face-to-face interviews each received a $20 gas station card after the interview, as gratitude to cover gas expenses to travel to the location (see Appendix F). The gas card receipt was signed using their study pseudonym to ensure confidentiality and was stored in a locked file separate from the locked file with the names that the codes correlate to.

**Instrumentation**

Marshall and Rossman (2011) described the phenomenological study as one that often includes the use of in-depth interviews. For the purposes of this study, there were in depth individual interview after the JIV is released from prison. Research by the Bureau of Justice Statistics shows high recidivism rates among former prisoners in the first year after release:
nearly half (44 percent) are rearrested, 22 percent reconvicted, and 10 percent returned to prison on a new sentence (Langan & Levin, 2002). However, according to Visher, Debus-Sherrill, and Yahner (2011), “not all return to a life of crime; some former prisoners successfully reintegrate and avoid recidivism—at least in the short term. The ultimate task for researchers and practitioners is identifying which key factors inhibit or promote recidivism after release” (p. 8).

These interviews were used to find the essence of their lived employment seeking experiences. These interviews were recorded and conducted in person or by phone, whatever was comfortable for the participants. The interview questions were connected to the research questions and conceptual framework. The interviews were first pretested through pilot testing. Pilot testing the interview questions was then used to evaluate how JIVs from the survey population responded to my interview questions. In addition, the pilot tests for my study tested the full implementation of the research procedures. The pilot test was conducted well in advance of when my study was fielded so that more substantial changes to the interview questionnaire or procedures could be made. Pilot tests are particularly helpful to help test new questions or making substantial changes to my questionnaire, testing new procedures or different ways of implementing my interview questions. For my pilot test, three JIVs volunteered to be analyzed. Their responses were not used in the study. Interview questions can be found in Appendix A. DEDOOSE was utilized to input and synthesize the information. It was the database for the transcribed interviews, observational notes, artifacts, and my bracketed experience. DEDOOSE will be explained more in the Data Analysis section of this research design.

Data Collection Procedures

As a qualitative researcher, I represented the participants in this study and developed an understanding of their experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). I understood that the
participants had their own lives and I did not conduct this study to change what they were doing or affected their lives in any way. I conducted this study to learn from their experiences. Three interviews were conducted in person and seven were by teleconference.

When I first met with the three participants as part of the interview, I introduced myself and I explained that this interview is part of my project to serve as my dissertation for the requirements of my Doctor of Philosophy degree in Educational Leadership concentrating on Career Technical Education at Western Michigan University. I also explained that the consent document they signed explained the purpose of this research project, which is to understand and describe the employment related post-release employment seeking experiences of JIVs. In the event that we could not meet in person, phone conferences were used to conduct the interview.

For the participants that could not meet in person, a teleconference was coordinated. The participants would contact the phone number on the posting and leave a message stating they were interested in discussing the project. When prompted, they left a phone number they could be reached at and I would then make contact with them. After I contacted them, I sent the consent form to them through U.S. mail for review. If they agreed to the study, they would sign the form and return it to me with the self addressed stamped envelope provided to them. Once I received the consent form, I would then contact them a second time stating I had received their consent form and we would set up a day and time that we could coordinate a phone interview. When the date and time was established, I would contact them and we completed the interview.

I covered all of the time commitments, procedures that were used in the study, and risks and benefits of participating in this research project. I requested participants to ask any questions if they needed more clarification. Once the participant signed a copy of the consent form, I gave them each a copy of the original consent form with his signature and I kept one original form
with the signature consenting to participating in the study. I interviewed 10 participants paroled using formal, open-ended guided questions so they were able to speak freely about their thoughts (see Appendix A). I assigned the participants a number to go by for the study to ensure anonymity.

During the interviews, I kept the study truly voluntary and confidential, respecting the political structure of the environment, and was aware of the interplay of my own personal power, biography, and status between the participants. I familiarized myself of issues of safety and real, or perceived, elements of danger or threat (Marshall & Rossman, 2011) that may compromise the study. I was also aware of, and respected, cultural predispositions for both myself and for the participants. The set of guiding questions was the same for each person yet flexible and spontaneous. One prompt was provided for open-ended questions, using "what, how, or why" as a part of the prompt, and I followed the participants' lead, making up probes that followed the participants' lead (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Each interview lasted no longer than 90 minutes in length.

The next phase of the study was to transcribe the recorded interviews and do so the same day each interview takes place. Once all data was transcribed, I wrote a narrative of the parolees' voice.

Data Analysis

Creswell (2013) stated, “data analysis is not off-the-shelf,” but rather “custom-built, revised, and choreographed” (p. 182). He goes on to state the importance of organizing the data, reading, and memoing, and interpreting data into codes and themes (pp. 182-184). This analysis continues into “abstracting out beyond the codes and themes to the larger meaning of data” (p. 187). Creswell (2013) noted that a phenomenology, specifically, includes creating and
organizing files for data as well as reading through text, making notes, and forming initial codes. Phenomenologies describe personal experience, and it also describes the essence of the phenomenon. Once the data is gathered and coded, a researcher develops significant statements and groups those statements into meaning units. The data is then interpreted by a textual description and a structural description. Both of these will then aid in the development of the essence (pp. 190-191).

The unit of analyses for this study was the individual parolee. Data was transcribed as it is collected and the analysis was conducted on an ongoing basis. When analyzing the data, I used the participants' language and avoided imposing my semantics and/or interpretation. I also viewed participants as holistic and autonomous human beings using no negative stereotypes. Interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed, and entered into a database using DEDOOSE qualitative data management software. I independently coded sets of interview data. As codes became identified and more defined, they were reapplied to interview transcriptions to test and evaluate the code’s applicability and conceptual validity. These codes were used to determine the most relevant and frequent themes that emerge from the data.

There were no prefigured templates for coding, but an editing analysis was used for coding, which Marshall and Rossman (2011) defined as “less prefigured” (p. 208). This editing analysis was closely related to a grounded theory (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 208). However, the data analysis approach was well suited for the phenomenological study.

This phase of the study consisted of organizing and preparing the data for analysis (Creswell, 2007). I read all of the data several times to understand a "general sense" of the data and "overall meaning" (Creswell, 2007). After gaining a general sense of what the parolees were saying and the tone of ideas, I began a coding process (Creswell, 2007). A code represents a
piece of data. Coding is the process of examining data line-by-line or paragraph-by-paragraph for significant events, experiences, feelings, that are then signified as concepts (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). A final category and coding list was created and a "preliminary analysis" of the categories conducted and more recoding. All categories and sub-categories were reviewed for similarities in content and/or salient points. Similar categories and sub-categories were combined when such mergers do not reduce the essence of the represented salient points.

I created a preliminary demographic profile table that included participant numbers in place of names, race, age, current education level, parents' education level (if known), branch of military served, and other categories that emerged from the interviews. It is important to have a good understanding of the demographics and issues that are relevant to the focus of JIVs. This information helped my analysis and interpretation of the data and was particular since the data was collected in various locations. Demographic data about research participants was included in the findings. This helps the readers understand more about how many JIVs took part in my research, how wide a diversity of people were involved, and what their backgrounds were. Such information also helped to validate my results and conclusions (Lennie, Tacchi, Koirala, Wilmore, & Skuse, 2011).

I included the subject's criminal offense(s) and time spent in prison to the demographic profile table only after full analysis of interview data and themes was completed for the study. Criminal offense(s) and time spent in prison is available to the public within an online database called the Offender Tracking Information System (OTIS) within the Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC) website.

Descriptions of the JIVs and setting emerged from the coding process. A general description of the themes was written in narrative form and interpretation of the data captured the
essence of the data. Lessons learned and descriptions emerged from the themes and later shared as challenges and successes in the conclusions. I made an effort to protect participants' identities by using numbers in place of participants' names during the interview transcription process. During the interviews, participants were informed that they may stop the recording at any time during the interview. Audio and transcription files were kept in a locked file in a separate location away from the participant list of actual names. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any point. I kept the study truly voluntary. The foreseeable risks and benefits associated with this study was minimal.

**Trustworthiness**

Marshall and Rossman (2011) described trustworthiness as having four criteria from which the “soundness of qualitative study was judged” (p. 39). These four criteria are reliability, validity, objectivity, and generalizability. This study had components that answered these criteria and hold up trustworthiness for the study.

For reliability, this study used triangulation (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 42). Triangulation occurred through a literature review of Justice-Involved Veterans, employment-related experiences, and the political leadership theories as one aspect to uphold rigor. This study also incorporated data sources from the participants’ interviews. Finally, to help triangulation, this study used a phenomenological approach to discern the essence of the JIV experiences.

For validity, this study used both transactional and transformational validity approaches. Marshall and Rossman (2011) described transactional validity as, “involving participants in the research project to validate themes, interpretations, or findings” (p. 41). In this study, participants had an opportunity to examine the themes along with their quotes to check for
accuracy. This is called member checking. This member checking allows for the participants to review the transcripts for accuracy of their words and intentions. Member checking was accomplished by sending the JIV a written transcription of their interview with a self-addressed stamped envelope to them. If the interview was valid and accurate, the JIV was not required to respond. This feedback is important to not only help bracket and check for validity of my study’s results and discussion, but also as an opportunity to revise and return it to the JIV. If I did not get a response, I noted that no response was given and the data was used as it was given or appears from the interview.

As for transformational validity, Marshall and Rossman (2011) explained, “writers in this category take quite seriously the notion that multiple perspectives, including those of the writer exist” (p. 42). Therefore, this study included with the researcher reflexivity memoing and a developed memo trail. Both of these approaches should help to inform and solidify the trustworthiness of this study.

As for objectivity and generalizability, I used several ways to build trustworthiness. First, a rich data set and description helped to bring objectivity, but also help in generalizability for other JIVs and correctional leaders to understand the employment-related experiences during the parole process. Second, limitations and delimitations of the study helped define the study and its findings, which helped the trustworthiness of the study in the next section.

**Limitations and Delimitations**

Rossman and Marshall (2011) stated, “limitations derive from the conceptual framework and the study’s design” (p. 76). They also stated, “the study’s limitations demonstrate that the researcher understands this reality – which he will make no overwhelming claims about generalizability or conclusiveness about what he has learned” (p. 76). With this in mind, the
limitations of this study included constraints I built into the research design. For example, including JIVs and employment issues adds a constraint to the study that limited the data obtained. As a result, the outcome of the study could not be generalized for all parolees or JIVs because only a sample of the population was interviewed. In addition, as the main tool for gathering information, I was an unintentional limit to the study. Part of my job for the MDOC is to interact with 1,352 prisoners’ daily activities and, therefore, already had an idea of how some parolees may behave and possible trends within the population. Some other limitations included “problems” within my study I cannot control (i.e., participants dropping, withdrawal from the study, or participants telling me what they think I want to hear, etc.). I made an effort to ignore those preconceived trends already created in my mind, in order to be an effective tool in gathering new information from the parolees within this specific population.

This study delimits its scope to employment needs, to a few JIVs that sought employment, and only to their own employment-related experiences. This study was not of several sites nor involved hundreds of responses to a survey. It was specific to a small site and a group of specific participants. The setting directly involved JIVs, which excludes civilian parolees. The purpose of studying JIVs was to add to the current literature information and their post-release employment-related experiences that were purposely narrow, but deep in content. There was extensive literature dealing with multiple aspects of employment and parolees. The hole in the research delimited this study to a specific group and a specific need (employment). Due to this delimitation, one may not be able to apply the same themes to other employment settings or other parolee settings. However, there are some results that can be generalized to the larger populations and literature as a whole.

Last, the sampling chosen for the study is small (10 JIVs) and only included parolees
within a military background, which limited the sample to a default group of parolees. In addition, participants with a “dishonorable” discharge were excluded. These were an unintentional delimiter to the study.

**Chapter III Summary**

The purpose of this study was to examine JIVs, and their employment-related experiences post-release from a correctional facility. A qualitative, phenomenological approach allowed for in-depth interviews of participants with the shared post-release employment-related experiences. Also, this approach allowed for themes to arise as the phenomena was experienced and described by the participants in their own words and later analyzed and interpreted by the researcher. These themes then helped to create the “essence” of the lived experience, which informs the literature both specifically and broadly.

During the analysis section of this study, I followed the six steps (Creswell, 2007, 2009) of a phenomenological study. The analysis consisted of organizing and preparing the data for analysis, reading through the data, coding the data, describing the data, representing the data, and finally interpreting the data. This was done in order to make sense out of text and image data (Creswell, 2009).

Finally, Chapter III outlined the role of the researcher, the research setting, and the steps taken to ensure validity and reliability of the findings from the JIVs who participated in this study and their post-release employment-related experiences in the community setting. Chapter IV discusses the recommendations of the study.
CHAPTER IV
DATA ANALYSIS

The purpose of this study was to describe and understand the employment-related experiences of 10 Justice-Involved Veterans (JIVs) after release from a Midwest State Department of Corrections facility. Interview data from 10 participants were coded and analyzed using phenomenological data analysis. Phenomenological data analysis builds on the data from the first and second research questions and highlights “significant statements,” sentences, or quotes that provide an understanding of how participants experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). The terms used in this analysis are themes and sub-themes. The development of themes and categories into patterns, theories, or generalizations suggested varied end points to this study (Creswell, 2009). This means the patterns from the theories represent the interconnected thoughts of JIVs linked to the whole theme that emerged. Themes are the largest category and sub-themes are smaller sub-categories to the overall voices we hear from the raw data collected.

Overview of Categories and Sub-Categories

Several categories and sub-categories emerged from the interviews. Table 4.1 provides a visual representation of the phenomenological analysis of the interview data. The four main categories in Table 4.1 are in bold title case as follows: Service and Programs, Successes, Barriers and Challenges, and Military Experience and Identity. While conducting the analysis of the phenomenology, a central category emerged and provided a common link that ran through the sub-categories and served to understand the lived experiences of the JIVs. The central
category that connected all of the categories and what the participants shared was to match Military Experiences and Identities.

In Table 4.1 the sub-categories that were used to describe each primary category are presented. The category (1a) Services and Programs is comprised of the following sub-categories: (1a-1) The Service Providers that JIVs are Involved With; (1a-2) The Services and Programs that JIVs are Involved With; (1a-3) Describing the Services from the JIV Perspective; (1a-4) The Important Aspects of the Services from the JIV Perspective; and (1a-5) The Circumstances that Led JIVs to the Services. Data from the next category (1b) Successes, focuses on the following sub-categories: (1b-1) The Decisions JIVs Made Immediately When Released, (1b-2) The Work Experiences of JIVs When Released, (1b-3) The Aspects of the Services Beneficial to JIVs, and (1b-4) The People Still Involved in the Lives of JIVs. The category (1c) Barriers and Challenges were formed from the following sub-categories: (1c-1) The Service Challenges of a JIV, (1c-2) Some Examples of Service Problems of JIVs, and (1c-3) The Difficulties Finding/Using Services. Finally, the last category is (2) Military Experience and Identity discusses the following sub-categories: (2-1) Describing the Enlistment of JIVs, (2-2) The Skills & Technology Learned from the Military, (2-3) The Benefits of the Military Experience, and (2-4) The Challenges of the Military Experience. The sections that follow provide detailed descriptions using the interviews of each participant to describe each category and sub-category.

Table 4.1

| Justice Involved Veterans Context: Employment-Related Experiences Under Parole |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Categories | Sub-Categories |
| 1a | Services and Programs |
| 1a-1 | The Service Providers that JIVs are Involved With |
| 1a-2 | The Services and Programs that JIVs are Involved With |
Table 4.1 Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Sub-Categories</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1a-3</td>
<td>Describing the Services from the JIV Perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1a-4</td>
<td>The Important Aspects of the Services from the JIV Perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1a-5</td>
<td>The Circumstances that Led JIVs to the Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b</td>
<td>Successes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b-1</td>
<td>The Decisions JIVs Made Immediately When Released</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b-2</td>
<td>The Work Experiences of JIVs When Released</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b-3</td>
<td>The Aspects of the Services Beneficial to JIVs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b-4</td>
<td>The People Still Involved in the Lives of JIVs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1c</td>
<td>Barriers and Challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1c-1</td>
<td>The Service Challenges of a JIV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1c-2</td>
<td>Some Examples of Service Problems of JIVs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1c-3</td>
<td>The Difficulties Finding/Using Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>Military Experience and Identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-1</td>
<td>Describing the Enlistment of JIVs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-2</td>
<td>The Skills &amp; Technology Learned from the Military</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>The Benefits of the Military Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-4</td>
<td>The Challenges of the Military Experience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Description of JIVs

At the time of the study, 10 Caucasian male participants ranged in age from 32-68 years or age (Table 4.2). For education and family, half of the participants reported having specialized training certificates or licenses such as auto repair, mechanics, practical nurse, and tool and die. All but four indicated having children before they were incarcerated. Six had a marriage status or was living together prior to prison. Six reported that their father had a high school diploma, six stated their mother had a high school diploma or higher, and two did not know the level of education of either parent. Two JIVs interviewed had general education development (GED) certificates, two had high school diplomas, two had some college, and four had associate degrees (Table 4.3).
For military experience, one JIV interviewed had held the rank of E-3, three as an E-4, four as an E-5, and one as an E-6. Seven participants discharged from the military with an honorable status, two as another than honorable (OTH), and one as a general discharge. Three JIVs were combat Veterans and seven did not experience combat. Years of service (in months) ranged from 23 to 240 months (Table 4.7).

When considering pre-prison substance abuse, seven JIVs reported having abused illegal drug use. Seven participants stated they used drugs or alcohol. The most common drug abused was THC and cocaine (Table 4.4). Prior to their current offense, seven reported having a past criminal history (Table 4.5). Two had stated they had their parole/probation previously revoked. Two indicated that they had served time in a juvenile facility. The age of first arrest ranged from 15-50 years of age.

When considering their current prison sentence, all 10 reported that they never served time in a max or high-risk facility. Two participants reported that their current sentence was due to parole/probation violation. Three JIVs indicated they were serving for a drug offense. The time spent on their current parole (months) ranged from one month to twenty-four months. Only one participant was serving for a violent offense. The time served (months) ranged from 13 to 314 months in prison. Seven JIVs were serving less than one sentence; three were serving for multiple offenses. The offenses included Assault w/Intent to do Great Bodily Harm Less Murder, Jails - Prisoner Possessing Contraband; Criminal Sexual Conduct, 2nd Degree. (Multiple Variables); Criminal Sexual Conduct, 1st Degree; Criminal Sexual Conduct, 2nd Degree (Person Under 13); Operating Intoxicated/Impaired/Controlled Substance - 3rd; Police Officer - Fleeing - Third Degree - Vehicle Code; Criminal Sexual Conduct, 2nd Degree (Relationship); Criminal
Sexual Conduct - 2nd Degree (Person Under 13, Defendant 17 Or Older); Criminal Sexual Conduct, 3rd Degree and Controlled Substance - Operating/Maintaining a Lab Involving Methamphetamine (Table 4.6).
### Table 4.2

**Demographics of JIVs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>JIV-01</th>
<th>JIV-02</th>
<th>JIV-03</th>
<th>JIV-04</th>
<th>JIV-05</th>
<th>JIV-06</th>
<th>JIV-07</th>
<th>JIV-08</th>
<th>JIV-09</th>
<th>JIV-10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Associates</td>
<td>GED</td>
<td>Associates</td>
<td>Associates</td>
<td>Associates</td>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>GED</td>
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### Table 4.3

**Education and Family**

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<th>JIV-01</th>
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<th>JIV-03</th>
<th>JIV-04</th>
<th>JIV-05</th>
<th>JIV-06</th>
<th>JIV-07</th>
<th>JIV-08</th>
<th>JIV-09</th>
<th>JIV-10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specialized Training Certificates or Licenses</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children under the age of 18 prior to prison</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage status or living together prior to prison</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<th>JIV-07</th>
<th>JIV-08</th>
<th>JIV-09</th>
<th>JIV-10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level of education of father</td>
<td>H.S</td>
<td>H.S.</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>UNK</td>
<td>UNK</td>
<td>Assoc.</td>
<td>H.S.</td>
<td>H.S</td>
<td>H.S</td>
<td>H.S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of education of mother</td>
<td>B.S.</td>
<td>H.S</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>UNK</td>
<td>UNK</td>
<td>H.S.</td>
<td>H.S</td>
<td>H.S</td>
<td>H.S</td>
<td>H.S.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level of education of parolee</td>
<td>Assoc</td>
<td>GED</td>
<td>Assoc.</td>
<td>Assoc</td>
<td>Assoc</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>H.S</td>
<td>H.S</td>
<td>GED</td>
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Table 4.4

*Pre-Prison Substance Abuse*

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<th>JIV-03</th>
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<th>JIV-06</th>
<th>JIV-07</th>
<th>JIV-08</th>
<th>JIV-09</th>
<th>JIV-10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequent Illegal Drug Use</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent Drug Use-What</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>THC, Opioids</td>
<td>THC</td>
<td>Opium</td>
<td>THC</td>
<td>Cocaine</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>THC</td>
<td>THC, Methamphetamine, Cocaine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent Drug Use Intoxication</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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Table 4.5

*Criminal History*

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<th>JIV-05</th>
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<th>JIV-08</th>
<th>JIV-09</th>
<th>JIV-10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Previously Convicted of a Crime</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parole/Probation Previously Revoked</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Served Time in a Juvenile Facility</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of First Arrest</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Served Time in Prison Before</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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Table 4.6

*Current Prison Sentence*

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<th>JIV-03</th>
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<th>JIV-08</th>
<th>JIV-09</th>
<th>JIV-10</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ever Serve Time in a Max or High Risk Facility</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Current Sentence Due to Parole/Probation Violation</td>
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<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Serving for a Drug Offense</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<th>JIV-08</th>
<th>JIV-09</th>
<th>JIV-10</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time on Current Parole (Months)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Serving for a Violent Offense</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Served (Months)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence 1</td>
<td>Assault w/Intent</td>
<td>Jails -</td>
<td>Criminal Sexual Conduct, 2nd Degree</td>
<td>Criminal Sexual Conduct, 2nd Degree</td>
<td>Criminal Sexual Conduct, 1st Degree</td>
<td>Operating Intoxicated/Impaired/Controlled Substance - 3rd</td>
<td>Criminal Sexual Conduct</td>
<td>Criminal Sexual Conduct, 2nd Degree (Relationship)</td>
<td>Criminal Sexual Conduct - 2nd Degree (Person Under 13, Defendant 17 Or Older)</td>
<td>Controlled Substance Operating/Maintaining a Lab Involving Meth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gr Bod Harm</td>
<td>Prisoner Possessing Contraband</td>
<td>(Multiple Variables)</td>
<td>(Person Under 13)</td>
<td>1st Degree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence 2</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Criminal Sexual Conduct, 1st Degree</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Police Officer - Fleeing - Third Degree -Vehicle Code</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Criminal Sexual Conduct, 3rd Degree</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence 3</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Controlled Substance Possess Narcotic/Cocaine &lt; 25 Grams</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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Table 4.7

**Military Experience**

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>JIV-01</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Military Rank</td>
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<td>E-5</td>
<td>E-5</td>
<td>E-6</td>
<td>E-4</td>
<td>E-4</td>
<td>E-6</td>
<td>E-4</td>
<td>E-5</td>
<td>E-3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Combat Veteran</td>
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<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Months of Service</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>48</td>
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<td>Branch of Service</td>
<td>Marines</td>
<td>Army</td>
<td>Navy</td>
<td>Army</td>
<td>Army</td>
<td>Navy</td>
<td>Air Force</td>
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<td>Navy</td>
<td>National Guard</td>
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**Research Question 1a: The Programs and Services of JIVs Post-Release Employment-Related Issues.** From the 10 verbatim transcripts, 223 significant statements were extracted. From these excerpts, five sub-categories emerged from the associated meaning of the post-release employment programs and services JIVs experienced. There were no observed relationships between the responses, time on parole, criminal offense, and JIVs.

The category *Programs and Services* brought to light the different treatments exclusively available to JIVs. My interview questions targeted topics that are critical to JIVs’ life when released including: Health, Mental Health, Substance Abuse, Employment, Career Tech Education/Vocational Education, and Housing issues. From my interviews, all but one participant commented that Veteran employment services were helpful to them. Michigan Works! and Veteran Employment Services were the most common services mentioned by the participants. Career Tech Education/Vocational Trades was the least discussed services shared among Veterans.

When asked what were their overall thoughts about the Veteran employment services that were available to them, the responses were mixed about what their experiences were like Positively speaking, some JIVs shared how helpful the people were.

I think they’re good. They don’t have the time or resources to hold your hand. So you really got to be your own advocate, and you got to get on the ball, and you got to have motivation to get it done. There’s some people that would expect them to do more. But I don’t think you should expect anybody to do everything for you. If you need help, they’ll help you. They have no problem with helping you. But if you can do it, you should be getting it done (JIV-09).
When probed to further explain the services, this 20 year Navy Veteran spoke of how Volunteers of America helped him prepare for the next step of trying to get employed. He recognized that there were numerous services and provided specifics:

So they have a lot of services, I think. I use just one service from them, which is the program to help you get a job, as in assisting you with interviews and resume, assisting you with any tools you might need to start your job, assisting you with work clothes, interview clothes. So they’re pretty supportive. (JIV-09)

A 12-year Army Veteran commented on another service through Michigan Works! and how they helped him and also his family:

I’m so glad they are available to me. That was the biggest thing. All of my family pretty much, both my brothers are Marine Veterans, I’m Army Veteran, my son’s going in the Navy. We have a lot of military history in my family and just the fact that there are these programs available and we know of them, it’s very helpful. (JIV-08)

Some Veterans are unable to work because of disability. A 16-year Army Veteran commented how helpful Veterans Administration (VA) Office was even though he is unable to work. “They asked me if I could work. And I said, well, no, I’m on disability. And I showed them my paperwork. So then they’d help me in other areas. They’ve become sort of like a friend” (JIV-04). Another Army Veteran is retired from work but if he was job ready, he might consider looking for work and using the services available. Although he does not use employment services, he did reference other people’s experiences with them:

That’s hard for me to answer that because I’ve really never used them. But I have heard from some people that they work with you the best they can. Really, it comes down to what your qualifications are. If you’ve got a high demand like me, being a German tool
and die maker, I could probably go out and get a job right now if I had some tools, but I
don’t. (JIV-05)

For some, they were not aware of Veteran employment services. For one 4 year National Guard
Veteran he said;

No comment. I don’t know what to say. [Laughter] I don’t know. I didn’t even know
there were Veteran employment services. Actually, I take that back. I think there is a
guy at Michigan Works who does work with Veterans’ employment services. And I was
supposed to meet him one day, but he wasn’t in the office, and I kind of already had stuff
lined with this other thing, so I think it just didn’t quite pan out that way. (JIV-10)

Another 20 year Air force Veteran, he shared that he did not have the proper contact information
made available to him. “Yeah, I’m sure you could have if you’d have known about where and
this and how and who, but if you don’t have the contacts to find those things, you don’t know
about them” (JIV-07). It was difficult to attend any services because of the restrictions he had as
a condition of parole. “Getting contacts was not the easiest with it because you had to have an
appointment to do anything to get out of the halfway house. I’m sure you could have” (JIV-07).

One 7-year Navy Veteran felt do to his geographic location, he was at a disadvantage and
neglected;

My overall thoughts are there’s not very many services offered right now in this area.
And the ones that are aren’t worth the effort to get mad about when they can’t help you
do anything. They leave a lot to be desired. How about that? I’m trying to give you a
decent answer without any kind of profanity or anything. But, believe me, they’re next -
- I had better luck obtaining a job in prison, you know what I mean, than trying to get one
out here with the help of our supposed state government and the federal government. The
state of Michigan has a Veterans - it’s like the VA, but it’s the state Veterans’ affairs. And they’re not doing too well over here in this side of the state. (JIV-06)

Another participant further supported the concern that Veterans are not aware of services by further claiming “I’m not really aware of them, so I don’t have a lot of thoughts. There is one online that I subscribe to, but most of those jobs are elsewhere, which I couldn’t even consider while I’m on parole” (JIV-03).

This new section now describes the services and programs available to JIVs when released from prison. The sub-categories that more fully describe this section are as follows: (1a-1) The service providers that JIVs are involved with; (1a-2) The services and programs that JIVs are involved with; (1a-3) Describing the services from the JIV perspective; (1a-4) Important aspects of the services from the JIV perspective; and (1a-5) The circumstances that led them to the services.

1a-1 The service providers that JIVs are involved with. JIVs have many issues to deal with while being supervised in the community setting. For this study, six services and programs were geared towards a parolee’s success including health, mental health, substance abuse, employment, CTE/vocational education, and housing issues. This section explores the JIVs’ services and program experiences by probing the following: services proposed, if he was participating in any of the services, what the services were like, and what were the important aspects of his time there if he participated in the services. Later, I will discuss the circumstances that led the JIV to those services.

The employment services received the most comments. For the most part, all the JIVs expressed that they were involved or made reference to some of the services or programs. The most frequently mentioned services were Michigan Works! and the VA Center(s). A majority of
the participants had good experiences with the Michigan Works! When asked what’s helping them the most right now with these services, as a Veteran, one JIV responded “Michigan Works” (JIV-10). Many referrals came as soon as they were discharged from the military, from their parole agents, or even by Michigan Works! Themselves;

   Oh, I knew about Michigan Works after I was released from the military, so I knew that it was the place to go to try to find a job. They had the most resources available, they had state funding available. It was much better than just clipping newspaper want ads and hoping for the best. This way, I had permission to use the computers at Michigan Works to post my resume online to different companies, and then I could go -- every week, I was able to go to that facility to check my email to see if there’s -- any companies had called me or had written, expressing an interest in me particularly. I knew right off the bat to go to Michigan Works. (JIV-08)

Michigan Works! is unique in that they have their own specialists available to counsel Veterans and those being released from prison. “Michigan Works has a - - they have a Veterans’ service officer there that will help Veterans obtain employment. But like I said, it’s limited when you’re a felon. They will offer education” (JIV-06). It became evident that Michigan Works! is a source of different programs that JIVs seemed comfortable with participating in. “Michigan Works got programs. I mean, they’re there for you, but you’re going to have to be the - - even myself, I have to be the guy that has the initiative to go out and find these programs, because nothing is handed to you. You have to work for it” (JIV-04). There are many different programs that are available to assist JIVs. When asked what type of programs that were available, one participant shared;

   Oh yeah, resume building classes. We had a class on how to overcome my criminal
history, how to have an interview, an adequate interview, and not skirt around the issue of the fact that I had a criminal history, but how to divulge that history without automatically shooting myself in the foot because that’s very difficult for a felon to do is to explain his past history, yet at the same time try and make himself sound employable. So they had classes on how to broach the subject diplomatically you could say, and that was very helpful. They had the resume classes, how to write a resume and of course, how to fill out applications. They had the tools necessary to do so. They offered state funding for jobs and for education for jobs, and that’s very helpful. They had quite a few programs that were available, as long as you were willing to work for them. That was all, that’s the biggest thing is you just had to fill out the applications. (JIV-08)

It is especially encouraging to hear that different agencies might be communicating with one another to provide the proper services and referrals together. When asked if any services were ever offered to him, one participant expressed how Michigan Works! indirectly failed him because of his crime. He was told to;

Just to come to Michigan Works. That would be the place to go. Now when I was in, there were some people that didn’t have a Criminal Sexual Conduct case that some of the agents in their area, whatever, was helping them out to get a job and a place and stuff like that. But from what I was told, being the case that I had, that a lot of that wasn’t available to me. (JIV-05)

I found it interesting that another participant sought services to please his parole officer. “At Michigan Works I was there just to keep my parole officer happy, because there really aren’t too many places that I can go that I can’t find work. Work’s everywhere” (JIV-02). In another case,
there is a situation that echoes a concern about duplicating efforts at Michigan Works! Most offices have a person that works with parolees and reentry services, and another person that counsels Veterans. It appears that some JIVs will go to whoever will give him the service first. As one JIV shared, “I went to Michigan Works, and I did talk to the Veteran specialist, but I was booking with someone else, so I didn’t really do a lot with her” (JIV-03). This is further supported by another experience that was shared:

Michigan Works will pay the business your first month’s pay to hire you. I don’t know, they must have something worked out with the state, or something like that, but that’s cool. It gives businesses incentive, then, to hire people with felonies, or whatever…Oh, yes. Jeff said, “Get a hold of Nancy,” and Nancy e-mailed him, because I think it’s got to go through that chain of custody, or whatever, but they’re going to hook me up with some work clothes so I’m not trashing out my good ones. That’s cool. They’re going to help me out with some T-shirts, and work pants, and even offered boots, but I have a paid, so I mean, I thought that was pretty cool. Plus, I think they gave me a voucher for Good Will, or something, but I never used it. So, that was nice, just getting out of prison. Like I said, I don’t think that’s Veterans’ services. I just think that’s like the MPRI program standard. (JIV-10)

The other service provider that was consistently mentioned by the participants was the VA Centers. VA Centers are community-based counseling centers that provide a wide range of social and psychological services including professional readjustment counseling to Veterans and families. From my interviews, the VA Centers were a safe environment where JIVs felt welcomed and comforted. JIVs experience a lot of challenges when released from prison, but VA Centers gave them a place of comfort;
And I think for me, it’s a little overwhelming, and I think for other people it’s is, as well, but I think that if you have a good support system, and a good frame of mind, and you just have to go out. But as far as the services themselves, I haven’t had a problem with the VA Center. (JIV-01)

There were no complaints about this JIVs experience or how he was treated when he once visited a VA Center;

You can go to the VA Center, and they actually have people there that they can place you into, say, like job-ready employment. I think that’s what it’s called. And once I got out, (Name) which was the liaison, she gave me a lot of information, too, and kind of walked me over there, and gave me everywhere I needed to go, and there was a lot of information that was at my disposal that I could have used, if I needed it. (JIV-01)

Another JIV shared the same feeling of comfort provided to him. “They were very helpful and just like the regular VA hospitals here. They’re there for you and not for doing anything else, trying to do this or that, but they’re there to help you out” (JIV-07). Interestingly, I got the feeling that there was a change in how the VA has treated Veterans from previous years or experiences from Veterans. One participant shared his experience by saying;

All I can tell you is, is that the VA experience that I’ve had so far has been kind of considerably surprising. Like I said, when I got out, it wasn’t the same. Now it’s a little different. You’ve got someone saying, come up and thanking you for your service and stuff, it kind of -- it’s kind of moody because you’re not used to that. I wasn’t used to it, but it’s pretty cool now. (JIV-05)

Given their positive treatment of Veterans, there are other service providers that were mentioned by individual Veterans. Out of respect to them and their service to Veterans, it is worth noting in
this study the best practices of: Patriot Place, Goodwill Industries, Volunteers of America, and Supportive Services for Veterans Families.

The most requested or services referenced were Veteran employment services, health, and housing. No JIVs were participating in substance abuse services and housing services. JIV-03 participated in the most services with the exception of substance abuse and housing. Five JIVs did not participate at all in the services. The only reference that resembled CTE programming was made by JIV-03 who was enrolled into a community college studying accounting.

1a-2 The services and programs that JIVs are involved with. This study found that most JIVs were provided services from service providers such as Michigan Works! and the VA Center(s). This section explores what were the important aspects of the time spent at the health, mental health, substance abuse, employment, CTE/vocational education, and housing service locations by JIVs. Disappointingly, most JIVs failed to recognize the important aspects of the services. This could be because they were not involved with or required a specific service. Only one JIV (JIV-07) recognized the importance of his time, and it was to obtain his prescription drugs. Again, employment services received the most mentions. The most frequently mentioned services that were mentioned were for health, mental health, employment services, and housing. Substance abuse and CTE/vocational services were not referenced.

Health services was one of the four services that JIVs chose to comment on as being a place that is important to them. “Well, financially quite a bit. Plus, they’re helpful for my health and mental wellbeing because of the drugs that I do need” (JIV-07). He further gave credit to his military service for these services by saying, “The care, the drugs, and prescriptions and stuff like that, that’s taken care of because I’m retired military” (JIV-07). Further, another aging JIV said;
You’ve got to have your health so that you can live, and at least you know you’ve got a place to go to get help if you’re broke, poor. Like me, I can’t get the SSI insurance, so my care doesn’t -- it did when I first got out. I got my glasses and my teeth right away, but when I turned 65, they switched me over to retiree, all that stuff stopped. So then I have to deal with Medicare and Medicaid and I got paid $105 a month for insurance on my scripts to the feds. But luckily, I had enough to do it, but it’s hard. If you didn’t have that MyCare, like they’ve got right now, when you first got out, my goodness I don’t know what you would be able to do. (JIV-05)

Another service provider that was mentioned was the mental health services. With known issues such as PTSD, I was surprised only two JIV’s made reference to how beneficial mental health services were to them. Considering this participant’s need for the services when he was asked the benefit of going to mental health services he replied, “Well, what do you mean? Without them, I’d be back to square one” (JIV-06). When asked why he would be back to square one, he said “Well, their services, psychiatric part of it. They’re helping me obtain medication and counseling” (JIV-06).

Once again, the service that was mentioned most frequently was employment services. One JIV was in the process of trying to get hired and the company referred him to Michigan Works! He said the people at Michigan Works! were helpful and friendly;

Well, they actually contacted me through my parole agent on my phone, and it was like, “Hey, I’m your representative for the area. I’m here to help you get a job.” And I was like, “I was just hoping to get in contact with you anyways, because the place where I’m trying to work just referred to Michigan Works.” So, it kind of worked out good, and I
met the guy. He’s real friendly. He said, “Hey, can you come on down? I’d love to meet you. (JIV-10)

Other JIVs commented on the specific services they obtained while at the employment service agency. This JIV commented on how he was able to better prepare himself for an interview. “Learning how to interview properly and to be able to put my thoughts in a more organized way and be prepared to answer difficult questions or tricky questions during an interview” (JIV-09). Another echoed the same feelings about the skills he learned;

I was able to use those skills and even though they weren’t -- they didn’t necessarily care about my criminal history, just the fact that I had recently taken interview classes really helped out as far as the interview that I had with the supervisors at the factory. (JIV-08)

When asked how those skills he learned at Michigan Works! benefitted him, it was encouraging to hear him respond, “It got me a job” (JIV-08).

The last service that was mentioned in this section was housing. It is difficult to obtain employment or enroll into school without a mailing address and a safe place to reside. Only two JIVs made reference to accessing housing services. It is encouraging to note that this could be explained by the fact that seven JIVs had residential placement already established with family relatives. However, for those that seek their own housing, it can be difficult for many reasons such as having a criminal history, the nature or criminal offense, and the location of the housing in proximity to schools or a library if they have been convicted of certain offenses;

I mean, finding an apartment, because a lot of times the guys that are getting out besides myself have trouble finding an apartment. It seems like once the apartment manager or the owner finds out you’ve been incarcerated and what for, they usually have a little bit of problems trying to find an apartment. So it’s good to have these services that’ll back
you and get you in someplace where you can prove yourself to be a good resident. (JIV-04)

When asked what the importance was when accessing housing services, this JIV further explained that he overcame the stigma of being a convict via the help of housing services, whereby he was able to find housing with all the basic amenities to survive with the help of his VA friends who advocated for him at the VA Center;

I mean, where would I be if I didn’t have the housing? Under a bridge, living out there in the wilderness. I mean, I like my comfort, and I like watching TV when I want to watch TV. I have an air conditioner here. If it gets too hot, I turn on my air conditioner. And I cook about anything I want to cook. I can read anything I want to read, and I just recently finished up - - I have a picture - - looks like a big picture frame, and it has all my medals in it from the time I was in Service. And so I put that up on the wall. And then I’m going through my military records, I have the whole thing, and picking out stuff to put in an 8 x 10 frame. So it gives people a little bit of knowledge of what I’m about, or at least I was about. (JIV-04)

The other participant that made reference to the housing services stated that housing is often temporary at best. He references a unique housing program tailored specifically for Veterans called “Patriot Place.”

At Patriot Place the most beneficial thing was a roof over my head and basically occasionally for someone that’s just coming out of prison, survival is the bottom line and occasionally one must house at a homeless shelter or whatever which is basically what Patriots Place is. It’s a homeless shelter with a tweak where it served Veterans. (JIV-02)

When I asked to elaborate on Patriot Place, he further stated:
Well, it was a roof over my head until I could arrange other living arrangements and also it gave me a chance to get some paperwork started. It gave me a little breathing room between what I already knew that I had to do and being demanded of me at that moment. So they created a cushion. I don’t know how to--that’s about the best way I can describe it, between either working and keeping a roof over your head, or if you’re unable to work or if work is hard for you to find, they put a roof over your head and keep it there until you’ve got things going on. It’s a two-year program. (JIV-02)

1a-3 Describing the services from the JIV perspective. This section explores what the JIV could best describe about the services he participated in. As stated earlier, when released all JIVs actively participated in a health, mental health, substance abuse, employment, CTE/vocational education, and/or housing Veteran service. Once more, I was disappointed to learn that most of these JIVs I interviewed failed to describe what the services they participated in were like. Only three JIVs initially described the services they referred to as good. Further probing revealed some other services surfaced which they described. Again, employment services received the most mentions. The other most frequently mentioned services that were mentioned were health, mental health, employment, substance abuse, and housing. CTE/vocational services were the only services not referenced.

The first service mentioned that I describe in this section was health services. It is difficult to obtain employment or enroll into school if a JIV has medical or health issues to address. Yet, only three JIVs made reference to accessing health services. It is encouraging to note that this could be explained perhaps by the assumption that seven of the ten JIVs for this study remained healthy for the most part.
Seven JIVs did not respond when asked if they could describe the health services they participated in. They either did not recognize the meaning of health services or it was not applicable to their life. One of the three that replied said, “I don’t know. I haven’t even tried it” (JIV-10). Another participant added that he had no issues with the health services he participated in. “Yeah, the Veteran’s health is no harm, no problem at all because if it’s not right, I can just go back and get it done right. They were very helpful for that, but that’s because I’m a Veteran” (JIV-07). Another participant gave a very detailed account of describing the services;

Well, they’re good, excellent. They take care of all my needs and whatever medications that I need for my Parkinson’s and for my diabetes and my blood pressure. I take blood pressure pills. And then at the hospital, I go to neurology there in the VA hospital. As a matter of fact, in December - - I got to make another appointment here for December, so I can go see them again. I see them about every six months. (JIV-03)

He then further said, “Actually really pretty good, and they’ve revised the facility, so it’s even better now. It’s much easier to navigate their system” (JIV-03). When asked how, he spoke of the technology they use and how user friendly it is, he said;

You go in, and I have a card, and I just swipe it, and if I have an appointment, or something then they know that I’m there. And they do lab work. They do the same thing, and it gives you a number, so, when they call your number then they’re ready to take your blood, or whatever. And so it’s very organized, and very efficient. I got a flu shot there. I just went in, and you don’t have to have an appointment or anything. I just walked in.

And they have a team that you’re assigned a team. There’s a nurse, and then there’s a nurse practitioner is my primary care, and so they always deal with me, and if I call or
something like that, they would check with part of my team to give me the answer. So, it’s very well organized, and they’ve always been very nice, and answered my questions. I have nothing bad to say about the care that I’ve received there. (JIV-03)

The second Veteran service that was mentioned in this section was mental health services. Because of the horrors of war, PTSD can make it difficult to obtain employment or enroll into school if a JIV has mental health issues to address. Yet, only one JIV referred to accessing mental health services. It is encouraging to note that this could be explained perhaps by the assumption that the nine other JIVs for this study remained healthy for the most part. However, for the one that did require mental health services, there appeared to be a personality issue. This JIV did not have a positive experience;

Well, I didn’t get along too good with this one guy. I mean, I’ve been up to see the - - at Ann Arbor to see their psycholog- - - I call them the psychs. I went up and seen them a couple of times. But, I mean, I’m not crazy. Sometimes I have nightmares. (JIV-04)

As I learned from these interviews, substance abuse was an issue experienced by many of the participants when they were enlisted in the military. As we all know, it is unacceptable to be allowed to work while under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol. Therefore, sobriety is not only a parole requirement; it is necessary to maintain gainful employment. Most of these JIVs had a recommendation to attend substance abuse counseling while on parole. It is noted that few actually could describe the substance abuse services they participated in. Four responded and the descriptions they provided were mixed.

One JIV described the substance abuse counseling classes as “Boring classes, useless classes, and waste of time” (JIV-07). Another interesting perspective explained how being a Veteran actually put this JIV at a disadvantage;
Those services are nil. Being a Veteran is - - like I said, being a Veteran has put a - - instead of being a benefit to me, it’s become a stumbling block. I think I started telling you, did parole. It’s up to my field agent whether I go out and get any kind of substance abuse treatment. But she feels that I should, and I’m in agreement with her since three of my incarcerations were all substance abuse related, all of my A, B, and C prefix, OUIL third, possession of cocaine and OUIL third.

But I went out there to obtain it, and as soon as this access people that provide the funding for the agencies, since they found out I was a Veteran, they had me give the phone to the receptionist up there. She got off the phone and told me, I can’t get no services through them because I can obtain it through the VA, which is silly because I can’t get 60-some miles once or twice a week without being able to drive or anything. So it’s becoming a headache. But, again, this [Name] from CMH is going to try and find me some treatment through the Veterans Outreach. (JIV-06)

Others had positive experiences and had no issues at all when describing their substance abuse services. “Well they’re very good. They’re a very positive, safe place to be. They’re all about helping the person stay sober or straight, whatever the case may be, and I’ve had a great experience with the meetings I’ve been to” (JIV-02). He further provided a more detailed perspective by saying, “They encourage a person to obtain a sponsor, which I did, and since I moved down here we have always stayed in pretty good contact, but he and I can’t make meetings together because he’s up there, I’m down here” (JIV-02). Even though attendance is a good sign, one JIVs’ description of the service was generalized. He said, “You show up for an hour and a half. You take some notes down, and that’s pretty much it” (JIV-10).
I was surprised only four participants were currently employed and who could describe their employment services experiences. Interestingly, the employment services category was the most reported service for this section. Maintaining gainful employment is not only a parole requirement; it is necessary to survive unless one is collecting retirement or disability. Most JIVs have a recommendation to maintain gainful employment while on parole. Again, it was noted that less than half described the employment services they participated in. Four responded and the descriptions they provided were mixed. Their descriptions consisted mostly of what they got from the employment services instead of commenting on the quality of customer service;

Well, right away they got me a bicycle before I even got my car. They got me a bicycle, a padlock. I thought that was really cool. It helped me get around till I got my wheels. I had to go get an ID. They paid for my original ID, and then, of course, I went and paid for the learner’s permit, and then the license right after that with a reinstatement fee, and a whole bunch of other stuff. They said they’d hook me up with clothes to work with, so I don’t got to trash the few nice pairs of clothes I’ve got. I thought that was pretty cool.

(JIV-02)

This JIV gave more description sharing how the employment services helped him emotionally.

“They offered a lot of resources, as I said, for resume building, applications, and just if anything, morale. That was very, very helpful towards my morale was to know that there was support available for me at the time” (JIV-08). “I don’t know. I haven’t had a issue with those. I registered for work with the Michigan Employment Security Commission, and that’s the only contact I’ve had with any of those people” (JIV-06). Another JIV had less to say about employment services. “Like I said, I wasn’t able to find any that did anything” (JIV-07).

I was surprised only three described their housing services experiences as “good”
considering seven JIVs resided with family when released. Most had a stable living arrangement set up living with family. Having a residence is important not only to have a safe place to reside, but one also needs residency for mailing addresses and contact information for employers. The three described their housing services as a good experience and commented on how others’ advocated for their behalf.

This JIV commented on the assistance he received from one program offered by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' called the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program. It awards grants to private non-profit organizations and consumer cooperatives who can provide supportive services to very low-income Veteran families living in or transitioning to permanent housing:

The SSVF is a - - they get grants for Veteran families. And, yeah, they have low income. It’s $23,400 gross in order to qualify. And they’ll help you with first month’s rent, security deposit, a bed, kitchen utensils, like a 75-piece kitchen utensil set, and cleaning supplies. If you’re going to need a deposit on the gas or electric, they’ll also assist with that. (JIV-09)

As stated before, criminal offenses can play a major role in obtaining a home and advocates can assist in the process;

Well, I mean, it’s hard. I mean, when you have a CSC case, it’s hard to find housing. I went to a couple places that they turned me down. But then when I went over here to the people I rent from now, I was up front with them, and so was (Name) who at the time was in charge of Community Actions. So I had no problem finding an apartment. I mean, it’s not what I really wanted, but it’s livable. (JIV-04)
Another JIV described his experience at the Patriot Place, a residency specific to Veterans. He said he “cannot say enough positive things about that particular program. The housing is excellent” (JIV-02).

1a-4 The important aspects of the services from the JIV perspective. This section explores what the important aspects of the services from the JIVs’ perspective that they participated in. As stated earlier, at one time when released, all JIVs actively participated in a health, mental health, substance abuse, employment, CTE/vocational education, and/or Housing Veteran service when released. Once again, I was disappointed to learn that most JIVs failed to describe the important aspects from the services they participated in. No JIVs initially described the important aspects of their time when they participated in the services. I was expecting more positive results given their experiences while incarcerated. Further probing revealed some aspects that we could discuss. Again, employment services along with health received the most mentions. When asked, the other most frequently mentioned service was housing. Mental health, substance abuse, and CTE/vocational services categories were the only services not referenced in this section.

For this category, three JIVs responded to the important aspects of the health services that they participated in. One participant shared an important aspect of the health services by saying, “They were very helpful and just like the regular VA hospitals here. They’re there for you and not for doing anything else, trying to do this or that, but they’re there to help you out” (JIV-07). Others have low expectations of the service and had little credit to give. “Well, I mean, whenever I go to the clinic or to the hospital or even if I go to the dentist, I mean, it’s okay. I mean, I don’t expect anything. I go in there and do what I have to do, and I get out” (JIV-04). I was surprised
how few had anything to share with the services, as it seems to be the most readily available to Veterans.

The next category for this section is the important aspects of employment services. I found it interesting that for most participants’ employment services consistently received favorable responses. However, when asked about an important aspect from his employment service experience, he said, “Just their ability that they reach out. I think some of it’s through the MPRI program” (JIV-10). His story lends to a possible thought about mentoring or advocacy programs that simply act as a guide service to JIVs. He said:

So, that program, and the fact that they just seem to go out of their way to explain what they do, and to help guide you places they know are hiring, and that means so much just coming out of prison, because it’s like you come out, and you don’t know who will hire you as a felon. You don’t know where the best place is. You know what I mean? Otherwise, you might just start knocking on doors. You might have to put in 100 applications. I got lucky. I just walked right up. I see an open garage door, and ex-girlfriend of mine said, “Hey, look…” – some guy that she was dating that had a felony worked there. So, I just walked right in. It was like, “Hey, are you guys hiring?” So, I got pretty lucky. (JIV-10)

Another participant commented on how the employment services not only guide them, but they help provide a handshake for employment or a job detail because of the contacts they have. This JIV said:

What’s an important part of my time with them? When you’re getting that phone number of that contractor that’s looking for somebody to work. It really kind of worked out there, Jim. For a guy that wants to go after it, or who was physically able to go after it,
there’s plenty of work. And working through Michigan Works, they know in that area wherever that contractor or whoever is getting the work is. They know where the work is and where the work isn’t, and they know who wants to work and who doesn’t. (JIV-02) Another JIV felt the skills he developed were the most important aspect to him. “Well, with the VOA employment assistance, the help with the interviewing. He helped me organize my thoughts a little better and different things to do and not to do during an interview. I think that was probably the most important” (JIV-09). From this section, I learned that employment services category helped JIVs with finding work and developing skills to obtain employment.

The final category that was discussed was the important aspects of housing services. JIV-09 stated how the grant from one service helped him get started with housing needs, which often is hard to do. He seemed genuinely appreciative of the service saying, “And with the SSVF, honestly, the financial assistance to help me get on my feet. It would take me a while to save up for these things, and I’m really blessed that there’s a program out there to help me out” (JIV-09). And surprisingly, for the first time I heard a JIV share that an important aspect to him and the housing services he participated involved the opportunity to volunteer while residing at this particular establishment. He said;

I volunteered and worked down at United Way helping fill food baskets for people in need and things like that, and also, they had a garden there so I was out there pulling weeds about every day. It’s almost like a private program, and if I had a suggestion to make I would say include that in your work. This particular organization called Patriots Place in Gaylord has unbelievable resources, not just for Veterans but for civilian stuff, too. So these guys are just great. (JIV-02)
For this section, I noticed that most JIVs had no important aspects of the services they participated in. For the next theme, we will discuss the circumstances that led the JIV to seek out the services available to them.

**1a-5 The circumstances that led JIVs to the services.** JIVs have many issues and with the help from their parole agent, they begin to prioritize their greatest needs and risks to prevent them from reoffending. There is no “canned” approach when assessing a JIVs needs. Each one is their own unique person and requires personal attention to meet those needs on an individual basis. This section explores what the circumstances were that led the JIVs to reach out to health, mental health, substance abuse, employment, CTE/vocational education, and/or housing Veteran services. For the first time, I saw a change in the responses. Starting with this section, I noted all the participants actively engaged in a dialogue about what led them to participate in services. I also noted that all the responses were mixed, with no specific theme that could link a relationship between the JIV and the circumstances that led the JIV to the Veteran service. This section I asked the participant the circumstances that led the JIV to the Veteran services.

It is important to understand how JIVs came to learn about the services they were involved with so we can assist other JIVs that have are unaware of the Veteran services available to them. From my interviews, I learned that Veterans obtained information about the services through different avenues. The parole officer (JIV-10, JIV-04, JIV-02) either connected them to the service or it was a condition of parole, a Veterans Independence Program (JIV-09), previous knowledge from the military (JIV-08 & JIV-07), a social worker from Community Mental Health (JIV-06), the wife (JIV-05), and service providers that would come into the prison prior to release (JIV-03).
Next, I asked when they decided to inquire about the Veteran services. It is important to know the time span it takes for a JIV to reach out to services. The longer one waits to get involved after being released, the greater the likelihood that he may recommit a crime. When analyzing the data, I classified the categories as days, weeks, and months. Surprisingly, I found that once released all but two JIVs sought assistance within days of his release. The two that required months to reach out had the following reasons about why it took months to seek assistance.

The first JIV was denied substance abuse counseling in the community he was at because he could obtain counseling through federal programs. The problem was, there was no program locally for him and he would be required to travel to get to the programming:

Well, when I was out at AICC, I went round and round. Me and one of the counselors out there know each other pretty well due to contact, him professionally and me as a client. And he did a substance abuse class out at the county jail. Like I said, I did the first part of my parole out there. And as part of my most recent case, the judge required me to do jail substance abuse and a thinking matters class and the jail drunk driving reduction program.

So I was involved with him out there. At any rate, when I was talking with this guy out there, I said, look, man, parole wants me to do this. Now they don’t want to help me because I’m a Veteran. What am I going to do now? Because especially with the Department of Corrections, it’s a cut-and-dried thing. If you’re ordered to do this, and you don’t, even though you might have a decent explanation, you know what I mean? So I’m telling him, and he said, well, look, we’ll do this and we’ll do that. And I was talking to him about (Name) out there, and he made a couple phone calls and got ahold of
him. And this is where this (Name) came into play. Adam put him onto me because he just got this - - he wrote this grant, and he just received the grant. And just what he’s going to be using it for is stuff like this. And so, actually, I’ve been trying to do this for months, isn’t something that I just started doing real recently. (JIV-06)

The other JIVs’ reason for not reaching out to assistance sooner was his order of priority of needs. When he was released, it took him a few months before he could transition back to his home to his wife. Therefore, he spent most of his time trying to make arrangements to return home and the services were not the priority to him;

Well, the first thing that was on my agenda was getting home, so that’s the first thing that I worked on because going through all these times and stuff, one thing at a time, most important down to the least important. Most important for me was to get home, so I got that done. December 8th, I got to come home, so it took that long...and once I got home, it was more like this settling in, getting used to what was going on. (JIV-05)

If we are able to understand what the determining factors were for JIVs to inquire about the services available to them, we can provide those services or inform JIVs of the services prior to being released from prison. From my interviews, I learned that Veterans obtained information about the services for different reasons. Access to medications was the most sought after reason (JIV-03, JIV-06, & JIV-07), employment was second (JIV-08 & JIV-10). Another reason included resume writing. This JIV said;

I wanted assistance on putting together a resume. And I didn’t think I needed any help with interviewing skills, but he showed me a lot of different things that I didn’t know about interviewing. So I wanted help with the resume, and I wanted help - - I wanted to know if they had any line on any jobs. (JIV-09)
Other determining factors included healthy living (JIV-05) and housing (JIV-02). I found one discussion that caught my attention worth noting. This JIV stated with a tone as if he was insulted for being asked the question. He said;

It’s called incentive. I was incentive to do that. If I wanted to survive, if I wanted a place to live, I had to go find it. And if I need a little bit of help, and I find out they’ll help me, I’ll ask them. It never hurts to ask if you need something, and that’s what I feel anyway. (JIV-04)

He got involved because he wanted to better himself, not as a recommendation or a requirement. Another echoed the same sentiment about having too much idle time;

For me personally it was I didn’t want to have down time. I didn’t want to have down time. I didn’t want to have down time, because I was moving back in with my parents, so I didn’t want to have down time for my parents to be all over my ass, and say, “Hey, we allowed you to come back here. Okay, we gave you a day or two. What are you doing? If you’re not ready, you’re not ready, then get the hell out of here.

I never had to have that conversation, but for me in my mind that’s what I thought when I was going in there to keep them off my back, and keep them happy, and to get busy.

You’ve got to keep your mind busy. You have like all this stuff that you have to do, and you just have to, and it sounds more difficult than what it really is, because it really isn’t difficult once you get a routine with it.

But for me it was just I decided before I got out, and I worked through some of my major issues that I continue to work on, but I decided to make a change in my life, and I knew where I wanted to go, and what I had to do. And I was ready to do that, and I think that’s
the biggest thing is I was ready to do that. And so, when I got out for me, I was motivated to do everything I could not to go back. (JIV-01)

It is important to understand who helped the JIVs to come to the decision to reach out to the services available to the JIV. If we have an idea of who influences JIVs to participate in services, we can target those individuals to act as mentors or guides prior to a JIV getting released from prison to assist them in other areas of need. From my interviews, I learned that Veterans obtained information about the services through different people. I was not surprised to learn that JIVs decided to reach out for assistance on their own (JIV-04, JIV-06, & JIV-09) since independence and leadership is a trait learned from the military. Next, the parole officer (JIV-03 & JIV-10) either connected them to the service or it was a condition of parole. Family members also played a role (JIV-01 & JIV-05). And last, a counselor ((JIV-02), and interestingly, one JIV, referred to what he learned in prison from outside groups that came into the facility;

Let’s see, in prison themselves, there are job seeking courses and such you can actually take in prison. There are support groups that allow you to look into these different programs when you get out, when you get on parole. So that was very helpful. Part of my parole plan, which I had to submit to the parole board itself, was the fact in how I was going to find employment and there were -- there are different -- the library they had in prison and there’s the NAACP offers programs towards inmates and felons that -- for job seeking agencies to actually get you a head start on all this. I had received a lot of information in prison itself about these programs on the outside. Some of it was out of date, but for the most part, it was all still current and I was able to use it. (JIV-08)

This section provided a description of the health, mental health, substance abuse, employment, CTE/vocational, and housing services and programs the participants experienced
when seeking employment. It is concerning that there is a noticeable absence to CTE/vocational training references from JIVs when describing the services given the amount of funding available through the G.I. Bill and Pell Grants.

**Research Question 1b. How Justice Involved Veteran’s (JIVs) Experienced Post-release Employment-related Issues Including the Successes when they Sought Employment.** From the 10 verbatim transcripts, 234 significant statements were extracted. From these excerpts, four sub-categories emerged from the associated meaning of how JIVs experienced post release-related issues including the successes when they sought employment. The four sub-categories for this section that will be discussed are the decisions JIVs made immediately when they were released, the work experiences of the JIVs when they were released, the aspects of the services beneficial to JIVs, and the people still involved in the lives of a JIV.

**1b-1 What decisions JIVs made immediately when released?** From these excerpts, I learned the decisions JIVs made immediately when released. The decisions they made helped to understand how JIVs experienced post release-relate issues including the successes as they searched for employment.

When released from prison, nine participants were released from in state correctional facilities. One came to Michigan from another state on an interstate compact agreement. The Interstate Compact for Adult Offender Supervision is a formal agreement between other states that seeks to promote public safety by systematically controlling the interstate movement of certain adult offenders. At the discretion of the sending state, an offender is eligible for transfer of supervision to another state under the compact, and the receiving state can accept transfer under certain conditions.
Finding a place to live is an obvious priority to a JIV. Five of the JIVs found residence in a house, and five were placed in a temporary living arrangement. It is also interesting to know who the first people are when JIVs are released. Pro-social relationships are important to prevent returning to old peer groups that do not promote positive rehabilitative change. In this study most JIVs stated that they contacted family members when they were released. When it was decided where they would reside, most JIVs ended up living with family members.

Employment is also another priority when released. When asked how long it took before they started applying for jobs, I learned most JIVs applied for jobs immediately when released. The reasons why the others did not apply for jobs included: 1 was self-employed, three are disabled, and 1 is retired. For those that did apply for jobs, most JIVs reported that they had good experiences when applying for jobs. When he applied for a job after being incarcerated for 26 years, one JIV spoke of the fear he had involved with searching for a job, “At first it was scary. I knew they were going to ask me about my background, but eventually I got used to talking about it, and then it’s like it’s not even a big deal anymore” (JIV-03). Another JIV who was incarcerated just under two years carried himself with more confidence and explained how he approached an opportunity;

I would just walk in and say, “Hey, I see boys are painting. Do you need an extra hand?”

And if they said no, then no, I would head on to the next place I’d go. But nine times out of ten, I knew a lot of contractors in the [Travis] City area and really would find work.

(JIV-02)

One JIV is self-employed and started his own contracting business. He articulated his experience of getting business by saying:
It’s a lot of work. I got out, and I was used to getting up early, and this and that, but we pretty much didn’t have any clients, or any business, so we had to go out, and solicit some business, and we did really good work, and just kind of this person told this person, so it was a lot of work. We worked from 6:30 a.m. until about 7:00 or 8:00 every night. That was 10 months ago, and now we’re like 15 jobs out. So, everything has been going well.

Sounding defeated, this JIV then described his experience applying for jobs by saying;

It was very frustrating, just knowing that I went from the military and then I went to a $25 an hour job, suddenly I’m making less than minimum wage and being looked at like a criminal, which I am, don’t get me wrong. But I did not have my honor, and that’s what hurt the most. (JIV-08)

Another JIV described his experience as “A brick wall. Everybody, as soon as you mention prison or whatever, the door almost slammed. Even though it’s not supposed to happen, it does. You can feel the fire just fall out and any other questions were just wasted time” (JIV-07).

1b-2 The work experiences of JIVs when released. Six JIVs remained unemployed at the time of this interview. However, the four that were employed had meaningful employment.

This JIV described his job working in a warehouse by saying, “When boxes come in on semis, hopefully they’re on pallets, and we separate--each different item gets a different pallet. So we separate everything out onto different pallets” (JIV-09). Another participant worked at a research facility and described his job as “We raise rabbits to be distributed to colleges, universities, and research facilities across the United States” (JIV-08). One JIV spoke with pride of his manufacturing job duties;
Basically, I work on a metal wall form line, and we manufacture grease filters that go above commercial ovens. They’re removable. They’ve got aluminum vents in them. What else do I do? I build parts for like California Closets, and we do a few different things there. They’re expanding. I think they’re going to do some plastic injection molding, and stuff there in the future. So, it’s a pretty good spot for me to be. (JIV-10)

One very interesting case spoke of how he began his own business and explained his job duties as the co-owner:

Well, I’m a co-owner with my father, so we do anything from soliciting business, then we go in and do the work. We have six people that work for us now, so, I’m in the process of hiring, and we also let people go. So, we do everything on 50-50 basis; he’s more of the CFO, and I’m more of the operations, I guess. And we kind of go hand in hand. I’m learning more of that. He does like all the taxes, and payroll, and I do it with him, but he has control over it, obviously. And then, I run the crews, and the jobs. (JIV-01)

Most of the participants interviewed were unemployed. Those that were employed had been employed for over two months or longer. One JIV was unemployed because of a disability, but still worked side jobs. He said, “It’s been a long time since I’ve been on a regular payroll. I usually work for myself for cash” (JIV-02).

When asked the reason for their un-employability, most responded because of a disability, two were officially retired from work, and 1 could not find work because of his criminal offense. One JIV who works side jobs for cash is limited to work and when asked why he was limited he said, “Well, physical limitations. I’ve had some injuries that have messed me up pretty bad, and it’s gotten to the point that it looks bad. It’s pretty bad” (JIV-02).

Another JIV spoke of his own disability and also a lack of jobs:
Well, disability is one. Two is the job situation around here is kind of slim. And by being a convicted felon limits it even more. Even the temporary agencies around here want to run a background check on you. A majority, not all the companies that are around here, there’s a few that will hire felons preferably because they tend to work harder, and they want to keep their job. But the majority of the higher-paying jobs don’t want to hire a felon, and they won’t let the temporary agencies hire them either. (JIV-06)

Another JIV that is unemployed spoke of his health limitations and living off his retirement as reasons why he does not work;

Well number one, my health ain’t as good as it used to be. Number two, I make enough money for me and my wife to live well from my--because I--when I was working, I made a lot of money and I paid a lot of FICA in, so that qualified me for quite a bit of money. Then of course I got over ten years in Chrysler, so I got a little pension money coming too and with that, with what I’m getting and the little bit that she gets, we’re living well. The whole idea is to stay out of trouble and everything’s comfortable and there’s no reason to rock the boat. I am planning to do some volunteer work, but I can’t do nothing, well my tether. I’m pretty much limited. (JIV-05)

1b-3 What aspects of the services were beneficial to JIVs. Services and programs exclusively offered to Veterans are meant to assist them in becoming successful tax-paying citizens. Of the six services discussed in this study, most of the experiences with services JIVs were involved with were positive experiences. For example, health services were the most beneficial to participants in this study. “Yeah, the Veteran’s health is no harm, no problem at all because if it’s not right, I can just go back and get it done right. They were very helpful for that, but that’s because I’m a Veteran. These guys that aren’t, I don’t know what they do” (JIV-07). In
this case, being a JIV was beneficial to this participant. Another shared the same feelings with the numerous issues he has;

   Well, they’re good, excellent. They take care of all my needs and whatever medications that I need for my Parkinson’s and for my diabetes and my blood pressure. I take blood pressure pills. And then at the hospital, I go to neurology there in the VA hospital. (JIV-04)

A majority of the participants did not need substance abuse counseling. Most were sober and felt like they did not need it even though they knew they were available if needed. Others did not care for the quality of the programs or were critical of them. However, one JIV did find the benefit of attending classes. “Well they’re very good. They’re a very positive, safe place to be. They’re all about helping the person stay sober or straight, whatever the case may be, and I’ve had a great experience with the meetings I’ve been to” (JIV-02).

   The next category that was explored was Veteran employment services. Most were very useful to JIVs. “They’re good people. They do have resources. They were going to steer me towards places that would hire me, and with my record, and stuff like that, and they work with other felons, obviously” (JIV-10). Another shared the same experience, “One of them was very helpful, very helpful. They offered a lot of resources, as I said, for resume building, applications, and just if anything, morale. That was very, very helpful towards my morale was to know that there was support available for me at the time” (JIV-08). One JIV recalled a specific person and situation that stuck out to him;

   I had to go to Michigan Works in [Place] City and the gentleman that I dealt with there, his name is [Name] and as a matter of fact, I ended up getting some work through him. I called a contractor whose number he gave me and I went right to work for the guy. I
worked for him for a little over a month until it just got too painful for me to up the ladder, down the ladder, move the ladder. (JIV-02)

1b-4 The people still involved in the lives of JIVs. When asked if any of the people that helped them with Veteran services were still involved in their life, most replied that some were still involved with them in some capacity. For those that were not involved, the reason they were not was because they were no longer needed. They did state that if they needed help, they knew they could get assistance real easy. “No, but they’re really, when it comes down to it, they’re really only a phone call away if I needed help” (JIV-02).

One JIV did not want to bother to have a relationship for his own reasons. “Not really, no, only if I need them, which is unfortunate to say. They were nice people and everything, but I just don’t have a social life as of right now because of my parole status. I’m not really allowed to go out and hang out with friends, if that’s the best term” (JIV-08). Another did not want work so he had no need for the services. “No, I’m not interested in looking for a job. Like I said when I get a chance and I’m able to, I’ll go ahead and do some volunteer work” (JIV-05).

For those that did have contact with the service providers it was encouraging to hear how they are involved in a JIVs life. When asked if they are in contact, one said, “Constantly. I mean, they call me all the time when I’m over here and ask me how I’m doing, if everything’s okay.” When asked if they helped them in any way while they were looking for work, one JIV said enthusiastically of one service provider, “Yes, he looked up some employment to be able to do a mock interview. He said he wanted me to be ready to interview for a job. So we picked out a job, and we did a mock interview for it” (JIV-09). Even though he is employed, they still reach out to him to let him know they have not forgotten about him. “The VOA, he still sends me emails every now and then about job fairs and job openings” (JIV-09).
Another self-employed JIV who does not need the services state representatives from the VA still reach out for encouragement, “They ask me how’s everything going?” He further states “But I’m sure they would be there, and help me if I needed it, or if we needed it, but they always check in, and I guess everything happens for a reason” (JIV-01).

This section provided a description of the successes the participants experienced when seeking employment. In addition, there was some concern expressed regarding the lack of availability and a sense of awareness to health, mental health, substance abuse, employment, CTE/vocational, and housing services. They spoke favorably of follow up courtesy calls. It is worth noting that it wasn’t until JIVs were asked their circumstances that led them to services that I noticed they actively responded to the interview questions.

Research Question 1c. How Justice Involved Veteran’s (JIVs) experienced Post-release Employment-related Issues Including the Barriers and Challenges. From the 10 verbatim transcripts, 122 significant statements were extracted. From these excerpts, three sub-categories emerged from the associated meaning of how Justice Involved Veteran’s (JIVs) experienced post-release employment-related issues including the barriers and challenges.

1c-1 The service challenges of a JIV. In this sub-theme, JIVs were asked to discuss the many issues they experienced with health, mental health, substance abuse, employment, CTE/Vocational, and housing services. Surprisingly, when they were asked what aspects of these services they found to be the most challenging, there were very few challenges that they shared during the interview. The employment services category received the most feedback as the most challenging Veteran service, followed by health, substance abuse, and housing. CTE/Vocational and mental health services were never referenced.
When JIVs were asked how Veteran employment services are challenging to them, the participants had mixed responses. The most concerning challenge regarding employment services were made by one JIV who stated, “They’re not known to me, that’s the difficulty” (JIV-10). He then began to elaborate by giving some suggestions that might have helped;

Maybe Vets, every person should get like a flier with the services that are offered to them. And then that way they can contact them if they do need, let’s say mental health, like where does someone who needs mental health, or has PTSD can contact. Is it the VA? Is it Health and Human Services? I don’t know. I’m not in that particular boat, but that would just be my thing, or maybe they need help with finding apartments after they have a felony or something like that. Where is the number of who? You ask Google? I don’t know. [Laughter] Those things are not known to me; so, maybe other people know about them, but I have seen no information on it, myself. (JIV-10)

Another participant added to this by saying he was frustrated at the frequency of scheduled appointments. With his inexperience with writing resumes, he wanted more help more often to progress his employability opportunities;

Well, the VOA was only one appointment per week. I would’ve liked that to move faster, but that’s the pace of the program. Challenging, just getting my employment history all settled out, yeah, my work experience, being able to organize that in a way that I think would be easily read and valuable to an employer. (JIV-09)

Another JIV was critical of one service provider and how they communicated job vacancies on their job boards;

The most challenging as far as Michigan Works goes is they’re pretty generalized, you know what I’m saying? The bottom line is, of course, to get a person working. But I
found that most of their posts, because we come in, you log on to a computer, a job search type program that they run there, and nine times out of ten just about everything they had is already filled. And it seems as though they could possibly update that a bit more, stay on top of who is still hiring and who doesn’t need anybody. (JIV-02)

Another JIV felt as if incompetent instructors taught a job interviewing class. He shared his frustration of how he felt he was a pilot case where the program was designed more for how the instructors could improve their teaching of the program instead of being prepared for his needs;

Well, the most challenging part of it is that the program where they brought it -- excuse me. The program where they brought in felons into a classroom and taught them what to do towards -- for the interview that was a brand new program. So they themselves were also learning what to teach, what not to teach, and they were looking for feedback from us, and that got kind of frustrating to a point because I was there to learn, not to teach the teacher, even though it was gonna help out for employee -- perspective employees in the future. I was kind of upset because it wasn’t helping me at the time, but it did. It did help out. They put a lot of time towards us, so it wasn’t just teaching them how to give the class. They really helped me out. I was just getting frustrated how we were -- it was a brand new program and we were their Guinea pigs. (JIV-08)

It is not an uncommon theme from the participants that their needs are not getting the complete attention they deserve. Their service to the country came with training and in this situation a JIV was hoping that those that serve him and his needs would be prepared as he was expected to be for his service when he was enlisted;

Oh, let’s see, I find it was more challenging because I had to focus on -- how can I say it? For instance, when I was giving an interview, a mock interview with the instructor, there
were certain things that I would say that would automatically turn that instructor off if you [forget the idiom] towards hiring me, and she wasn’t quite sure how to change it for the better. So she had to ask for help and such, and I’m sure she knows better now and it would go a lot smoother. It just wasn’t a smooth process at the beginning. (JIV-08)

When JIVs were asked how housing services are challenging to them, two participants had communication issues with their service providers. One JIV had issues with two providers communicating effectively with each other. He gave an example where he shared the following:

I got to have surgery done, and the VA in Detroit is requiring my primary care doctor to clear me for surgery. And I got a runaround from there, and they ended up hooking me up with one of his nurses, and I’m still waiting for a phone call back. (JIV-6)

Another JIV was frustrated because he could not understand the medical terminology when he was discussing his issues with the medical provider due to his 15 years of being incarcerated. “Because when you’ve been out of circulation for so long, your terminology and their terminology are three different languages” (JIV-07).

Only one participant shared how substance abuse services were challenging to him. He was frustrated because of an inconsistent referral process. “Well, I had to go from one person to another to another to another to another, one agency to another to another to another to get from point A to point B. I was denied here, denied there, didn’t know this” (JIV-06).

Only one participant shared how the last service category, housing services were a challenge to him. His issue is not uncommon to other JIVs, especially those that have a sex crime history;

Well, like I said, depending on your crime. I went down to the high rise here in Hillsdale, and it’s a senior living place, but they have Section 8. And because of my crime, they
could not rent to me because of it. So a lot of them are very particular, and you got to be up front with them. Because if you’re not and they find out later, then you’re without housing anyway. So you might as well be up front with them from the very beginning. (JIV-04)

For the next section, JIVs were asked how they dealt with their challenges. When asked how he dealt with an employment service provider that could only meet once a week, this JIV simply took responsibility himself in initiated his own effort to work on his work history himself. Below, he acknowledged the challenge by saying;

Yeah, just everything one step at a time and just work through the program. I applied myself to everything. I was my own advocate. I took care of business. If I needed to find information, I got it. I got down and dirty. I got organized, and then I reorganized it and organized it and reworded it again until I--yeah, I just kept plugging away. You got to have a--I just remember where I was only four months ago in that shithole surrounded by people that I would probably never associate with ever in my life. I just kept a good positive attitude and stayed focused. (JIV-09)

Another participant practiced until he got good at what he was trying to improve on. “Repetition, just keep going over and over again. That’s what they were saying, until you feel comfortable with what you’re doing and until I feel comfortable with the answers and any possible answer that I can give” (JIV-08). Another said, “With the proper motivation, anybody can” (JIV-02).

Another JIV stated he was unaware of any service available and made no attempt to look for them on his own other than through the Internet. “So, at some point, I might start digging around online to find what other services are available, but as of right now, like if they said, “These services for…” I wouldn’t know” (JIV-10).
When asked how he dealt with the miscommunication between his primary physician and the VA health service provider, this JIV decided to abandon the VA and return to his primary physician. When asked how he felt about the VA referring him to his primary physician’s nurse to clear him for surgery, he replied, “I don’t think that’s the appropriate route that they’re supposed to be sending me. I’ve tried to make an appointment with my primary care physician since he don’t want to see me for six months” (JIV-06). Another JIV who experienced similar communication issues with language barriers said he dealt with the challenge through “Trial and error. Repeat visit and not being afraid to make a mistake” (JIV-07). He didn’t get frustrated and quit. Instead he kept trying. “Really, nothing other than making sure that I can get myself across and make them understand what I’m saying” (JIV-07).

The JIV that was unable to obtain substance abuse services through the county was forced to take care of the issue on his own. “I was pretty much on my own as far as whatever was put in front of me. Like substance abuse, I was told by my parole office, go do this, and then left to my own devices” (JIV-06). A common theme is starting to emerge that Veterans are often left to take care of their issues on their own.

1c-2 Some examples of service problems of JIVs. Participants were next asked to provide specific examples of their challenges they faced with their services. Surprisingly, there were very few examples that were provided. The most frequent examples given were related to the employment service category.

One JIV shared that there are not enough service providers to share with all the people that have needs, including JIVs;

It was frustrating that the schedule can--you can suddenly have something else to do because there isn’t a whole lot of, I guess, extra employees to be able to handle the things
that he does. So when he needed to train somebody, my employment got held back by a week. And I didn’t like that. It felt like it pushed me back by a week. And he worked at different locations, which is kind of this or that, six of one, dozen of the other. It could be an easier location to get to or a more difficult location, all depending on where you live. But I guess not a lot of people can get around all that easy, so he works at different locations during different days of the week. (JIV-09)

Another JIV made reference to an example at Michigan Works. Where in his case he had multiple people able to help him;

There is the Veterans’ rep, and then there was the guy that I was working with, who was also a Veteran, and he knew that I was a Veteran, so it wasn’t like it was completely divorced, but they seemed to be at odds, and that was challenging for me. I felt kind of caught in the middle. (JIV-03)

Although this JIV had positive experiences at Michigan Works! he added;

I will say that Michigan Works, I don’t know what to say other than it needs to be tweaked a little bit so that certain postings of mine are updated, this one’s been filled, this one still needs people, you know what I’m saying, because otherwise a person goes put in an application at places but the position that they’re applying for has already been filled, it can be frustrating. It can be discouraging. (JIV-02)

Another example given had to deal with prescription medications and the coverage. As expensive as prescription drugs are, one JIV claimed, “they’re questioning coverage on medications and stuff like that. They’re saying, ‘Well, you’re covered right now because etc. etc. but you have to be evaluated in another six months’ (JIV-07).
Another alarming example came from one JIV who referred to the issue of obtaining substance abuse service. When asked if he could give examples of any problems he encountered, he replied, “No, not really, other than the one problem I had with the Alcohol Information Center trying to get treatment there and being told since I was a Veteran with an honorable discharge, I can’t receive their services” (JIV-06).

The last category we discussed regarding an example of a problem had to deal with housing and being a sex offender. One JIV had to find housing and he had no help.

Well, it was when I first got out trying to find apartments and stuff. It was difficult. But once, like I said, I went to Community Actions and the VA, [Name] and [Name], they helped me out quite a bit trying to find a place to live. And they helped me with the down payment on my rent and everything. They paid three months’ worth of rent for me, so I could get myself situated. So it made it a lot easier than if I went out here with nothing.

In his case, the Veterans Community Action Team (VCAT) advocated for him and got him started. Many times, all the Veteran needs is a little support so he can prove that he can be trusted. In this case, VCAT facilitated that opportunity to solve his problem.

1c-3 The difficulties finding/using services. Participants were next asked if they had any difficulties finding or using Veteran employment services since they have been out. Surprisingly, there were only a few participants admitted that they had experienced difficulties. However, it is once again disturbing that those that confessed were not aware that they existed. The responses I received to this question were short and to the point. “I don’t even know of any, so yes” (JIV-10). “I’m not aware of a lot of them, so I guess that would be a yes” (JIV-03).
Another participant gave a more detailed account of his knowledge of Veteran employment services;

Well, I hadn’t really used much of the Veteran’s employment because one, I didn’t know a lot about it and there wasn’t much of it explained to anybody. More or less, come as you go. If you figure it out, that’s fine. If you don’t, that’s your tough luck. They don’t tell you about it. So what you find out is what you find out and you’ve got to dig for it because you just don’t -- it’s just not served to you on a platter, telling you, “Oh, this is this, this is this.” You just start raking rocks and see what you can turn up. (JIV-07)

Last, one JIV at least recognized that service providers are stretched themselves with an overwhelming responsibility of coverage. “But they can only do so much. And with me being a disabled Vet, it’s even less, even though I get more preference on top of just being a Veteran” (JIV-06).

This section provided a description of the barriers and challenges the participants experienced when seeking employment. In addition, there was some concern expressed regarding the lack of availability and a sense of awareness to employment services available to them. It should be noted, that when faced with challenges and barriers, JIVs did not get deterred; act out in frustration, or place blame on others. Instead, they persisted with their resilience and were not afraid to overcome their challenges on their own without the assistance of others.

**Research Question 2. What Role Did the Experience of, and Identity Associated with, Having Served in the Military Play in Their Post-release Employment-related Issues.**

From the 10 verbatim transcripts, 135 significant statements related to this question were extracted. From these excerpts, four sub-categories emerged from the associated meaning of what role the experience of, and identity associated with, having served in the military played the
post-release employment-related issues of a JIV. The four sub-categories are (a) Describing the enlistment of JIVs; (b) The skills and technology learned from the military; (c) The benefits of their military experience, and; (d) The challenges of their military experiences. I noticed during part IV of the interview, almost all JIVs were able to respond to inquiries about their military experiences.

2-1 Describing the enlistment of JIVs. It is important to understand what motivated JIVs to enlist into the military to help explain the role from having served in the military played in their post-release issues besides employment. Surprisingly, when they were asked why they joined the military, the responses I received were mixed. The main reasons were duty, escapism, and opportunity. Only one JIV was drafted. It was not a surprise to hear that duty was one of the primary reasons for enlisting as evidenced by this JIV who said, “It was just something I wanted to do ever since I was a kid” (JIV-10). Another also stated, “Patriotic duty. I wanted to be a soldier. I’ve always wanted to be a soldier, since watching G.I. Joe on the cartoons to just playing combat, to just seeing Desert Storm on the television” (JIV-08). Interestingly, another spoke of the benefits that came along with serving, “To serve my country and to get my teeth fixed” (JIV-09).

Another reason for enlisting was a sense of escapism. Two JIVs wanted out of their currently living situation at the time of their enlistment when they were asked their reason for enlisting. “Pretty much as a way to get out of my parents’ house” (JIV-02) and “Let’s see, I wanted to get out of the house” (JIV-07). Another spoke of the need for a fresh start after a failed relationship;

I joined the military – well, to be 100 percent truth, I was with my high school sweetheart, and she moved away from Traverse City, and went down to college, and she
broke up with me, and I took it real hard, and I kind of needed to get away from here.  

(JIV-01)

Another enlisted as a way to find success after finding himself in trouble while in school and not having a sense of direction with what he wanted to do with his life;

I was on probation at college, and I didn’t know really what I wanted to do with my life. A friend of mine had been in the Navy, and told me that after boot camp it wasn’t really bad. And he enjoyed it, so that helped me to decide. But mostly, I was just confused. I didn’t really know where I wanted to go, and it seemed like a good alternative for the time, while I figured out what it was that I wanted to do. (JIV-03)

One JIV volunteered before he was old enough to join and used the military as an opportunity for academic growth;

I was young. I was 17 when I joined. As a matter of fact, my mom had to sign for me. And at that time I didn’t have a high school diploma. So as soon as I went in, I went to the GED program, and they helped me receive my GED. (JIV-04)

This JIV used the military to explore career opportunities and travel;

Well, at that time Vietnam was still going on. And even though we were withdrawing at the time, it didn’t look like we were going to get out of there. The Draft was just getting ready to shut down. I had a few friends that were--about 75 percent of the people being drafted were being drafted into the U.S. Army, and about 25 percent were being drafted into the Marine Corps. And I wasn’t going to go either way. So I joined the Navy. On top of that, I saw career opportunities possibly and travel. And travel I did get. (JIV-06). 

When JIVs were further asked to describe their enlistment, almost all of them described it as a good experience. They liked it for how it made them feel, the places the military took them, and
the skills they learned from their experience. “Wonderful, loved it. Great time, it was structured, I loved the discipline, I loved everything about the military. It tore my heart out when I had to leave” (JIV-08). Another also echoed the same, “For the most part, it was engaging. I enjoyed the better part of it. There were some aspects of it that I absolutely hated. But as for life, not everything’s a bowl of cherries” (JIV-06). “I felt good, probably the best health I’ve ever been in my life as far as I was strong, both physically and mentally. I think that was a good way to describe it. It was all right. It wasn’t bad” (JIV-05);

Some enjoyed it for the travel as well as part of their self-discovery.

It was excellent. I had a great time. I got to see a lot of the country and I was in Germany for about 16 months. The traveling by itself was almost worth it. Of course, there are definitely parts of the military that are somewhat negative, but the last part for me, I loved every minute of it. (JIV-02)

This JIV described how he enjoyed the military, but to no surprise he did not care for combat;

I enjoyed it. I mean, I’ve been all over the world. I mean, I didn’t like Vietnam. I did two tours there and got--I mean, I got quite a few medals from Vietnam and took quite a few lives. But, of course, I didn’t like wartime. But when I wasn’t in war, I was in Germany or France. I tried to go to different places. I went to Copenhagen. I’ve been all over the place, seeing different parts of the countries. And I enjoyed it. I enjoyed it very much. (JIV-04)

Besides the way the military made JIVs feel, and places to travel, the military also gave them some skills that they discovered;

Overall, it was a positive experience. I learned a lot about myself. I did pick up some skills, computer skills. I had a computer before I went into the Navy, and that was years
ago, and it wasn’t much of a computer by today’s standards. And then, when I got in I learned the navigation system for missile submarines, and then eventually I ended up teaching that, as well. So, I found out that I really liked teaching, and I think that I’m good at it. I did that for four years, the last four years I was in. (JIV-03)

Sadly, another combat Veteran who discovered leadership skills within him also suffered from mental health issues as a result of the trauma he experienced in the many conflicts he was engaged in;

   We worked hard in training, and go and fight the enemy, and then when you let us out in the town, and say, “What are you guys going to do?” We were out drinking, and fighting, and being stupid is what I thought at the time. But after a while, I wasn’t doing what I should have been doing [in the rear 46:43], and as a leader. I was very gifted. I was a very decorated Marine, but after that first combat pump I did two more, and then it seemed like each one it just kind of got a little bit worse, and I stopped caring, and I kind of lost that caring mode of, “Okay, here’s these junior Marines, and they’re looking at me as a leader, and I’m showing up late for formation, because I think, eh, it doesn’t really matter; I’m out drinking the night before. I was young, too, 19, 20, 21, 22, but I was suffering from PTSD a little bit, and they really didn’t know much about that back then. (JIV-01)

   For others, when asked the same question, their first response was to simply describe it as an experience. “I guess it was a learning experience, a transitioning from civilian life to that, and also at the same, simultaneously, moving out on my own, so I was pretty young, I’d say. I was 20” (JIV-10). Another also said, “The best way I can describe it is that it was an experience, and
it’s good and bad. So I guess I would describe it as normal, if I had to come up with a word, I guess. It was an experience” (JIV-09).

When JIVs were asked describe their enlistment in the military by sharing the challenges and barriers they experienced, I found it interesting that those that saw combat faced more challenges than those that did not experience combat. JIV-01, who saw combat in Afghanistan cited management, training, lack of experience, building relationships, and lack of leadership as challenges he had to deal with in the Marines;

A challenge is when you’re in combat that you’ve trained these younger, junior Marines, and they could be older than you. I just call them “junior Marines,” because they don’t have the experience that you have to use the tools in what I’ve taught, and what we’ve learned together as a unit to pull together, and to bring everybody home. And every day is a challenge. It’s a challenge to go out on a 25-mile hike with these guys that I’m talking about, and it’s 80 percent mental, and 20 percent physical, even though you have an 85-pound pack, and your weapon. (JIV-01)

JIV-08, who served in the Army, experienced challenges such as being on his own for the first time, being away from home, the structure and regiment of the military, being around new people, and fitting the military mold as challenges that he faced. The leadership, structure, rules, and expectations were a common challenge that emerged with many of the participants. “I guess that would have to be working with superiors whose feet weren’t really on the same ground as the rest of the troop, like in the territory too” (JIV-02). “Just meeting their goals, the same ones that everybody meets” (JIV-07). “I came across challenges people in positions that shouldn’t be there and incompetence or inabilities” (JIV-09). Further, he described the leadership as “the lack
of motivation to do their job properly in order to assist the mission. That was really difficult for me” (JIV-09). Another spoke of how the inconsistencies of how rules were enforced;

The rules that didn’t make a lot of sense, and the people that enforced them to the letter, rather than making sense of them. They were just by the book. They didn’t do it by the person; they did it by the book. So, that was probably the biggest challenge. (JIV-03)

I was surprised that only one JIV shared that substance abuse was a barrier that he felt worth mentioning. This JIV who served 72 months for Operating/Maintaining a Lab Involving Methamphetamine said, “Oh, I don’t know. I think there’s a lot of substance abuse issues that came from that” (JIV-10).

2-2. The skills & technology learned from the military. In this sub-category, JIVs were asked to discuss the skills and technology they learned during their enlistment in the military. Surprisingly, when they were asked to discuss the skills they learned from the military, most gave a response but almost all of the responses were not considered skills recognized by O*NET. From their website, the O*NET program (O*NET, 2017) is the nation's primary source of occupational information. Central to the project is the O*NET database, containing information on hundreds of standardized and occupation-specific descriptors, such as occupational skills. Many left the military with many ways to describe their job title, or the core values they learned from the military branch they served. Most when asked did not describe the skills they learned from the military that would transfer from the military to civilian careers. According to the U.S. Department of Education, these skills are listed under three categories: Applied Knowledge, Effective Relationships, and Workplace Skills from the Employability Skills Framework (U.S. Department of Education, 2017).
For example, this participant shared what he learned during his enlistment in the Marine Corps. “The Marine Corps taught me how to stay healthy, as far as exercising-wise, but honor, courage, commitment, integrity, leadership are the main principles, and core values that I’ve taken out of it that I still carry with myself” (JIV-01). Another spoke of his time in the Army where he was accustomed to “Being pushed, do more, do more. Yeah, that was good because you could do it. When I first got to Basic, I wasn’t doing a whole lot of anything. But when I got about five weeks into it, six weeks into it, I was doing all right” (JIV-05). This JIV said, “All kinds of skills. I mean, I was a staff sergeant E6. I started out a private. So you had to go to school. I had to go to school for an NCO school. I had to learn how to drill and ceremony” (JIV-04). Another participant went into more detail:

Well, I learned a lot of skills, man. Some of them I don’t know if you want to say skills. But I learned how to repair aircraft. I learned a lot of self-discipline, a lot of motivation, which is--I don’t mind telling you, I wasn’t that motivated as a young man. I wanted to go to school and party and do girls and all that stuff. So I didn’t get a lot of motivation ‘til I went into the military. And then, like I said, I received a lot of education. I went to two trade schools while I was in the Navy, Aircraft Structural A and Aircraft Structural C School. I guess that’s about it. (JIV-06)

Others spoke of the types of duties they had or the equipment they worked with when asked about their skills. “Computers, and the computers that I worked on were like a huge, like big refrigerator/freezer combination.” At that point it was a satellite system, but again, nothing like we have today” (JIV-03). Another described how he learned to shoot better and work in an office setting when asked about what his skills were;
Well, I was a hunter when I went in, but I can shoot pretty straight now. I could. I would say responsibility and control and to be proud. See, I didn’t take any other training other than—oh, well I did. I went to officer’s candidate school, what do they call them, the thing, I went to that training. With my job, I was good. I was working up in an air conditioned building, five to—a nine to five job. I had a good warrant officer for a boss up there and stuff. It was just a regular office setting type thing. (JIV-05)

This participant spoke of teaching skills that he learned. “I didn’t get along with my boss there, so I went over to this place and I ended up learning how to instruct, and I taught for 12 years” (JIV-07). Another said, “Oh, leadership skills, first aid. I like to think I have decent discipline. Let’s see, what else? My self-discipline is good. I’m very happy with myself, prior to my incarceration of course” (JIV-08). This JIV did share his experiences that might be considered under the Effective Relationships category. “I learned supervisory skills, safety supervisor. I learned that to be a team leader, you have to be able to give orders and at times take orders without question” (JIV-09). I felt this participant summed it up best by realizing not everything transfers from the military to civilian life;

Oh, I learned great skills. The problem is, though, is they’re like geared towards like combat, and stuff like that. They don’t really transfer into a civilian world, so, the skills you learn there, I guess on an educational [trip 34:19], not on like the behavioral like discipline, and stuff like that, but I’m thinking more on the educational side, don’t transfer over into civilian life on that part. Now, there are other things, like military values, and things like that that do transfer, and I guess would make you an asset to companies, and employers, and stuff like that. But deals that you are looking forward to
get a better job, or get ahead in life. For some – [MOSs 34:55] don’t really transfer over.

You understand what I’m kind of saying? (JIV-10)

Next, I will discuss what uses of technology was available to them during their enlistment and what it was like to operate the technology they had access to. The application of technology in the military is often designed for combat situations and has little utilization in the civilian world. Most of the technology that was referenced was computer based or used for communications and used by those that did not work in the field. This participant spoke of training scenarios;

They would pull out a chip in the computer and hand you a computer and say figure out what’s wrong and why, and I could always track it right down to what it was specifically, just stick them under your desk and they got so good at trying to trick me, but I found it.

It’s quite a sense of accomplishment. (JIV-02)

This participant is a convicted sex offender with restrictions to the use of a computer. He is unemployed and is currently taking classes at a private college. However, when he described his experience with technology in the military, he said;

It was fun. That’s when I realized that I really like computers. I kind of knew I was leaning that way before, but I was sure after that. I was like, “Oh, wow, this is as cool as I thought it would be.” So, I gained that. And so, I’ve always had an affinity with computers. (JIV-03)

Another sex offender shared a similar talent of working with computers;

It was interesting. It was a very technical field. We had to take classes in theory and in the actual, the operation and maintenance of a satellite communication terminal in order to facilitate communication between two units or more. So it was a challenge. It was very
challenging to keep the machine running as best as possible with equipment that may not be the top of the line. It was a very fun and challenging experience. (JIV-08)

For those that worked with computers, software, and communications they described what it was like working with the technology as challenging, but rewarding when speaking about it;

It took a little bit of training to be efficient with it. [Long pause] I didn’t work too much [Unknown] tracker, which was kind of like their communications software. It updated all the time about possible enemy locations and locations of friendly forces and stuff. I didn’t do too much in it, but it looked like it wasn’t too difficult to learn. (JIV-09)

For those that served in the field or in combat, their application of technology was different. “I mean, if you’re an infantryman, you got your rifle, and you got your packs on your back, and you got--if you learn how to drive a Jeep, or you learn how to drive a tank, like I did” (JIV-04). “I think mainly my responsibilities consisted of carrying an M16 120 rounds, expandable baton, OC pepper spray” (JIV-10). When he elaborated more on technology he said, “So, no, using technology would have been like the radio for the call people was pretty much it. I used my cell [Laughter]” (JIV-10). For another participant, he explained what his use for technology was like;

I was always kind of in the Infantry, but technology as far as being able to write home, like on the Internet, or like are you talking about night-vision goggles? For me, you have to understand, because I didn’t have a computer job, or a desk job. I was in the field. But you could have your cell phone, like when we were deployed, if you were inside of friendly lines, we had sat phones, so you could call home. You could always use the Internet. (JIV-01)

2-3 The benefits of the military experience. In this sub-category, JIVs were asked to discuss the benefits they learned from the military. To learn more about the benefits from their
military experience, they were asked to expand on what aspects were the most beneficial. They were then asked how they were beneficial. I found it interesting that each could provide at least one aspect that was beneficial to them, but only four could give more than one aspect that was beneficial to them. When JIVs were asked how the aspects were beneficial to them, most of the participants favored aspects that had to deal with relationships with other people.

When this JIV was asked about what aspect was most beneficial to him he said, “I think really all of them, especially with what I do now. Attention to detail” (JIV-01). For this participant, “Self-discipline, learning that I am capable of committing myself to a certain course of action and actually sticking to it, that discipline” (JIV-02). “Probably the computer technology, being comfortable with that, and realizing that I could do it” (JIV-03). “The schooling I got was the most beneficial to me at the time. It not only enabled me to do my job in the military, it was going to provide me with a job afterwards” (JIV-06).

They each had their own aspects that meant something differently to each of them. To some it was education, to others it was dealing with people and relationships;

Well, they try to keep--basically, they’re trying to help you to keep your head together. If there’s a problem, you deal with the problem. And if you can’t deal with the problem, then you go to your commander. You talk to your commander and say, look, I have a problem in this area. Can you help me? And it’s all about communication. (JIV-04)

One JIV had multiple aspects he shared. “Just dealing with people.” He later would say, “I learned responsibility” and from his military experience dealing with people, he added, “So I learned quite a bit of leadership” (JIV-07).
Others were short with their response regarding how their aspects were beneficial to them. For example, one JIV simply replied, “The experience” (JIV-10) whereas another gave more specifics about their own experience;

Let’s see, the values, the values learned within the military, the leadership, the leadership values, learning about duty, loyalty, and respect and selfless service and such. It’s all of those that would make me a better person and able to instill those beliefs in other soldiers, in younger soldiers or younger people. (JIV-08)

Another took a more patriotic approach to his service and when asked how the aspects he shared were beneficial to him, he stated, “To appreciate my freedom. Then pride, proud to serve” (JIV-05).

For this section, I asked the JIVs how the aspects they learned in military were beneficial to them. All with the exception of one JIV was able to provide a positive experience from their enlistment in the military. This JIV went into great detail about how his patriotic duty has served him in his present life overcoming fears and building his self-confidence;

I’m not afraid of a lot of things. I’m able to look at things and look at problems and attack them head on. I have great self-confidence in myself. I can talk to anybody. It doesn’t matter. I can look someone in the eye and talk to them. It instilled definitely, it really instilled confidence in myself and discipline to do what I need to do. I have a great work ethic. That was partly from my family and it was just built upon in the military. I have worked long hours in hellish conditions, so working at a factory in the civilian world is nothing. If they tell me I have to work holidays, it would be no problem because I had been deployed many, many holidays. I missed a lot of time with my family because I had been deployed in the military. So that got me used to adverse conditions. (JIV-08)
Most of the responses had something to do with people or relationships. “Well, building those relationships in order to get business” (JIV-01). In his case, this JIV was able to use what he learned from the Marines to lead his own construction crew and develop relationships for future work for his company. Another participant said, “It benefitted me a lot. I mean, you learn how to—well, you’re supposed to learn how to talk to people and treat them with respect, and they treat you with respect” (JIV-04). When making difficult decisions, this Army Veteran found his time that he served “makes that decision a little easier to make with a little bit of military background” (JIV-02). “But the most beneficial is learning how to treat people because I had a fair amount of good trainers and a few bad ones. But I learned that I like people who can do things. I think that was beneficial” (JIV-09).

For others, their enlistment allowed them to improve themselves and develop new skills. “I was under the GI Bill and I found that very beneficial because when I went back to school, they did definitely help me out” (JIV-05). This was first instance where a JIV referred to the G.I. Bill. When I asked him how was the GI Bill beneficial to you then, he replied, “Well, they sent me 500 and some odd dollars a month for attending school for, I don’t know how many months it was, the whole time I was in, and I think I used most of it” (JIV-05). However, he did not say how he used it and to what extent he uses what he learned today. Another felt that same way and said, “Oh, any time you learn how to carry yourself better is beneficial or any time you learn how to stoop a little more, it’s beneficial because you learn. Anything you learn is beneficial” (JIV-07). For this JIV, the military gave him value, made him feel good about himself. “I guess it’s my personality that it makes me feel good” (JIV-09).

For others, the training they received in the military was so rigorous and difficult; it made everyday challenges in the civilian life easier to deal with. “It has always made it easier” (JIV-
03). For this JIV, it gave him a sense of patriotic duty. “I think it feels good to sacrifice a little bit for your country, and I think more people should probably pursue that. I think it’s a good thing” (JIV-10). However, not everyone felt the same. For this participant had nothing positive to say about his military experience and the aspects that were beneficial to him. “They’re not. Not applicable. Having convicted of some felonies, everything that was beneficial to me in the military doesn’t pertain to me today at all” (JIV-06).

2-4 The challenges of the military experience. In this sub-category, JIVs were asked to discuss the challenges they experienced while in the military. To learn more about their challenges, they were asked to expand on what aspects were the most challenging and how they dealt with those challenges. As we heard, many JIVs enlisted into the military for different reasons. Many did not expect to see some of the things they saw or were prepared for what they experienced. In this section, JIVs were asked to share what challenges they experienced to give a better understanding of how they dealt with those challenges in their lives.

The responses I got had to deal mostly with dealing with other people, authority, and the personal discipline associated with being in the military. One JIV made reference to how he was challenged by conforming to the rules and following orders. “I’m not much of an ass kisser, Jim. I’m not very good at it” (JIV-02). Another participant spoke of how difficult it was to work with others that failed to do the job they were assigned to do. “You have to work with people that don’t do their job, and you have to either do their job, or explain to somebody why it didn’t get done, and things like that. And they may or may not understand if I told them the truth” (JIV-03). Another challenge was dealing with the bureaucracy of the government;

Well, for instance, every single time--let’s see. Every single time a policy would change throughout the U.S., they would always test it in the military first. E.O, equal opportunity
was a big thing. They would always strive to say that the military is equal in everything we do, we don’t believe in race or creed, yet at the same time, we had to keep an exact count of how many African Americans received awards every month or how many Hispanics received awards or how many Caucasians received awards, just to make sure everything was to the, I don’t know, to the political master’s happiness, to their benefit or what not. I don’t know, it was very frustrating that we had to [bow down] to a lot of these people and then try to do our duty as much as possible. JIV-08

Others I found struggled with themselves and how they dealt with their own personal challenges. The military is its own machine, a very large entity that demands a lot. “It’s just doing it, being able to do it was challenging. But it was, it was a challenge that was comparable because I was able to do it” (JIV-07). Others spoke about what wartime challenges were like and how challenging it could be not having ever experienced death;

It was real challenging to try to keep my wits about me. And I had to learn not --it’s not about hate. It’s not about going over there and try to take charge. And it’s not about killing. It’s about how people communicate. And that’s what I found was challenging because no one seemed like they wanted to communicate. All they wanted to do was killings all the time. (JIV-04)

Another challenge that emerged was how their maturity and coping skills of the challenges were dealt with through the lifestyle associated with the military. “Well to begin with, you’re in the military so you’re a little cocky anyhow. It was really easy to get in trouble” (JIV-05). “Well, like I said, I’ve always been a wild child. And the discipline was a challenge to me because I didn’t want to accept it. I kind of want to do what I want to do” (JIV-06). “Well, you have these people that are utilizing drugs on a regular basis. You think that that could be socially
acceptable, and even though you know it’s not allowed, you kind of fall in with that, too” (JIV-10). The participants each had their own issues. Now we will look at how they dealt with those challenges.

For the JIV who was challenged by the experience of the military, he simply would “Grin and bear it. A lot of times, you just do what you’ve got to do and you do it. There’s no formula that says, “This works every time,” because it doesn’t. You try it, and if it doesn’t work, you grin and you try something else” (JIV-07). Others used the tools that had available to them when the government would test new policies on him. When he was asked how he dealt with that, he replied, “The best we can. We had to follow the guidance of our supervisors. We did the best we can with the tools that were available and if our hands were tied behind our back, we just used our feet” (JIV-08). When dealing with the peer pressure from others, when this JIV was asked how he dealt with the challenge, he said, “I walked around, a lot of things I didn’t do. A guy would say, “Let’s go do this,” “No,” got to say no” (JIV-05).

As for dealing with superiors, the participant who was not good at following orders said he dealt with the challenges of following orders by “Just respectfully and politely as I possibly could, agree with everything my superior was telling me and as soon as they left continuing to do things just exactly the way that I wanted to” (JIV-02). One found it was easier to deal with the challenge of people not doing their jobs by completing the task themselves;

If there was no other way, then I usually did the work that need to be done, whether it was my job, or not, just to get it done, and so I wouldn’t have to explain to somebody why it wasn’t done, mostly. And I would try to talk with people, and reason with them, and get them to do it, but that was marginally successfully. (JIV-03)
For the combat Veteran, dealing with people not cut out for the military was even more compounded on the field where people’s lives are at stake. When this JIV caught a soldier asleep while on post, he reacted in the way that anyone might who cared about his fellow troops would in a situation like that;

And I just kind of lost it. I lost about 13 guys in Fallujah, and it’s hard to go through that, and for somebody to be in country, and that’s been in a firefight with me before, and to know what we’re doing, and just say, “Eh, well, I’m tired. F**k it.” F**k him. Excuse my language, but he’s just basically saying, “F**k me, f**k you, and f**k you, and f**k you,” and he obviously is saying f**k himself because he doesn’t care. How do you fall asleep in a combat zone? That’s what I want to know. ..Anyway, so I’m yelling at him. I picked his weapon up. He’s scared anyways at this point. I threw it down the mountain about 30 meters, and told him to go get it. He wouldn’t go get it. (JIV-01)

Others resorted to dealing with their challenges with substance abuse. Drugs and alcohol was a source to numb the pain of war, combat, loss, and emotions. For this Army Veteran, he turned to alcohol;

Well, I just--alcohol. Like I said before, I took alcohol, and then I drank a lot of beer and then smoked pot and whatever else I could get ahold of over there, opium. And that kept me a little bit sane. But that’s the only way I could figure how to tell you. You’d have to be there to know. It’s hard in a war. It’s hard on anyone. And I saw my best friend get killed over there. Like a mortar round hit our compound, and he jumped in one foxhole. I jumped in the other, and he got a direct hit and killed him. So, yeah, it’s hard. For a long time, I didn’t want to have any friends because I was afraid of losing them. So, yeah, wartime is not easy. (JIV-04).
Substance abuse does not discriminate in the military. This Navy Veteran dealt with his challenges that he experienced similarly. “Substance abuse, that’s where I started abusing alcohol for sure. It was a big part of the military, at least when I was in. That’s what we did after work, sometimes during work” (JIV-06). The issue is also present in the National Guard, as this E-3 explains;

Everyone else kind of – not everyone, but it is there, alcohol, and drug use is high in the military, believe it or not – and I guess I wish I would have made some different choices then, because at the time I was actually doing a lot of cocaine then when I was in the military. So, I actually ended up taking that habit out from the military with me, or just the fact to utilize drugs on a semi-regular basis, led to some poor life decisions. JIV-10

Others did not have coping skills and instead of abusing alcohol or resorting to violence, this JIV complained. “I didn’t have very good coping skills at that time. So I would complain to my peers. I didn’t have any coping skills really” (JIV-09). A real issue is how Veterans dealt with issues in the military. Some handled it maturely whereas others dealt with the challenges with physical force or abusing alcohol.

For the last section, JIVs were asked to share a time where they had to deal with a problem or a challenging issue while they were in the military. They were then asked how they dealt with that problem. I was surprised that two could not provide an example. Another simply said, “Not really. There really isn’t anything I can think of besides work” (JIV-06). When asked if he could further explain, he simply referred to how difficult it was to do the best he could. “Well, here comes the pride issue again. I wanted to be good at what I did” (JIV-06). For two participants, they were able to share experiences from combat. One described in detail what it
was like taking orders from his superior who was not in the field experiencing the violence that he was experiencing at the time. He said;

   It’s hard when you get orders from a Colonel who is 1,000 miles away. He’s giving you an order, and it’s like, “Well, hold on a second, sir. You don’t know what’s going on. I can’t do that.” So, there’s problems like that all the time, and you have to know what a lawful order is, and with somebody that’s not there as on on-scene commander there’s a lot of responsibility on you, and you have to make the right decision. (JIV-01)

When asked how he dealt with that situation, he defiantly stated, “I guess I would take the punishment, and I made the best decision that I thought even if it went against the Colonel’s orders” (JIV-01). Another combat Veteran spoke of a situation during his time in Vietnam. “I saw this Viet Cong turning around the Claymores on the fence because I knew they were going to try to hit it. So I had to open fire on the person there” (JIV-04). When asked how later he dealt with the issue, he replied, “I just try to put it out of my mind, try to put it out of the back of my mind” (JIV-04).

   Other issues shared by the participants were not nearly as complicated as the issues experienced by those in combat. But on a personal level, most could recall a specific issue that they considered a challenge during their enlistment. This JIV recalled an issue where he was given a problem to solve and he knew the problem that was given to him was not the source of the problem they had to solve. When he tried to discuss the issue, his superiors would not listen to him and insisted the problem presented was the problem. He said, “the challenge involved there was I knew it was superiors who don’t agree with your opinion” (JIV-02). When he was asked how he dealt with the problem, he stated, “I finished off the rest of that afternoon and went back to the barracks and pretty much I got drunk. Between you and me, I got drunk” (JIV-02).
Another participant had a similar situation where he was faced with a computer problem where the memory location failed, and he had to reprogram around the location of the problem. When asked to describe the challenge he replied, “That was an interesting challenge, and I loved it. And I loved the fact that I was able to do it” (JIV-03). When he asked how he solved the problem, he relied on his education and his training;

I know that I studied what was going on, and I studied the information that they’d given us in school to figure out, and it’s like little by little just things started to click, and then finally I narrowed it down to, “It has to be this.” So, I reprogrammed around that one location, and it worked. And I got a real feeling of satisfaction from that. (JIV-03)

Others had problems or were challenged with how the training was delivered to them. One JIV stated that when he was in the reserves, they would get together once a year for training. He stated the trainer was not properly trained on the content that was being delivered. He said, “That was my first strong taste of people doing things they’re not qualified to do” (JIV-09). When asked how he handled or dealt with that particular problem, he said;

I sat through it. I talked to my immediate superior about it. And he said he had the same concerns and needed to put it up the chain of command, and that later on we can go through some of our own training, so we understand things better. (JIV-09)

Other JIVs had issues not directly related to them while on duty, but that took place during their enlistment. For instance, one participant spoke of how he was dating a girl and he walked into the post commander’s house with the senator and he saw this girl he was dating come down the stairs. He described the scene as “[Laughter] I’m a damn specialist and I was running around with the commanding officer’s daughter” (JIV-05). When asked how he dealt with that
particular challenge, he responded simply, “I just stopped seeing her. I seen her as a problem, there ain’t no use pushing it” (JIV-05).

For another JIV, a challenging issue to him happened when he got into a serious motorcycle accident and he woke up in the hospital after six weeks and did not understand what had happened. When asked to describe what it was like when he woke up, he replied, “That was a challenging issue. You try to work down to the nurse’s station and you can’t walk apparently. You get down there and you can’t talk. You get down there and you can’t write” (JIV-07). When asked how he dealt with a life-threatening situation like the one he experienced, he replied “A whole lot of learning. You’ve just got to grin and do it” (JIV-07).

Most participants could give detailed accounts of specific challenges and how they dealt with those challenges. Those that could recall specific challenges dealt with the problem. There were no reports where a participant failed to solve an issue or problem. Whether the challenge was in combat or in their personal lives, most handled the situations the best they could. To some concern, some solved the problem or followed the direction and later dealt with the stress by abusing alcohol.

**Chapter IV Summary**

This concludes the individual descriptions and narratives of the participants. In this study, participants were asked questions that helped me understand their employment-related experiences. From their lived experiences, the following categories began to emerge: services and programs; successes; barriers and challenges; and the military experience and identity of JIVs. Now, I will turn to Chapter V, which discusses analysis of themes and sub-themes identified from the interview transcriptions, and suggestions for the stakeholders by the participant
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The intent of this research was to explore the lived-experiences of 10 justice-involved Veterans’ post-release employment related experiences. I was interested in their use of services and programs, the successes when searching for employment, and the barriers and challenges that influenced JIVs while on parole. Also, I was interested in how the experience of, and identity associated with, having served in the military played in their post release employment-related issues. However, while using the scrutiny-based missing data technique of data analysis (Ryan & Bernard, 2003), it became evident that JIVs often have issues in their lives that they did not talk about that prevented them from participating in many Veteran services that could help them obtain employment. The findings led to a deeper and more detailed understanding of how external forces such as stigmatization and parole conditions may impact Veteran employment services. Thus, it appears that the social structure might be more problematic than the individual motivations of a JIV. In other words, the structure of Veteran services seems fairly well suited to the needs of the JIV, but society is not always willing to accept the needs of a JIV.

Based on the research and the current literature, we know employment issues are common among JIVs. According the Bureau of Justice Statistics, at year-end 2015, the United States held an estimated 1,526,800 prisoners in state and federal correctional facilities. Further, 1 in 37 adults (2.7%) in the United States was under some form of correctional supervision, and about 7 in 10 persons under correctional supervision were supervised in the community.

We also knew that in 2004, 10% or 140,000 of state prisoners, reported prior service in the U.S. Armed Forces (United States Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2007; Noonan & Mumola
The increase of the prison population has been astonishing, but it has not been the largest area of growth in the criminal justice system. Those generally on probation and parole—the sentenced offenders, who are not behind bars—show the largest growth (Kaeble, Galze, Minton, & Tsoutis, 2015).

Yet, we knew very little why reintegrating JIVs back into the workforce remains a significant barrier to overcome for employment and reentry efforts. We also knew very little about how JIVs describe their post-release employment-related experiences. Evaluation beyond quantitative analysis was needed in order to better understand the lived experiences of JIVs. Within this context my research was conducted to answer the research questions.

Results Summary

The conceptual framework for my study of employment-related experiences of JIVs consists of four categories, each containing their own sub-topics (Figure 1). The four categories and sub-categories for my study are: (a) Challenges and Barriers (Health Recidivism, Social); (b) Motivations to Enlist (Institutional, Occupational); (c) Services (Benefits and Programs), and (d) Successes (Institutional and Individual). As Figure 1 shows, the center of my study is the voice of Justice Involved Veterans’ post-release employment seeking experiences.

The purpose of my phenomenological study was to describe and understand how the 10 JIVs’ post release employment-related experiences. The goal of my research was to learn about their experiences and possible identify themes for JIVs when released from prison. Major categories that emerged from the interviews include: (1a) services and programs, (1b) successes, (1c) barriers and challenges, and (2) military experience and identity. Tables 2-5 provide an overview of my research questions as connected to my conceptual framework and the categories identified from the study. Following the tables, my findings are discussed by research question.
Review of the Research Questions

Research Question 1a: How do Justice Involved Veteran’s (JIVs) Experience Post-Release Employment-Related Issues including the Services and Programs Available to Them?

For my research question, there were several themes that emerged. There are many services and programs that are available to JIVs. For this study, I explored health, mental health, substance abuse, employment, CTE/vocational, and housing services available for JIVs. These service categories were decided after personally speaking with one of the investigators, Daniel Blonigen of “Justice-Involved Veterans and Employment: A Systematic Review of Barriers and Promising Strategies and Interventions (McDonough, Blodgett, Midboe, and Blonigen, 2015). This review acted as the foundation for my study and attempts to add to the literature for one area noted in their review (pp. 5-6), that of key question #3 “What are the effective or promising employment-focused strategies and interventions for Justice-Involved Veterans?”.

For this research question, I searched for the service providers that JIVs were involved with, the services and programs that JIVs were involved with, the description of the services from the JIV perspective, the important aspects of the services from the JIV perspective, and finally the circumstances that led JIVs to Veteran services. When discussing services and programs offered to JIVs, it is important to realize that not all JIVs require or need referral to ALL programs. Each JIV is unique in their own situations and it cannot be assumed that all JIVs require ALL services and programs.

First, I found that all participants reported the name of a particular service they had participated in while on parole. However, most identified no more than two services that they could name for this section. Only one participant could name multiple service providers that he took advantage of. Surprisingly, most of the services mentioned were locally or state operated,
not federally operated. In fact, the VA Center was the only federal service that was referenced and it was generalized as a hub for services, mainly for health services. Through this study the services that I was exploring, Health Care for Reentry Veterans; Veteran Justice Outreach Initiative; Veterans Court programs; and Priority of Service were never referred to in those contexts by the participants. It is unknown why these services are not directed to Veterans. One possible explanation could be a lack of staffing, in that there is only one Veteran Specialist for the entire state of Michigan; program implementation is determined by the county for Veteran Justice Outreach Initiative and Veterans Court programs; and many Veterans are unaware of what priority of service means.

Second, I learned that half of the participants are involved with a single service available to them. Of those involved, a majority were involved with health related services. All participants reported that they were not aware of or participating in any Career Tech Education/Vocational education programming. The presence of CTE programming was absent from the entire study as reported by the participants. There are three possible reasons to explain the absence of CTE programming in this study: (a) CTE is not a priority to the needs; (b) Veterans are not aware of the benefit; and (c) A majority of Veterans in this study were retired or disabled. Only one participant was actively involved with a community college, yet almost all of the JIVs made reference to having an interest in community colleges or higher education.

A third theme that emerged from this study is the JIVs’ opinions of the services provided to them. Most JIVs did not describe their judgment of the services. The few that did, described them as “good.” However, when asked their thoughts about the services the response had mixed results as good and bad experiences. Those Veterans that reported their experiences as good reported that the service providers were friendly and helped them find work or housing. Those
that responded unfavorably reported a lack of communication and information about services as the main reasons.

The next theme that emerged from this section was the important aspects of the services from the JIV perspective. Nine Veterans did not describe the most important aspects of their time when participating in the services they mentioned. This can be explained by the lack of participation or needs for certain services. One participant replied, “I don’t expect anything” when he was asked about his time at health services.

Last, one theme that broke through for the study was the circumstances that led JIVs to the services. During this point of the interview, I found the JIVs lit up and all but one of the participants provided responses to the eight sub-questions asked about what their circumstances were that led them to these Veteran services. These interview questions looped back to the services provided, if they were able to identify the services, and how they came to those service providers. Most of the participants sought employment, health, medical, and financial services within days of being released from prison for their own personal reasons, not because they had to as a condition of parole. Most relied on others to help them come to the conclusion that seeking the services would be beneficial to them in hopes to help them.

For this section, I discussed how JIVs experienced post-release employment-related issues including the services and programs available to them. Overall, their experience with services and programs is minimal, and most JIVs do not take advantage of the many exclusive services available to them because they are not aware of them. One possible recommendation to assist Veterans is provide them with a resource published by the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs titled “Michigan Guidebook for Incarcerated Veterans” prior to their release.
Table 5.1

*Employment Service Experiences*

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<th>Thematic Finding</th>
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Research Question 1b: How do Justice Involved Veteran’s (JIVs) Experience Post-Release Employment-Related Issues including the Successes when Seeking Employment?

For this question, there were several more categories that emerged. There are many successes with the services and programs from the experiences shared by JIVs. For this study, I explored the successes JIVs experienced immediately when they were released, the work experiences of JIVs when they were released, the aspects of the services beneficial to them, and finally the people who were still involved in the lives of JIVs that helped them find the services.

First, the decisions JIVs made when they were immediately released were mainly for a place to live and establish a support system. All participants stayed in state at either a relative’s house or at a temporary housing arrangement provided by the state. One was staying in a hotel. The first people JIVs contacted and where they ended up residing was with family. More than half submitted applications for employment and initially described the process as “good.” Next, I explored the work experiences of JIVs when they were released. At the time of the interviews, more than half of the participants were unemployed and those that were employed had been working for over a month. One JIV was self-employed, another worked in manufacturing, one in warehousing, and the last participant worked for a farm raising rabbits for research. The main reason for those that were unemployed was disability, and retirement. One major finding found only one (JIV-03) reported that his reason for not finding employment was because of his criminal offense. Third, the positive aspects of the services those JIVs experienced consisted of health, mental health, employment, and housing services. For the positive experiences, the JIVs reported a main source of services provided to them came from VA Centers. VA Centers provided medications, counseling, interviewing and resume writing skills, and a place to reside.
Last, a majority of the people that helped the JIVs with the services was still involved in the lives of JIVs in some capacity.

For this section, I discussed how JIVs post-release employment-related experiences included the successes when seeking employment. Overall, their experience with successes consisted of finding a place to live and re-establishing relationships with their families. One noteworthy success included maintaining continued sobriety. This study adds to Schultz et al.’s (2015) study that criminal justice involvement among Veterans is a critical and timely concern, and wrote little is known about criminal histories and clinical characteristics among Veterans seeking treatment for substance use disorders. Another success that was discovered was employment. Tripodi et al. (2009) found that among parolees who are reincarcerated, those who obtain employment spend more time crime-free in the community before returning to prison. For this study, most were unemployed due to retirement or disability.

Table 5.2

_The Experienced Successes of JIVs_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thematic Finding</th>
<th>JIV-01</th>
<th>JIV-02</th>
<th>JIV-03</th>
<th>JIV-04</th>
<th>JIV-05</th>
<th>JIV-06</th>
<th>JIV-07</th>
<th>JIV-08</th>
<th>JIV-09</th>
<th>JIV-10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Obtain housing/residence as the first needs of JIVs when released from prison</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Current employment status of JIVs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disabled</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. JIVs that experienced positive aspects of Veteran services</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. People that initially helped JIVs that are still involved in their lives</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Question 1c: How do Justice Involved Veteran’s (JIVs) Experience Post-Release Employment-Related Issues including Barriers and Challenges?

For this question, more themes emerged. There are many post-released barriers and challenges experienced by JIVs with services and programs. For this section, I explored the Veteran service challenges they experienced, some examples of service related problems, and the difficulties of finding/using Veteran services.

First, the JIVs found the health, substance abuse, employment, and housing Veteran services were the most challenging to them. Some examples of service problems included health (med coverage), substance abuse (no services available), employment (staffing, caught in middle with staff referral), and housing (criminal history) services. Last, the difficulties they had finding and using services mostly consisted of Veterans not knowing what services were exclusively available to them.

Table 5.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Services That Were Challenging to JIVs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Mental Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Substance Abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Career Technical Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Housing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the last question, there were several additional categories that emerged from this study. I noticed that almost all of the participants were excited and engaged when speaking about their military experience. There were many categories associated with JIVs having served in the military that played in their post release employment related issues. For this study, I explored how JIVs described their enlistment, their skills and the technology they learned from the military, benefits of the military, and the challenges of their military experiences.

First, when describing the enlistment of JIVs, most participants enlisted into the military for reasons such as moving out of the house, a fresh start in life, for a career, duty and calling. Only one participant was drafted. Almost all JIVs described their enlistment as a good experience. However, almost all shared that their enlistment came with some challenges such as management, leadership, expectations, meeting goals, structure and discipline to name only a few. Only one participant shared that his enlistment had barriers, substance abuse. Interestingly, he did not list any challenges to his enlistment.

Second, I explored the skills and technology JIVs learned from the military. In this section, I found that JIVs held many job duties and titles and were very proud of the duties they were tasked. Although their military skills helped them individually when released, I found many of the skills that the participants provided were not skills as defined by the U.S. Department of Education Employability Skills Framework (Applied Knowledge, Effective Relationships, and Workplace Skills). Many were combat related such as marksmanship, airborne infantry, tank mechanic, helicopter re-fueling, satellite communications, and aircraft mechanic that they found to be difficult to transfer to civilian life. Some mentioned the core values of the branch of service
such as honor, courage, commitment, and responsibility. Almost all participants used some sort of technology during their enlistment. The most common use of technology consisted of computers and communications. Others consisted of combat related technology such as rifles, scopes, and jeeps. One used new forms of welding for repairs.

Third, I found that all JIVs experienced some benefits from having served in their military experience that played a role in their post-release employment-related experiences. A common theme that emerged was the camaraderie they experienced while in the military. Others included attention to detail, self-discipline, dealing with people, the schooling, freedom (duty/service), the use of technology, and the whole military experience. When asked how these aspects were beneficial to them, all responded with positive responses that dealt with people or the benefits earned from serving in the military. Some examples include building relationships and obtaining work for the JIV that started his own business. Other responses from participants that were beneficial after being released from prison included doing the right thing, learning became easier, G.I. Bill, VA benefits, not being scared, and how to treat others.

The fourth theme that was discovered was the JIVs’ challenges experienced while enlisted in the military. Most of the challenges were the participants’ own internal challenges and the external forces upon them. Internally for example, some JIVs found it challenging following orders, keeping their wits, staying out of trouble, not accepting discipline, and just the whole military experience. Externally, some JIVs found it difficult dealing with other people and their personalities. One JIV found it challenging when dealing with people not cut out for the military, whereas another participant found it challenging to work with other people that don’t do their job. Other examples include contesting people in certain positions and people abusing drugs. Yet
some dealt with their challenges by abusing alcohol themselves. Others dealt with challenges by simply complying with the behavior to get the job done even though they did not approve of it.

Table 5.4

_The Military Experiences of JIVs_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thematic Finding</th>
<th>JIV-01</th>
<th>JIV-02</th>
<th>JIV-03</th>
<th>JIV-04</th>
<th>JIV-05</th>
<th>JIV-06</th>
<th>JIV-07</th>
<th>JIV-08</th>
<th>JIV-09</th>
<th>JIV-10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. JIVs positive perceived experience while enlisted in the military</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. JIVs that felt military experiences that helped them post-release</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. JIVs that experienced challenges while enlisted</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Implications and Recommendations**

The purpose of my study was to understand and describe the post release employment-related experiences of JIVs. This was a phenomenological study researching the lived experience of JIVs and the outcome of the study cannot be generalized for all parolees. Despite this limitation, my study provides future researchers, the Michigan Department of Corrections, Veteran service providers, higher education leaders, and employers, information that can be used to better understand JIVs’ employment-related experiences and how VA services or their experience as Veterans play a role in the JIVs rehabilitation.

The sample for this research study represented a wide range of ages, education, family background, criminal background, and military experience. Regardless of their age and background, these participants had similar influences and experiences as JIVs. Numerous themes found in my study were supported by previous quantitative and qualitative research. Several
themes from my study were not found in previous research and, therefore, it adds to the body of knowledge for parolees and their post-release employment-related experiences. See Tables #5.6 through #5.8 for a summary, followed by a narrative.

Table 5.5

Comparison of Dawson Research with Previous Research: Services and Programs Available to JIVs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dawson Research (What we learned)</th>
<th>Previous Research (What we knew)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1a-1 There are many Veteran service programs available to JIVs.</td>
<td>Confirms McDonough, Blodgett, Midboe, and Blonigen (2015) who reviewed 32 employment specific intervention programs; West and Kregel (2014) provided an overview of 27 federally-funded employment services and supports that can be accessed by Veterans with disabilities, including those designed to meet the needs of the disabled Veteran population.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1a-2 There are very few Veteran services and programs that JIVs are actually involved with.</td>
<td>No previous research found on JIVs, thus Dawson (2017) is a new finding.*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. All participants could report the name of a particular service they had participated in while on parole. However, most identified no more than two that they could name for this section.</td>
<td>New finding. Contradicts Schaffer (2015) who encourages the development of a re-entry outreach model and strategies such as the federal Veteran Justice Outreach and Health Care Reentry for Veterans programs to prevent episodes of criminal recidivism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Most of the services mentioned were locally or state operated, not federally operated.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1a-3 Most JIVs could not describe the services from their perspective.</td>
<td>Confirms West and Kregel (2014) who found that many of the federal programs have little or no readily available data regarding the numbers of Veterans, and none for JIVs with disabilities served or their employment outcomes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

184
Table 5.5 Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dawson Research (What we learned)</th>
<th>Previous Research (What we knew)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. (Continued) Service was never referred to in those contexts by the participants.</td>
<td>Contradicts Kehler and Mittra (1975) who reported the most prevalent request for assistance was institutional skill training/education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Half of the participants are involved with a single service available to them. Of those involved, a majority were involved with health related services.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Only one participant was actively involved with a community college, yet almost all of the JIVs made reference to having an interest in community colleges or higher education.</td>
<td>Confirms Potts (2011) who found that for parolees enrolled in community college, goals for the future include completing the college program and obtaining (better) employment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. There was a lack of reference by almost all of the participants to the Michigan Prisoner Reentry Initiative (MPRI) program. It was apparent that there is a cross collaboration or referral of services offered from the MPRI program with parolees and JIVs from service providers.</td>
<td>This might provide support (Eklin, 2015) to corrections officer’s feelings from the prison setting that the MPRI program is “misguided and dishonest,” but it does provide a small sample of a “success story,” that might change the skepticism of the perceived advantages of the program. Garland, Wodahl, and Cota (2015) found there was a lack of public support for prisoner reentry initiatives that could undermine the sustainability of prisoner reentry as a large-scale movement. In their study, they found that no multivariate, explanatory analyses of the correlates of support for prisoner reentry policies could be found.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1a-4 The Important Aspects of the Services from the JIV Perspective.
7. A resounding majority did not describe the most important aspects of their time when

No previous research found on JIVs, thus Dawson (2017) is a new finding*
Table 5.5 Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dawson Research (What we learned)</th>
<th>Previous Research (What we knew)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7. (Continued) participating in the services they mentioned. This can be explained by the lack of participation or needs for certain services.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1a-5 The Circumstances that Led JIVs to the Services.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. JIVs obtained information about the services through different avenues.</td>
<td>No previous research found on JIVs, thus Dawson (2017) is a new finding*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Once released almost all JIVs sought assistance within days of his release.</td>
<td>No previous research found on JIVs, thus Dawson (2017) is a new finding*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. JIVs obtained information about the services for different reasons.</td>
<td>No previous research found on JIVs, thus Dawson (2017) is a new finding*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The analysis of the JIV interviews suggests several conclusions when considering how JIVs experience post-release employment-related issues including the services and programs available to them. One of the findings from this question is there are many Veteran service providers available to JIVs. When JIVs are released, there are plenty of services that can be accessed specific to any needs of a JIV. This is consistent with McDonough et al. (2015) findings that there are many services intended to help ease the transition from incarceration to the community, including developing linkages to vocational training and employment opportunities for JIVs. West and Kregel (2014) provided an overview of 27 federally-funded employment services and supports that can be accessed by Veterans with disabilities, including those designed
to meet the needs of the disabled Veteran population specifically, the Veteran population in general, and the disability population in general.

A second major finding from this question is *there are very few Veteran services and programs that JIVs are actually involved with.* Although all participants could report the name of a particular service they had participated in while on parole, most identified no more than two that they could name for this section. This is a new finding since no known qualitative studies exist where JIVs have been interviewed to gather this data. This is significant to hear the voices of JIVs and to learn from them what services they are actually involved in. This study was able to access JIVs to explore the services and programs that are known to them. Another new finding was that most of the services mentioned were locally or state operated, not federally operated. This contradicts Schaffer (2015) who encourages the development of a re-entry outreach model and strategies such as the federal Veteran Justice Outreach and Health Care Reentry for Veterans to prevent episodes of criminal recidivism. This finding shows that local programs played a larger role in their rehabilitation over federal services and programs. This is significant since the studies from the literature review made reference to federally funded programs. Now, we can add the experiences from locally funded services to the literature.

A third major finding from this question is *most JIVs did not describe the services from their own perspective.* For instance, the services that I explored (Health Care for Reentry Veterans, Veteran Justice Outreach Initiative, Veterans Court programs, and Priority of Service) were not referred to in those contexts by the participants. This confirms West and Kregel (2014) who found that many of the federal programs have little or no readily available data regarding the numbers of Veterans, and none for JIVs with disabilities served or their employment.
outcomes. This is significant because if JIVs do not provide descriptive data of the programs or services, it would explain why no data is available to federal programs.

Also, it was found that only one participant was actively involved with a community college, yet almost all of the JIVs made reference to having an interest in community colleges or higher education. This confirms Potts (2011) who found that parolees enrolled in community college had goals for the future including completing the college program and obtaining (better) employment. Last, there was a lack of reference by almost all of the participants to the Michigan Prisoner Reentry Initiative (MPRI) program. It was apparent that there is a cross collaboration or referral of services offered from the MPRI program with parolees and JIVs from service providers. The participants from this study made reference to services they participated in, however they were not sure if those services were provided because they were Veterans or if it was part of the MPRI program. This might provide support (Eklin, 2015) to corrections officers’ feelings from the prison setting that the MPRI program is “misguided and dishonest,” but it does provide a small sample of a “success story,” that might change the skepticism of the perceived advantages of the program. Garland et al. (2015) found there was a lack of public support that could assess prisoner reentry initiatives. In their study, they found that no multivariate, explanatory analyses of the correlates of support for prisoner reentry policies could be found. Programs were being offered, but there was no way to assess their success in the public perception.

A fourth major finding from this question is regarding the important aspects of the services from the JIVs’ perspective. A resounding majority did not describe the most important aspects of their time when participating in the services they mentioned. This might explain the lack of participation or needs for certain services if no participants could provide feedback to
assess the program. This new finding is again supported by the lack of qualitative research with parolees as found by Patenaude (2004); Gueron (2000); and Jackson (1987).

The last major finding from this question is regarding the circumstances that led JIVs to Veteran services. From this category, I found three new findings not previously stated in prior research. First, JIVs obtained information about the services through different avenues; once released, almost all JIVs sought assistance from service providers within days of release; and JIVs obtained information about the services for different reasons such obtaining medications, employment services, housing, and healthy living.

I have discussed the post-release employment-related experiences of JIVs. This includes the services and programs available to them. Now I will share my findings of how JIVs experience post-release employment-related issues that include their successes when seeking employment as demonstrated in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparison of Dawson Research: Employment Issues of JIVs.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dawson Research</strong> (What we learned)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1b-1</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. <em>Decisions JIVs made when they were immediately released were mainly for a place to live and establish a support system.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. <em>The first people JIVs contacted and where they ended up residing was with family.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1b-3</th>
<th>The Aspects of the Services Beneficial to JIVs.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Most of the experiences with services JIVs were involved with were positive experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Those that reported being sober felt like they did not need it even though they knew they were available if needed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dawson Research (What we learned)</th>
<th>Previous Research (What we knew)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>improved employment outcomes after release.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirms Decker et al. (2014) who concluded their report with a number of policy recommendations regarding the job preparation, application, and interview process.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirms Tripodi, Kim, and Bender (2009) found that although obtaining employment is not associated with a significant decrease in likelihood of reincarceration, it is associated with significantly greater time to reincarceration.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirms Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014) reported Veterans with a service-connected disability had an unemployment rate of 5.9% in August 2014</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No previous research found on JIVs, thus Dawson (2017) is a new finding*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirms Schultz, Blonigen, Finlay, and Timko (2015) who wrote that little is known about criminal histories and clinical characteristics among Veterans</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 5.6 Continued</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dawson Research (What we learned)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Previous Research (What we knew)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Those that reported being sober felt like they did not need it even though they knew they were available if needed.</td>
<td>Confirms Schultz, Blonigen, Finlay, and Timko (2015) who wrote that little is known about criminal histories and clinical characteristics among Veterans seeking treatment for substance use disorders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b-4 Some people are still involved in the lives of JIVs.</td>
<td><strong>No previous research found on JIVs, thus Dawson (2017) is a new finding</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. JIVs spoke favorably of the people still in their lives that helped them when released.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further analysis of the JIV interviews suggest four conclusions when considering how JIVs experience post-release employment-related issues including the successes. The first finding from this question found that of all the decisions that need to be made, two decisions JIVs made immediately when released emerged. JIVs searched for a place to live and to establish a support system. This confirms the Garland et al. (2015) study supporting post-release transitional housing units, and the opposition of offenders housing opportunities. Another positive decision JIVs made was first contacting and residing with family when they were released. This confirms Visher, Debus-Sherrill et al. (2011) who reported that conventional family relationships improved employment outcomes after release.

The second finding from this question found three work experiences of JIVs when released. More than half of the JIVs submitted applications for employment and initially described the process as good. This confirms Decker et al. (2014) who concluded their report with a number of policy recommendations regarding the job preparation, application, and
interview process. Also, six of the participants were unemployed and the four that were employed had been working for over a month. This confirms Tripodi et al. (2009) who found that although obtaining employment is not associated with a significant decrease in likelihood of re-incarceration, it is associated with significantly greater time to re-incarceration. Last, the main reasons for JIVs’ unemployment status in this study was attributed to their disability and retirement (60%). This contradicts the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014) report that Veterans with a service-connected disability had an unemployment rate of 5.9% in August 2014.

The third finding from this question is that there are three aspects of the services beneficial to JIVs. Most of the experiences with services JIVs were involved with were positive experiences. No previous research was found on JIVs, thus Dawson (2017) is a new finding. A second finding is the participants that reported being sober felt like they did not need substance abuse treatment even though they knew the services were available if needed. This finding confirms Schultz et al. (2015) who wrote that little is known about criminal histories and clinical characteristics among Veterans seeking treatment for substance use disorders. If JIVs do not participate in services, little is known about the services.

The fourth finding from this question found some of the people who initially helped JIVs were still involved in the lives of JIVs. When asked, JIVs spoke favorably of the people still in their lives that helped them when released. No previous research was found on JIVs, thus Dawson (2017) is a new finding. I have discussed the post-release employment-related issues experiences of JIVs. This includes the services and programs available to JIVs. Now I will share my findings of how JIVs experience post-release employment-related issues that include the barriers and challenges when seeking employment as demonstrated in Table 5.7.
Table 5.7

**Comparison of Dawson Research: Barriers and Challenges**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1c-1</th>
<th>The Challenges of a JIV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Dawson Research</strong> (What we learned)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. <em>Health, substance abuse, employment, and housing Veteran services were the most challenging to them.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. <em>Stigma was a minimal factor in this study.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>1c-2</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. <em>Some Examples of Service Problems of JIVs</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. (Continued) Some examples of service problems included health (med coverage), substance abuse (no services available), employment (staffing, caught in middle with staff referral), and housing (criminal history) services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. <em>The most frequent example given was related to the employment service category.</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>1c-3</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Difficulties Finding/Using Services.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>The difficulties they had finding and using services mostly consisted of Veterans not knowing what services were exclusively available to them.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Further analysis of the JIV interviews suggest three conclusions when considering how JIVs experienced post-release employment-related issues including the barriers and challenges. One of the findings from this question is the challenges of JIVs when looking for employment. The most common challenges JIVs experienced were Health, substance abuse, employment, and housing Veteran services. This confirms Durcan (2012) who said around 90% of criminal offenders under supervision have a mental health problem, personality disorder or addiction, and most have two or more such problems. Shocking, Stigma was a minimal factor in this study. This is encouraging since Needels’ (1996) labeling theory argues that the stigma of criminality can increase the likelihood of future criminal offending by limiting access to employment.

The second finding from this question is the examples of service problems of JIVs. Some examples of service problems included health (med coverage); substance abuse (no services available); employment (staffing, caught in middle with staff referral); and housing (criminal history) services. No previous research was found on JIVs, thus Dawson (2017) is a new finding. The most frequent example given was related to the employment service category. No previous research was found on JIVs, thus Dawson (2017) is a new finding. This adds to West and Kregel (2014) who found that many of the federal programs have little or no readily available data regarding the numbers of Veterans, and none for JIVs with disabilities served or their employment outcomes.

The third finding from this question was that JIVs had difficulties finding/using services. The difficulties they had finding and using services mostly consisted of Veterans not knowing what services were exclusively available to them. No previous research was found on JIVs, thus Dawson (2017) is a new finding. I have discussed the post-release employment-related issues experiences of JIVs including the challenges and barriers. Now I will share my findings of the
role that JIVs’ experiences of and identity associated with having served in the military, played in their post-release employment related issues. This is illustrated in Table 5.8.

Table 5.8

Comparison of Dawson Research: Experience of, and Identity Associated with Having Served in the Military

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dawson Research (What we learned)</th>
<th>Previous Research (What we knew)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2-1 Describing the Enlistment of JIVs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Most participants enlisted into the military for reasons such as moving out of the house, a fresh start in life, for a career, duty and calling.</td>
<td>Supports Moskos (1977) institutional (duty, honor, country) and organizational (Identity, payment) models of why people enlist in the military. Eighmey (2006) also associated the tangible, self-serving themes of benefits, dignity, challenges, and adventure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Almost all JIVs described their enlistment as a good experience.</td>
<td>No previous research found on JIVs, thus Dawson (2017) is a new finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. JIVs that saw combat faced more challenges than those that did not experience combat.</td>
<td>No previous research found on JIVs, thus Dawson (2017) is a new finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-2 The Skills &amp; Technology Learned from the Military.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Many of the skills that the participants learned in the military were not skills as defined by the U.S. Department of Education Employability Skills Framework (Applied Knowledge, Effective Relationships, and Workplace Skills).</td>
<td>No previous research found on JIVs, thus Dawson (2017) is a new finding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.8 Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dawson Research (What we learned)</th>
<th>Previous Research (What we knew)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. Almost all participants used some sort of technology during their enlistment.</td>
<td>No previous research found on JIVs, thus Dawson (2017) is a new finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. A common theme that emerged was the camaraderie they experienced while in the military.</td>
<td>No previous research found on JIVs, thus Dawson (2017) is a new finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. All responded with positive responses that involved dealing with people or the benefits earned from serving in the military?</td>
<td>No previous research found on JIVs, thus Dawson (2017) is a new finding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2-3 The Benefits of the Military Experience.

6. A common theme that emerged was the camaraderie they experienced while in the military.

7. All responded with positive responses that involved dealing with people or the benefits earned from serving in the military?

No previous research found on JIVs, thus Dawson (2017) is a new finding.

2-4 The Challenges of the Military Experience.

8. Most of the challenges were the participants’ own internal social challenges and the external forces upon them.

9. Externally, JIVs found it difficult dealing with other people and their personalities.

No previous research found on JIVs, thus Dawson (2017) is a new finding. Helfgott (1997) suggest that social distance is an issue that may hinder the reentry success for some offenders.

No previous research found on JIVs, thus Dawson (2017) is a new finding. Fahey et al. (2006) found although employers consider technical skills to be important in the selection process, they reported non-technical (“soft”) skills as being most important. These soft skills include good communication and interpersonal skills, ability and willingness to learn, attention to detail, reliability, and showing up for work on time.

No previous research found on JIVs, thus Dawson (2017) is a new finding. To further promote this resilience, researchers and clinicians should understand military culture so they can better interact with Veterans in a culturally competent manner and provide information that will aid in creating supportive working environments (Yamada, Atuel, & Weiss 2013; Savitsky, Illingworth, & DuLaney, 2009).
Further analysis of the JIV interviews suggest four conclusions when considering how the role of JIVs’ experiences of/and identity associated with having served in the military, played in their post-release employment related issues. The first finding from this question found JIVs could generally describe their enlistment in the military as positive. Most participants enlisted into the military for reasons such as moving out of the house, a fresh start in life, for a career, duty and calling. This supports Moskos (1977) institutional (duty, honor, country) and organizational (identity, payment) models of why people enlist in the military. Eighmey (2006) also associated the tangible, self-serving themes of benefits, dignity, challenges, and adventure. Another new finding was almost all JIVs described their enlistment as a good experience and to no surprise, JIVs that saw combat faced more challenges than those that did not experience combat. The challenges they faced dealt with dealing with people and their thinking attitudes. Specifically taking orders, making decisions that involved the lives of others, training provided by people not qualified, and superiors not agreeing with the work the JIV performed. No previous research was found on these JIVs, thus Dawson (2017) is a new finding.

The second finding from this question explored the skills and technology JIVs learned from the military. One theme that emerged was many of the skills that the participants learned in the military were not skills as defined by the U.S. Department of Education Employability Skills Framework (Applied Knowledge, Effective Relationships, and Workplace Skills). Another theme that emerged was almost all participants used some sort of technology during their enlistment. No previous research was found on JIVs with these themes, thus Dawson (2017) is a new finding.
The third finding from this question sought to discover the benefits of the military experience. A common theme that emerged was the camaraderie JIVs experienced while feeling a part of a group in the military. No previous research was found on JIVs, thus Dawson (2017) is a new finding. When asked how these aspects from the military were beneficial to them, all JIVs provided positive responses that involved dealing with people or the benefits earned from serving in the military. No previous research was found on JIVs, thus Dawson (2017) is a new finding, however Fahey et al. (2006) found although employers consider technical skills to be important in the selection process, they reported non-technical (“soft”) skills as being most important. These soft skills include good communication and interpersonal skills, ability and willingness to learn, attention to detail, reliability, and showing up for work on time.

The fourth finding from this question researched the challenges of the military experience. Most of the challenges were the participants’ own internal social challenges and the external forces upon them. No previous research was found on JIVs, thus Dawson (2017) is a new finding. Helfgott (1997) suggest that social distance is an issue that may hinder the reentry success for some offenders. Last, JIVs found it difficult dealing with other people within the military and their personalities. No previous research was found on JIVs, thus Dawson (2017) is a new finding. To further promote this resilience, researchers and clinicians should understand military culture so they can better interact with Veterans in a culturally competent manner and provide information that will aid in creating supportive working environments (Decker, et al., 2014; Savitsky, et al., 2009; Yamada et al., 2013). These findings helped to inform the next section, which will discuss the recommendations for future researchers, department of corrections, and Veteran service providers.
Limitations and Delimitations

My study explored the post-release employment-related experiences of 10 JIVs. Within my study, I intentionally sought the employment *experiences* of JIVs so I did not make it a requirement that the participants be civilians or if they were employed or not. I also excluded participants that were on probation and only included those on parole. In doing so, I eliminated a large number of potential participants for this study. I have also limited the research sample to only State of Michigan JIVs. The inclusion of other states’ JIVs would have been interesting and could have different results.

The amount of participants were adequate at 10 participants, but the sample of respondents might have been larger if I had been able to market the study over a larger time frame and if I could have been able to make contact myself. This study design required the participants to contact me if they were interested. Since I was an MDOC employee, I could not actively recruit because of the perception of coercion. The actual posting for the study was sent out to all parole offices in the State of Michigan, Michigan Works! offices, and service providers where available. Since I could not actively recruit, the number of JIVs who could have been contacted would have provided a more diverse sample. Therefore, 10 participants were not representative of the overall JIV population.

Since the study required the JIVs to make contact with me the age, race, and gender of those that volunteered for this study is also not representative of the entire JIV population. The study was also delimited to the employment experiences of the participants. Some JIVs had little to offer for responses due to being retired, disabled, sustainable employment, short-term employment, and whether parole was a motivating factor to seek employment. Future consideration with these variables would be interesting.
Recommendations for Future Work

Recommendations for Future Research

Recommendations for application of the qualitative research findings provide suggestions for future researchers, department of corrections, and Veteran service providers. When comparing the findings from the four major categories of my study (Programs and Services; Successes; Challenges and Barriers; and Military Identity) to previous research on parolees or Veterans, 16 studies held relationships with my study. However, my study provided 20 new findings to add to the current literature. As the research shows, each service category (health, mental health, substance abuse, employment, CTE/vocational, and housing services) will vary based on the needs of JIVs. However, there may be some recommendations that could be applicable to JIVs in general (service awareness, communication, pre-enrollment while incarcerated, mentoring, advocacy, skills transferability, etc.).

Recommendations for Future Researchers

There were very few results when I attempted to compare the findings from my study to previous research on parolees or Veterans because there is very little qualitative research that targeted JIVs. Most studies were prisoners, parolees, or Veterans. “While this review is intended to highlight employment-focused interventions for justice-involved Veterans, very few of the intervention studies focused on justice-involved Veterans specifically, with much of the research drawn from the literature on the justice-involved general adult population. There is minimal literature on justice-involved Veterans, and even less literature on Veteran sub-populations” (Blodgett et al., 2015, p. 6). I reference Patenaude (2004), Gueron (2000), and Jackson (1987) who reported the challenge remains with qualitative research conducted with prison-related
populations: (a) researchers need to decide to get their hands dirty in prison, and (b) correctional managers need to facilitate such research. The reason for such little research that is available is it is not easy to gain access to the population and it takes considerable time.

Future researchers can benefit from building relationships with Departments of Corrections leadership. Without the cooperation of all stakeholders (department of corrections, service providers and JIVs), it makes it very difficult to gain access to JIVs, which explains why there is very little research available. Researchers need to honor the safety and security concerns of a correctional facility, the rules and regulations, and recognize the work corrections staff performs on a daily basis.

Last, let us not forget the victims of crimes as we often do. I would find it interesting if future research were conducted on the victims of JIVs and what their thoughts are of the rehabilitation of JIVs and if this sub-population of prisoners might be worth researching restorative justice efforts with the Veteran Outreach Program. Restorative justice is a system of criminal justice that focuses on the rehabilitation of offenders through reconciliation with victims and the community at large.

**Recommendations for Department of Corrections**

Dirkx et al. (1999) found that much work remained to be done with respect to the overall goal of helping inmates develop more marketable skills, to improve the overall effectiveness of vocational programming within the Michigan Department of Corrections. They wrote the Michigan Department of Corrections needed to foster a strong and consistent vision for vocational education throughout its facilities. A number of policies at the time of their research adversely affected vocational programming, in terms of inmate participation such as completion of programs, updating technology, materials, and resources, and determining program outcomes.
Some examples include

Under recent new leadership, the MDOC began a nationally recognized “Vocational Village” where multiple vocations are held at one prison. Such success might bring interest to a “Veterans Village” where JIVs are housed together, like “Patriot Place” and services could be streamlined into one location. LePage et al. (2013) found that the group format was associated with quicker employment and more total employment than the basic and self-study conditions for that population. Based on the emergence of “Camaraderie” of JIVs, perhaps a longitudinal study could track the success rates of a population separate from other prisoner JIVs from the model of the MDOC “Veterans Village.”

JIVs showed an interest in continued education, yet there was only one that was enrolled in higher education. Many found they did not have the time, resources, or they had restrictions preventing them from enrolling into a school program. Without sacrificing the safety and security of the community, perhaps MDOC leadership would consider a graduated restriction of parole conditions (such as tether restrictions) if certain incentive based goals were met so JIVs could enroll into training programs. Also, prisoner awareness of the G.I. Bill and Pell Grant should continue to be promoted in correctional facilities.

Additional sub-populations (gender, race, age, offense, etc.) and the research conducted would benefit with future studies, as this study was limited to only white males that are relatively older.

**Recommendations for Veteran Service Providers**

The participants for this study were energetic and interested in services, but most had no knowledge of the services available to them. When asked about their experiences with service providers, most had little to give. Those participants that did comment had positive experiences
for the most part. One JIV commented how one individual from Michigan Works! reached out to him and how much that meant to him. I felt the JIVs wanted to be served and would participate more if they were encouraged or mentored more by service providers. JIVs for the most part would do any amount of work if led. Most would not reach out for help on their own until later in life when health issues require medical attention, like prescription drugs. It is recommended that mentors play an active role prior to the JIVs release to help guide them to those services when released.

Also, I noted that the Priority of Service (POS) was never mentioned. It seems as if the Veterans have no idea that they are given preference for Federal programs or assistance at service providers such as Michigan Works!. Yet, none of the JIVs mentioned POS as if they had no idea that they have earned the right after serving their country. One JIV recommended that a brochure be provided to the prison for programs and services when released. In this brochure, POS could also be included. Videos could also be prepared and played for Veterans explaining what they could expect when released from prison.

Last, there seemed to be a lack of communication or collaboration of services between service providers. One JIV made reference that he felt it would be a good idea to have an assessment tool that would help assess the needs before being released from prison so a roadmap could be laid out for them as soon as they are released. Perhaps it would help to have a service provider available to them at the facility they are released from the day of release so the JIV knows right away that they are available to them.

Chapter V Summary

This phenomenological study examined the actual, lived experiences of Justice Involved Veterans’ post-release employment-related experiences. By exploring the employment-related
experiences of JIVs, this study shares the ways in which JIVs draw upon their post-release employment-related experiences. This study focused on ten participants and their experiences, insights, and dispositions while exploring their post-release employment occurrences.

From this study, the most revealing things to me were the lives of parolees from “the other side.” That is, for a brief moment, I was able to explore the lives of JIVs as people now living in my community. When you work “inside” with prisoners, there is a clear “us versus them” mentality between staff and prisoners. There is no association with prisoners, and there is definitely no relationships established. In the community setting however, JIVs were normal people to me. The JIVs did their time and now they were simply trying to survive, blend in, and are accepted. There were no state blues uniforms; the language or vernacular was more respectful, and they wanted to fit in. From my perspective, I learned to listen more to what was being said and what was experienced from the participants. In the prison setting, two-way communication is still a challenge. In the real world though, the conversation between the JIV and the surrounding world seemed more “human,” and less stigmatized when the conversation centered on a purpose; every day events; or where the JIV was going in life, not where he had been.

From this study, I found two significant discoveries from the JIVs experiences. First, the participants desire to work, and to work with others. These participants were not “loners” or reclusive as I previously perceived them. They wanted to fit in with society and a chance to prove them as “honorable.” Second, I was disappointed that so many JIVs reported that they were unaware of the services that were available to them that they could so easily access if shown what was available to them.
As a researcher, I learned it would have been easy to find another topic that was not as challenging to gain the necessary approvals than researching a protected population such as parolees. I could have selected a topic and had it completed months ago. However, I selected this topic because there was a lack of qualitative literature available and I believed in the topic. Through the process of this research, I learned so much more about myself, and how I view others. I also learned to appreciate “the good” of everything, and to appreciate my family more for allowing me to conduct this research. This research was difficult. As I reviewed my work from the past, I am embarrassed at the quality of the work I started, but proud of how it ended. Through the education I obtained, I feel I made progress within myself as a researcher and give much respect to those that continue to conduct research. In closing, if it were easy, everyone would be doing it.
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Appendix A

Interview Questions
Interview Format

Project: Justice Involved Veterans’ Post-Release Employment-Related Experiences

Start Time of Interview: ____________________________________________________
End Time of Interview: ____________________________________________________
Date of Interview: ________________________________________________________
Location: _______________________________________________________________
Interviewer: _______________________________________________________________
Participant # and Code: ____________________________________________________

Thank you for consenting to participate in this study. I am employed by the Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC) at a correctional facility and as a student researcher I cannot influence Field Office Administration (FOA) decisions. The decision to participate or not to participate in this study shall not result in any sanctions, penalties, or loss of your privileges.

I would like to record the interview so the study can be as accurate as possible. You may request that the recorder be turned off at any point of the interview. This interview will probably take 60-90 minutes to complete.

Lead-in: Today, we are going to conclude our discussion of your post-release employment-related experiences by discussing your life prior to being incarcerated, post-release experiences, and employment services available to Veterans, your time in the military, post-release employment goals, and the opportunity to voice your experiences for employers to consider. Today’s final interview will help us to understand this phenomenon.

PART I

First, let’s discuss some of your information that will help capture your life prior to being incarcerated:

1. Education and family relationships:
   a. What is the highest level of education your parents obtained?
   b. What was the highest level of education you have obtained?
   c. Did you possess any specialized training, certificates, or licenses?
   d. Were you married or living together as a married couple with someone before prison?
   e. Did you have children under age 18 when you entered prison?

2. Pre-prison substance use:
   a. Frequent drug use or intoxication?
   b. Frequent illegal drug use?
   c. If so, which drug?
Interview Format---Continued

3. Criminal history:
   a. What was the age of your first arrest?
   b. Did you ever serve time in a juvenile facility?
   c. Did you ever have your parole or probation revoked?

4. Current prison sentence:
   a. How much time did you serve?
   b. How much time have you been on parole?
   c. Is your current term due to probation or parole violation?
   d. Were you ever placed in a maximum/high risk security facility?

5. Military:
   a. What branch of the military did you serve?
   b. What was your highest rank obtained?
   c. How many years did you serve?
   d. Were you a combat Veteran?
   e. What was your discharge status?

PART II

Next, let’s discuss your post-release experiences:

6. Please walk me through what you did immediately after being released from prison?
   a. Where did you go?
   b. Where did you settle/decide to live?
   c. Who were the first people you contacted when you were last released?
   d. Who did you end up living with?
   e. How many jobs did you apply for when you were released?
   f. What was it like applying for those jobs?

7. Where are you employed?
   a. How long have you been employed?
   b. What are your responsibilities or job duties?
   c. If not employed, what reasons do you feel you have remained unemployed?

PART III

Next, let’s talk about the employment services available to Veterans:

8. Were there any Veteran employment services that were helpful to you?
   a. Which ones?
   b. Are you participating in any services now?
      i. Health
Interview Format---Continued

ii. Mental Health?
iii. Substance abuse treatment?
iv. Employment?
v. Career Technology Education/Vocational Trades?
vii. Housing?

c. What are those services like?
i. Health?
ii. Mental health?
iii. Substance abuse treatment?
iv. Employment?
v. Career technology education/vocational trades?
vii. Housing?

d. What are the most important aspects of your time there?

e. What aspects of the service do you find to be most beneficial?
i. How are they beneficial to you?

f. What aspects of this service do you find to be the most challenging?
i. How are they challenging?
ii. How do you deal with these challenges?

g. Can you walk me through a time when you had to deal with a problem or a challenging issue with a service?

h. Please tell me about the circumstances that led you to come to those services?
   i. How did you find out about (name of Veteran employment service)?
   ii. When did you decide to inquire about the Veteran service?
   iii. What were the determining factors?
   iv. Who helped you come to those decisions?
   v. Are any of the people from (name of employment service agency or organization) still involved in your life?
      1. How are they involved with you?
      2. Do they help you in any way while you were searching for employment?
   vi. What did you hope to accomplish by being there?

i. Have you had difficulties finding or using Veteran employment services since you’ve been out?

j. What are your overall thoughts about what Veteran employment services are available to you?
PART IV

Now, let’s talk about your time in the military:

9. Why did you join the military?
10. How would you describe your enlistment in the military?
11. What challenges and barriers did you face while enlisted?
12. What skills did you learn from the military?
13. What use of technology was available to you?
   A. If technology was available, what was it like for you to operate?
14. What are the most important aspects of your time while in the military?
   a. What aspects of the military did you find to be most beneficial?
   b. How are they beneficial to you?
   c. What aspects of the military did you find to be the most challenging?
      i. How were they challenging?
      ii. How did you deal with those challenges?
15. Can you walk me through a time when you had to deal with a problem or a challenging issue while in the military?
   a. How did you deal with that problem or issue?

PART V

Last, let’s discuss your post-release employment goals:

16. What employment goals and expectations do you have for yourself?
   a. How do you go about meeting those goals?
   b. How did the MDOC help prepare you to meet those goals?
   c. What are your long-term employment goals?
   d. What additional training do plan on obtaining?
   e. Help me understand the importance to work and what it means to you?

Part VI

We’ve come to the end of the interview. I would like to give you the opportunity to speak directly to employers.

17. What would you like employers to know about your experience in prison that would make you a candidate to hire?
   A. Why should employers hire a person who has served time in prison?
   B. What does it mean to be “job ready” to you?

18. If there was something someone could have said or done that would have helped you once you were discharged from your military service that would have changed the path that led you to prison, what would it have been?
19. Is there anything that I missed that you would like to tell me about your employment-related experiences since you’ve left the MDOC?

Thank you for your time today. I appreciate your willingness to participate in our study. The information you shared is valuable and will be treated with complete confidentiality. The next step will be for the recording to be transcribed. Once the recording of your interview is transcribed, I will contact you so you may review the transcription to ensure that it is accurate and reflects what you said. When you receive the transcription, it will have a pseudo name and number and any information that identifies you will be redacted.

Your review of the transcript is completely voluntary. If you choose to review your transcript, please remember these three items:

1. Read for accuracy. The transcription will be verbatim, but you may want to elaborate upon, correct, or add to one or more areas of your responses.
2. Reflect on how well the transcript tells your story. Feel free to fill in any gaps.
3. Be sure that the transcript accurately captures both how you experienced things and how you make sense of your experiences. Again, feel free to fill in the gaps.

I will send you these same prompts when I send you the transcript. You will receive it as a word attachment to an email, so please provide me with a private email account, if you wish me to send it there rather than to your personal email account. I suggest you download the electronic word file of your interview transcript and make your edits and revisions on an attachment page. If you would rather use a different process to highlight any additions you make to the transcript, just let me know at the time, so I am clear on how I will get your feedback. Do you have any questions?

Again, thank you for giving your time and your voice to this study. Also, thank you for your service.

James L. Dawson
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Ph.D. Candidate in Educational Leadership
Career and Technical Education Concentration
James.L.dawson@wmich.edu
(231)715-1323
Appendix B

Recruitment Flyer
Recruitment Flyer

JUSTICE INVOLVED VETERANS NEEDED FOR A STUDY OF EMPLOYMENT-RELATED EXPERIENCES

Are you: 1) A military Veteran, 2) Received anything but a dishonorable discharge, and 3) Currently on parole from the Michigan Department of Corrections?

If you answered yes to all of these questions, you may be eligible to participate in a confidential research study that examines your employment-related experiences.

As a participant in this study, you will be asked to:
1) Provide personal information,
2) Complete an interview with the researcher that will last for approximately 60-90 minutes,
3) Review your results.

To volunteer for this study, please contact the student investigator of the study, James Dawson at james.l.dawson@wmich.edu or at (231) 715-1323.

This study has been approved by the HSIRB at Western Michigan University and by the IRB at the Michigan Department of Corrections. Letters of approval are included from each with this posting.
Appendix C

Letter of Invitation for JIV Participation
[Date]

Dear Sir,

Thank you for responding to my recruitment for my study. My name is James Dawson, and I employed by the MDOC at a correctional facility. I am also completing my Ph.D. in Educational Leadership--concentration in Career and Technical Education at Western Michigan University and would like to invite you to participate in a research project that I think will benefit all justice-involved Veterans (JIVs). As a student researcher I cannot influence field office administration (FOA) decisions. The decision to participate or not to participate in this study shall not result in any sanctions, penalties, or loss of your privileges. The purpose of this study is to give a voice to JIVs about their personal post-release employment-related experiences. Veterans—especially those involved with the criminal justice system—stand to benefit greatly as researchers learn more about their employment-related experiences. Post-Traumatic Stress, Traumatic Brain Injury, Mental Illness, and Substance Abuse—have already been improved through knowledge about employment-related experiences of Veterans. This study may lead to new knowledge about which employment-related experiences help JIVs succeed, and which ones remains a barrier. This knowledge may eventually lead to ways we can reduce recidivism. This research project is part of the requirements for the doctoral degree in which I am a student.

Participants in this study will be asked to complete a single one-on-one confidential 60-90-minute interview with the researcher. The interview will take place in a comfortable and confidential setting of your choice or by phone. After the interview, you will be asked to review a transcript of the interview to add or expand upon what you said if you wish to do that. Both the audio recording and transcript of the interview will use a participant number and code name, and any potentially identifying information about you and your residence will be redacted. Only the researcher will know the names and residence of actual participants.

If you need more information before you make your decision, please contact me at either this email address (james.l.dawson@wmich.edu) or this phone number (231) 715-1323 and I will answer any questions you have. Thank you for your consideration of this request to be a part of an important study. I would appreciate a response to this letter, so I know that you have received it.

Sincerely,

James L. Dawson
Western Michigan University
Ph.D. Candidate in Educational Leadership
Career and Technical Education Concentration
Appendix D

Follow-Up Phone/Email Script for Participation
Follow-up Phone/ Email Script for Participation

Hello, my name is James Dawson.

I contacted you a few days ago by mail and/or e-mail hoping you will participate in my dissertation study of Justice Involved Veterans’ (JIVs) post-release employment-related experiences. This study is in partial fulfillment of my Ph.D. in Educational Leadership--concentration in Career and Technical Education at Western Michigan University.

The purpose of this study is to understand and describe JIVs’ post-release employment-related experiences. As a JIV on parolee, your post-release employment-related experiences and valuable insights may benefit other JIVs prior to release from prison as they transition to parole or community supervision.

One benefit you may gain from participation in the study is a better understanding of your employment-related experiences as a JIV. Another benefit from this study is by providing the researchers with information that can be used to reduce recidivism. If you choose to participate and you are required to travel, you will receive a $20 gas card to cover your transportation expenses after the interview.

If you agree to participate, I would speak with you for about 60-90 minutes during one visit. The interview would be scheduled at a time and location that is convenient for you or by telephone conference. You will be asked about your employment-related experiences as a JIV.

If you are interested, I would like to meet with you to review details about the research and go over a consent document. If after this you agree to participate, we can proceed with the interview at that time. If you are not interested, opting out of the study will not impact your parole status. All information collected from you will be completely confidential. Only the researcher will know of your participation.

If you have any questions about the study, I would be happy to answer them at this time. I would like to schedule a visit to explain the consent form and discuss your post-release employment-related experiences. May I schedule a visit to explain the consent form and continue our conversation about your post-release employment-related experience?

Thank you and I look forward to meeting you. In the meantime, please feel free to contact me with any questions that you may have about the study. You can contact me by email at: james.l.dawson@wmich.edu, or by phone at (231) 715-1323.

OR, if not

Thank you for speaking with me. I understand that are not able to participate in this study. I appreciate the time that you spent as you considered participation.
Appendix E

Informed Consent Form
Informed Consent Form

Western Michigan University
Department of Educational Leadership, Research, and Technology

Principal Investigator: Dr. Richard Zinser
Student Investigator: James Dawson
Title of Study: Justice Involved Veterans’ Post-Release Employment-Related Experiences

You have been invited to participate in a research project titled, “Justice Involved Veterans’ Post-Release Employment-Related Experiences.” This project will serve as James Dawson’s research project for the requirements of obtaining a Doctor of Philosophy. This consent document will explain the purpose of this research project and will go over all of the time commitments, the procedures used in the study, and the risks and benefits of participating in this research project. Please read this consent form carefully and completely and please ask any questions if you need more clarification.

What are we trying to find out in this study?
This qualitative study examines justice involved Veterans post-release employment-related experiences.

Who can participate in this study?
You can participate in this study if you are currently on parole from the Michigan Department of Corrections. We are not conducting an evaluation of your programming; rather we are interested in how you are experiencing the shift from prison to successful discharge from incarceration.

Where will this study take place?
All interviews will take place within a private conference room at a Michigan works! office public library conference room, or location to be determined within a reasonable distance to the research participant.

In the event a face-to-face interview cannot be arranged, a recorded audio teleconference will be arranged at a time convenient to the research participant. Once agreed, I will place the call to the participant at a number provided to me. This number will be protected for confidentiality.

What is the time commitment for participating in this study?
Your total time commitment to the study will be approximately 60-90 minutes.

What will you be asked to do if you choose to participate in this study?
If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in 60-90-minute in-depth interview with the researcher. During the interview you will be asked a series of 6 questions related to your life prior to being incarcerated, post-release experiences, employment services available to Veterans, your time in the military, post-release employment goals, and the opportunity to voice
your experiences for employers to consider. The interview will be audiotaped and later transcribed. You will receive a copy of the transcript with an invitation to review and add to it if you want to clarify anything you said in the interview or add more information.

**What information is being measured during the study?**
The focus of the interview will be a conversation about your post-release employment-related experiences. You will be asked to describe your experiences and the meaning those experiences hold for you. Your descriptions will be compared with those of other study participants to identify common themes and/or ways in which JIVs experiences differ from one another.

**What are the risks of participating in this study and how will these risks be minimized?**
The foreseeable risks associated with this study are minimal and there will be no monetary cost to the participant, although your time participating is a known expense and I will make every effort to schedule interviews with you so that it does not interfere with your personal or professional commitments. If you choose to participate and are required to travel, you will receive a $20 gas card to cover your transportation expenses after the interview.

There may be some risk or discomfort from participation in this research. Some of the questions I ask may make you feel uncomfortable, sad, embarrassed, or evoke some feelings of anxiety. The interview includes questions about military experience, employment, and any criminal history that you may have. If answers to these questions were disclosed, you could be at risk of criminal prosecution, loss of employment, or social stigma. I am aware of these risks and will make every effort to ensure that the information provided is kept confidential. In addition, you will not have to answer questions you are uncomfortable answering.

Since some of the questions I will ask are about sensitive subject matters, I will take the following precautions to ensure the information you share with me is kept confidential and your privacy is maintained:

1. Audio recordings from the interviews will be uploaded and stored onto secure password encrypted computer files and erased from the audio device within 48 hours after transcribed.
2. Contact information will be kept in separate file folder, in a locked cabinet, in a locked office at my residence.
3. We will use pseudonyms rather than names to link the information you share with me to your contact information.
4. A decoder key linking contact information with interview data will be kept in a separate file folder, in a locked cabinet, in a locked office at my residence.
5. No identifiable information about people in this study will be shared with anyone outside of the research team.
Informed Consent Form—Continued

6. All identifiable data, including audio files (once transcribed) with identifiable data, will be securely destroyed or deleted at the conclusion of data collection and transcription.

7. Only de-identified data, that is data with all identification removed from it, will be kept for possible future use.

8. No identifiable information will be used in presentations, articles, book chapters and/or manuscripts, or any other product that results from this research study. Instead, pseudonyms or fake names will be used.

You can choose to stop participating in the study at any time for any reason. You will not suffer any prejudice or penalty by your decision to stop your participation. You will experience no consequences, penalty, or judgment if you choose to withdraw from this study.

What are the benefits of participating in this study?
There are no known immediate benefits to participants for involvement in this study; however, you may experience some emotional benefit from being afforded an opportunity to express your personal employment-related experiences. Post Traumatic Stress, Traumatic Brain Injury, Mental Illness, and Substance Abuse—have already been improved through knowledge about employment-related experiences of Veterans. This study may lead to new knowledge about which employment-related experiences help JIVs succeed, and which ones remain to be a barrier. This knowledge may eventually lead to ways we can reduce recidivism.

Are there any costs associated with participating in this study?
Your time participating in this study is a known expense and I will make every effort to schedule interviews with you so that it does not interfere with your personal or professional commitments. Otherwise, there will be no monetary costs for your participation.

Is there any compensation for participating in this study?
There is no compensation for participating in this study. However, if a teleconference cannot be arranged, you will receive a $20 gas card to cover your transportation expenses after the interview.

Who will have access to the information collected during this study?
The principal investigator, student investigator and transcriptionist will be the only persons to have access to the information collected as part of this study. Once transcribed, the digital recordings of the interviews will be deleted and the remaining transcription will have all identifying information redacted or replaced by a participant number or code. Data from the study will be maintained on an encrypted and password protected electronic storage device and stored in a locked file or cabinet in the researcher’s office until the conclusion of the study when the data will be transferred to and maintained by the Western Michigan University research archives for a minimum of three years after the close of the study, then destroyed. All information will be treated with complete confidentiality. You will be assigned a specific participant number to protect your identity and ensure confidentiality of your responses.
De-identified research findings will be published as part of the student researcher’s dissertation and may also be utilized by the researchers in future publications or presentations.

Should you have any questions prior to or during the study you can call me, the student investigator, at (231) 715-1323 or via e-mail at james.l.dawson@wmich.edu. You may also contact the primary investigator, Dr. Richard Zinser at 269-387-3007 or via e-mail at richard.zinser@wmich.edu. You may also contact the Chair, Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at 269-387-8293 or the Vice President for Research at 269-387-8298 if questions arise during the course of the study.

This consent document has been approved for use for one year by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the board chair in the upper right corner. Do not participate in this study if the stamped date is older than one year.

I have read this informed consent document. The risks and benefits have been explained to me, and I agree to take part in this study.

_______________________________________________________
Please Print Your Name

_______________________________________________________
Signature Date
Appendix F

Gas Station Card Receipt
Gas Station Card Receipt

JUSTICE INVOLVED VETERANS’ POST-RELEASE EMPLOYMENT-RELATED EXPERIENCES

Research Study

By signing this form, you are confirming that:

• You participated in one 60-90-minute interview

• You have received a $20 gas station card from the student investigator, James Dawson, if travel is necessary.

Parolee pseudonym: ________________________________ Date: ____________

Student Investigator: ________________________________ Date: ____________
Appendix G

Participant Characteristics
Participant Characteristics

Name:

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<th>Demographics</th>
<th>OTIS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current Age:</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American:</td>
<td>OTIS</td>
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<tr>
<td>White or Caucasian:</td>
<td>OTIS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hispanic:</td>
<td>OTIS</td>
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<td>What is the highest level of education your parents obtained?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the highest level of education you have obtained?</td>
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<td>Do you possess any specialized training, certificates, or licenses?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Married or living together as married before prison:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Had children under age 18 when entered prison:</td>
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<td>Frequent drug use or intoxication:</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent illegal drug use:</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>If so, which drug?</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Served time in a juvenile facility:</td>
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<td>Previously convicted of a crime:</td>
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<td>Served time in prison before:</td>
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<td>Had parole or probation previously revoked:</td>
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<td>Time on parole:</td>
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<td>Violent offense conviction:</td>
<td>OTIS</td>
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<td>Drug offense conviction:</td>
<td>OTIS</td>
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<td>Current term due to probation or parole violation:</td>
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<tr>
<td>In maximum/high risk security facility:</td>
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<td>Rank:</td>
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<td>Years served:</td>
<td>Yrs.</td>
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<td>Combat Veteran:</td>
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<td>Discharge status:</td>
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Appendix H

WMU HSIRB Approval
Date: April 19, 2016

To: Richard Zinser, Principal Investigator
    James Dawson, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number 16-03-16

This letter will confirm that your research project titled “Justice Involved Veterans' Post-Release Employment Experience” has been approved under the full category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note: This research may only be conducted exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project (e.g., you must request a post approval change to enroll subjects beyond the number stated in your application under “Number of subjects you want to complete the study”). Failure to obtain approval for changes will result in a protocol deviation. In addition, if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

Reapproval of the project is required if it extends beyond the termination date stated below.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: March 15, 2017
Appendix I

Michigan Department of Corrections IRB Approval
July 27, 2016

James L. Dawson
Ph.D. Candidate in Educational Leadership
Career and Technical Education
Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, MI

Re: Research Project on Justice Involved Veterans’ Employment Experiences

Mr. Dawson:

We have reviewed the documentation you submitted regarding your research project: “Justice Involved Veterans’ Employment Experiences”. Our review indicates that all appropriate protections for study subjects and confidentiality of data and other information are in place. Further, we are satisfied that based on the methods outlined in your proposal and the results of your pilot study, the project is likely to produce valid and reliable results that will be of interest to the Department. Thus, we are hereby issuing final approval for you to proceed with your project, as required by PD 01.04.120.

As you are aware, this approval is limited to an acceptance of methods and procedures for the project. Operational approval to go forward with the study must be obtained from MDOC’s Field Operations Administration (FOA) office(s) involved with your project. This letter documents that your study is approved per Policy and that posting of solicitation notices in FOA offices is approved as part of the study methods. However, please note that final operational approval resides with the FOA office(s) based on their judgment regarding whether your request can be accommodated without compromising Departments operations, security or confidentiality.

If you have questions, or if we can be of any further assistance, please let me know. We look forward to working with you on this and future projects.

Sincerely,

R. Douglas Kosinski

R. Douglas Kosinski, Manager
Risk/Classification and Program Evaluation Section
Office of Research and Planning

cc: Kenneth Bush, Program Evaluation Section