Academic Motivation and the Effects on Students' Career Aspirations:

Before and After a Law Enforcement Studies Education at the

Justice Institute of British Columbia

Jairus W.E. Korpa

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Greg Keenan, Instructor

Gurinder Mann, Advisor

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Abstract

Education is one of the most important resources available to Canadians because it directly effects each person's future. With a post-secondary education, students can have an enhanced quality of life for themselves, their families, and their communities. Career choice and outcome for many professionals are dependent on education, which supports future development and improves interpersonal skills required for successful careers. The purpose of this study was to explore the influence that a law enforcement studies education, from the *Justice Institute of British Columbia* (JIBC), had on student's career aspirations. Of the 123-student participants, 98% indicated they had specific career goals in public safety or law enforcement prior to a formal education at JIBC. However, after exposure to an education at JIBC, 51% of the student participants indicated a change in their career goals.

Keywords: academic motivations, career aspirations, career goals, law enforcement studies, public safety, policing careers, police training, Justice Institute of British Columbia.

Table of Contents

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Education is one of the most important resources available to Canadians. Fortunately for many Canadians with a post-secondary education, they can improve their circumstances and enjoy an enhanced quality of life for themselves, their families, and their communities. Career choice and outcome for many professionals are dependent on prior education, which supports future development and interpersonal skills required for successful careers. The purpose of this study was to explore the influences that a law enforcement studies education, from the *Justice Institute of British Columbia* (JIBC), had on a law enforcement studies student's career aspirations.

Prior to this study, it was presumed that the majority of students who chose JIBC for their post-secondary education had specific career goals. Students chose JIBC for their post-secondary education because they wanted to pursue a career in public safety and security, or as a first responder. JIBC has provided specialized training since 1978 for paramedics, fire-fighters, and police (peace) officers, which include: municipal police officers, sheriffs, corrections officers, and other provincial peace officers (Rossiter, Budgen, & Grescoe, 2008). The goal of this research was to determine whether career goals changed, from before to after a law enforcement studies education at JIBC. This study was conducted using a mixed-methods approach, where anonymous primary data was collected from seven cohorts who were enrolled in JIBC's *Law Enforcement Studies Diploma* (LESD) and *Bachelor of Law Enforcement Studies* (BLES) programs during the Winter 2019 semester. The qualitative portion of this study explored the possible reasons that may influence career goals and aspirations, including education.

Research Question and Rationale

Using a mixed-methods social-constructivist approach, the objective for this research project was to provide some analysis on the effects on career choice following exposure to a law enforcement studies education at the *Justice Institute of British Columbia*. It was presumed a significant number of students enrolled, started their education with career aspirations in mind, as many student's had expressed their goals during student introductions at the start of each semester. Therefore the research question explored, "does the career aspirations (or goals) of JIBC law enforcement studies students change over the course of their education—from before a student begins their education through completion?" This study included participants from a sample of both, the two-year *Law Enforcement Studies Diploma* program and the four-year *Bachelor of Law Enforcement Studies* program. The objective was to determine whether a law enforcement studies education at JIBC impacts a student's choice on careers, following their exposure to an applied education in law enforcement and policing, with a Canadian perspective.

Literature Review

Career goals may be influenced by a variety of motivations, both intrinsic and extrinsic. According to academic sources in *Healthline*, "intrinsic motivation is the act of doing something without any obvious external rewards" ("Intrinsic," 2019, para. 1). Whereas, intrinsic motivation is enjoyable and interesting, rather than being motivated by an outside incentive or pressure, such as a reward or deadline. *Healthline* further added, "intrinsic motivation also involves seeking out and engaging in activities that individuals find challenging, interesting, and internally rewarding without the prospect of any external reward" ("Intrinsic," 2019, para. 6). *Healthline* also described extrinsic motivation, as incentive or reward driven behaviour, such as being paid to do a job ("Extrinsic," 2019). Some students embark on a path towards a career in policing because they

want to help others and their community—intrinsic. While others pursue a career in policing because of the great pension, income, or health benefits plan—extrinsic. Such motivations support the perspective that psychological and psychosocial factors influence career goals and aspirations.

A variety of keywords were selected to provide the most recent results from scholarly databases. The academic references used for the qualitative portion of this study was sourced from a variety of keywords including: career goals and education; effects of education on career goals; post-secondary and law enforcement or police; impact of post-secondary on career goals (aspirations); education and career expectations; social-cognitive career theory (SCCT); and career outcome expectations (COE).

In most economically advanced countries such as Canada and the United States, a post-secondary education has been encouraged and has supported professional career success. Dupriez, Monseur, Van Campenhoudt, and LaFontaine (2012) reported, that access to higher education in some countries is at the heart of critical issues within their respective societies. According to Weingarten, Hicks, Jonker, Smith, and Arnold (2015), "Educational institutions may be the most important public institutions in Canada to ensure a vibrant and robust quality of life and economy" (p. iii). Such extrinsic motivations contribute to the high-enrollment amongst students, following high-school graduation. However, the academic research suggested differing perspectives as to why individual's seek certain career paths. Three-common themes emerged from the research, creating a correlation between education and career aspirations: 1) psychological and social motivators; 2) subject matter and education; and 3) entertainment and media.

Psychological and Social Motivators

According to Ascencio (2018), an individual's goals, interests, and subsequent actions result from positive self-efficacy and positive outcome expectations. However, in order to organize

and sustain the behaviour and actions that lead to successful outcomes, it is essential to set goals. Since the late-twentieth century, the federal government along with many parents have encouraged and promoted post-secondary education as an optimal way for successful employment outcomes.

Domene, Socholotiuk, and Woitowicz (2011), examined the effects of career outcome expectations and aspirations on post-secondary academic motivation using the social-cognitive career theory (SCCT) framework. A study of 380 post-secondary students in Canada and the United States revealed that a student's outcome expectations can evolve from various sources. However, a post-secondary education can have a positive and significant impact on intrinsic motivations towards career goals. Alternatively, students with low-academic motivation, based on extrinsic values such as monetary expectations, had correlated with a lower-academic performance. Domene et al. (2011) further suggested, students who have positive career expectations and goals were more likely to have increased motivation for engaging in their program of study. To further motivate students, post-secondary counsellors, academic advisors, and educators can encourage and support the link between advanced education and individualized career goals.

Professor Robert Lent (1996) of the *University of Maryland*, one of the leading academics on career development and counselling, explained the concepts and assumptions behind social-cognitive career theory (SCCT):

> The SCCT framework, developed in collaboration with our colleague, Gail Hackett, focuses on the processes through which (a) academic and career interests develop, (b) interests, in concert with other variables, promote career-relevant choices, and (c) people attain varying levels of performance and persistence in their educational and career pursuits. Derived primarily from Bandura's (1986) general social cognitive theory, SCCT considers the interplay among many constructs (e.g., interests, abilities, goals) that are dealt with to

varying degrees by existing career theories. It also emphasizes cognitive and experiential

processes that may undergird important variables in other career models (e.g., the means

by which people come to develop primary vocational interests in Holland's, 1985, theory).

While incorporating a variety of person, contextual, and behavior [*sic*] variables, the

framework highlights a few central mechanisms and paths through which these variables

affect career developmental outcomes. (para. 5)

Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1994) developed a study that compared the central aspects of academic

and career development over one's lifetime using social-cognitive career theory (as cited in Lim,

Lent, & Penn, 2016). However, more recent models incorporated work satisfaction and personal

wellbeing, along with career self-management to advance one's career. Lim et al. (2016) furthered

the research into SCCT, which expanded to incorporate the relationship between social, cognitive,

personality, and behavioural variables that jointly impacted the career decision-making process.

The most recent research by Lent, Morris, Penn, and Ireland (2019), tested the social-

cognitive model of career self-management (CSM) on 420-college students in the USA. The social-

cognitive model of career self-management examined adaptive behaviours that student's apply to

anticipate and adjust to challenges in both work and school. The CSM highlighted the connection

between social-cognitive personal variables including: "…self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and

goals; contextual supports and barriers; person inputs, such as personality traits and abilities; and

learning experiences that promote or hinder the development of self-efficacy and outcome

expectations" (Lent et al., 2019, p. 184).

Within the career self-management model, self-efficacy was identified as promoting goals

and actions, directly and indirectly, by means of outcome expectations. The ability to manage

specific tasks with positive outcomes helped shape goals towards effective career exploration and

decision-making behaviours. As a result, efforts towards improving self-efficacy through career exploratory activities may help reduce decisional anxiety and enhance career aspirations (Lent et al., 2019). Therefore, it was suggested that within the post-secondary environment, educators may further assist students develop decision-making skills by reviewing past and present successes. Furthermore, counsellors, academic advisors, and course instructors may attempt making career exploration and decision-making activities fun, interesting, and novel; which could help reduce decisional anxiety. Educators may also promote setting goals that are more likely to motivate exploratory behaviours. As SCCT suggested, career aspirations are more likely to transpire into action when goals are specific, clear, and organized into sub-goals (Lent et al., 2019). The CSM model offers a potential framework for social-cognitive expectancies, social supports, and traits that translate into career goals, actions, and outcomes.

      Critical Analysis. Career goals and aspirations are effected by a variety of internal and external sources. The motivation to work through the challenges of achieving one's career goals may be intrinsic, extrinsic, or a combination of both. Most career aspirations start with setting a goal, where some students have had such goals since childhood and others have set goals in their adult years. In the pursuit of a professional career, such as public safety and security, some post-secondary credits are required by municipal law enforcement agencies in British Columbia. However, successfully being recruited as a law enforcement officer comes with a myriad of challenges and strict requirements. An understanding of the psychosocial elements behind motivation, in relation to education and career achievement, may assist the prospective law enforcement recruit overcome some of these challenges. It is also important to understand that intrinsic motivators may contribute to job satisfaction and overall wellbeing; where some extrinsic motivators may negatively impact the education process and career satisfaction. Social-cognitive

career theory may also assist in understanding how a student can achieve their career goals through effective motivation and to further advance interpersonal skills, such as self-efficacy.

Subject Matter and Education

In Daniels, Stewart, Stupinsky, Perry, and LoVerso (2011), the research explored indecision amongst undergraduate students in relation to their career aspirations. Indecision towards a future career may create unwanted anxiety, which has the potential of becoming a debilitating negative emotion. Daniels et al. (2011) highlighted how educators and mentors can focus on helping undergraduates make career decisions. Daniels et al. (2011) further suggested that students who associated with professional faculties had less career anxiety and career indecision than students who were enrolled in general studies with no affiliations. Therefore, there exists the potential for intervention by educators and faculty members to help alleviate indecision and negative career anxiety.

Heckhausen, Chang, Greenberg, and Chen (2013), compared the strong motivational goals and commitment towards educational goals as a component of a successful transition to adulthood. Though career goals and aspirations are an important consideration after high school, motivation and effort applied towards a post-secondary education produced an increased number of successful professionals, than those who focused their efforts on work experience only. Therefore, the path to a successful and satisfying career is more attainable with a post-secondary or professional education, than with the less feasible alternative of early work experience. Heckhausen et al. (2013) added, that motivational efforts towards earning a post-secondary degree is also conducive to a more positive outlook on one's future career. Heckhausen et al. (2013) concluded, by advancing one's education after high school, psychological wellbeing, job satisfaction, and career progress is selectively due to the motivational commitment guiding a student's experiences.

Galliott and Graham (2015) conducted a study which included 706 students from secondary schools in Australia, who were uncertain of their future career plans. The study suggested, students who were uncertain of their career goals were more likely to enroll in non-selective schools and were more likely to hold negative attitudes towards education. Therefore, families and students who were exposed to timely career guidance and information allowed them to make meaningful use of the resources and opportunities available to them, with a positive outlook on future careers with real world benefits (Galliott & Graham, 2015). Their study concluded that career choice "…is a multistage formative process that relies on personal characteristics and resources, as well as educational experiences" (Galliott & Graham, 2015, p. 196). To increase successful outcomes in post-high school transitions, schools need improved curricular diversity, as well as proactive career guidance. Galliott and Graham (2015) further suggested, to aid in career aspiration formation, students and their families should research the relevant education information before they choose their programs or electives.

Critical Analysis. Within Canada and the United States, a post-secondary education in pursuit of a professional career has been encouraged by parents and the federal government since the late 1980s. Regardless of choice, a post-secondary education has become the norm for pursuing a professional career. As a result, students who make effective use of their educational experiences were more likely to seek out the various career opportunities available to them.

Entertainment and Media

According to Barthe, Leone, and Lateano (2013), the general publics' interest in criminal justice has significantly increased since 1990, with TV series such as CBS's *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* (Zuiker, Bruckheimer, & Mendelsohn, 2000). Such interest has led to an increase in criminal justice programs offered by many post-secondary institutions in the USA. Barthe et al.

(2013) indicated that many students who wished to enter the field of criminal justice had based their knowledge of the criminal justice system on modern-day media depictions. The findings suggested that self-reported media effects a student's perception of the criminal justice system and their post-secondary major selection. More specifically, television shows and movies glamourize and dramatize law enforcement and policing which has influenced academic major selection, while forensic- and court-related television shows negatively impacted perceptual accuracy (Barthe et al., 2013). For 335-students surveyed, exposure to the media has resulted in practical changes in their educational or occupational goals, with the added possibility for disappointment when the reality of criminal justice and law enforcement is objectively learned (Barthe et al., 2013). Barthe et al. (2013) suggested that criminal justice educators should "…dispel the myths inherent in these television shows, and to replace that misinformation with the information necessary to make an informed and reasonable decision about…career paths" (p. 25).

Walters and Kremser (2016) surveyed 204-criminal justice major students in the USA. The findings suggested that television and movies had a greater impact on first- and second-year students, as opposed to third- and fourth-year students. Criminal justice teachers and professors had a greater impact on third- and fourth-year students by clarifying misinformation in the media. Further study indicated that the two-primary (intrinsic) motivators for a career in law enforcement was helping others and interest in the subject matter (Walters and Kremser, 2016). Alternatively, Walters and Kremser (2016) found, the two-weakest (extrinsic) motivators as to why students selected majors in criminal justice was wearing a uniform and for power (authority). Ultimately, criminal justice students go through developmental stages throughout the course of their education and by the time they graduate, career aspirations may change. These changes are influenced by maturity, exposure to various opportunities in the criminal justice system, and accurate subject

matter from their teachers and professors.

Critical Analysis. With modern day technologies, entertainment and social media platforms are accessible 24-hours a day, 7-days a week. The amount of misinformation or "fake news" is at an all time high. One common goal many post-secondary instructors try to teach their students is to think critically and to search for credibility and validity. The media dramatizes and glamourizes law enforcement professions, where policing appears to always be exciting and adventurous. However, as many experienced police officers have expressed, the reality is very different. Therefore, a post-secondary education will undoubtedly help clarify the myths presented in television, movies, and the news. Post-secondary institutions such as the *Justice Institute of British Columbia*, who are specialized in training municipal law enforcement officers in the province of British Columbia, has been a trusted institution for the advancement and professional training of first responders since 1978. As indicated by Walters and Kremser (2016), career motivations are influenced by maturity, exposure to various opportunities in the criminal justice system, and accurate subject matter from their teachers and professors.

Research Design and Methodology

This study was based on a mixed-methods, social-constructivist approach. Where primary quantitative data was collected to support a common influencer on career aspirations, specifically subject matter and education. Anonymous quantitative data was collected from seven cohorts who were enrolled in both, JIBC's *Law Enforcement Studies Diploma* and *Bachelor of Law Enforcement Studies* programs, at the New Westminster, BC campus during the 2019 Winter semester. The data retrieved was collected using a group-administered questionnaire which consisted of eight questions. The multiple-choice styled, closed-ended questions, ranged from what program the student was currently enrolled in, what career goals the student had prior to their education at JIBC,

and what career goals the students had after their exposure to a JIBC education. The purpose for collecting primary data was to provide local insights into whether a law enforcement studies education at JIBC influenced change in career goals. The qualitative portion of this study explored existing academic studies as to why career goals and aspirations change over time. The two-research methods not only supported the findings and results, but also provided possible explanations as to why career choice amongst students might change following an academic education.

Quantitative Data Collection

Senior volunteer BLES students visited seven-law enforcement studies cohorts including the two-year *Law Enforcement Studies Diploma* program and the four-year *Bachelor of Law Enforcement Studies* program. Of the 123-student sample, 65-students indicated they were currently enrolled in the LESD program and 58-students were currently enrolled in the BLES program. Using an eight-question, closed-ended questionnaire, each cohort was invited to complete the group-administered survey in-class. Each senior student volunteer administrator was provided with an outline on how to present the survey to the student participants (Appendices, p. 35). The student administrators introduced themselves, the subject matter, and purpose of the study. Furthermore, the administrators highlighted that participating in the study was both voluntary and anonymous. Initially, it was estimated that a maximum of fifteen-minutes was required to introduce, complete, collect, and conclude the data-collection process. However, each of the seven-cohorts finished in approximately ten-minutes. The questionnaire consisted of the following eight closed-ended questions (Appendices, p. 34):

1. Please indicate the law enforcement program you are currently enrolled in?

2. Before you started the LESD and/or BLES program, did you have a future career goal

in mind?

3. Was your future career goal in public safety or law enforcement?

4. Before your law enforcement education at JIBC, which one of the following agencies (options) would have been your primary choice for employment?

5. Throughout your law enforcement education at JIBC, were you introduced to new career opportunities that interested you?

6. Throughout your law enforcement education at JIBC, did your future career goals change, and if so, at what point in your studies did your goals change?

7. If you had a choice today, which one of the following agencies (options) would be your primary choice for future employment?

8. Being in your final year, have you or will you be applying to any law enforcement agencies within six-months of graduation?

Using the *IBM Corporation's, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* (SPSS) v. 25, the 123-completed surveys were inputted in triplicate to confirm accuracy. As previously indicated, the purpose for collecting primary data was to provide empirical support whether a law enforcement studies education at JIBC influenced a change in career goals. The qualitative portion of this study explored existing academic studies as to why career goals and aspirations change with education.
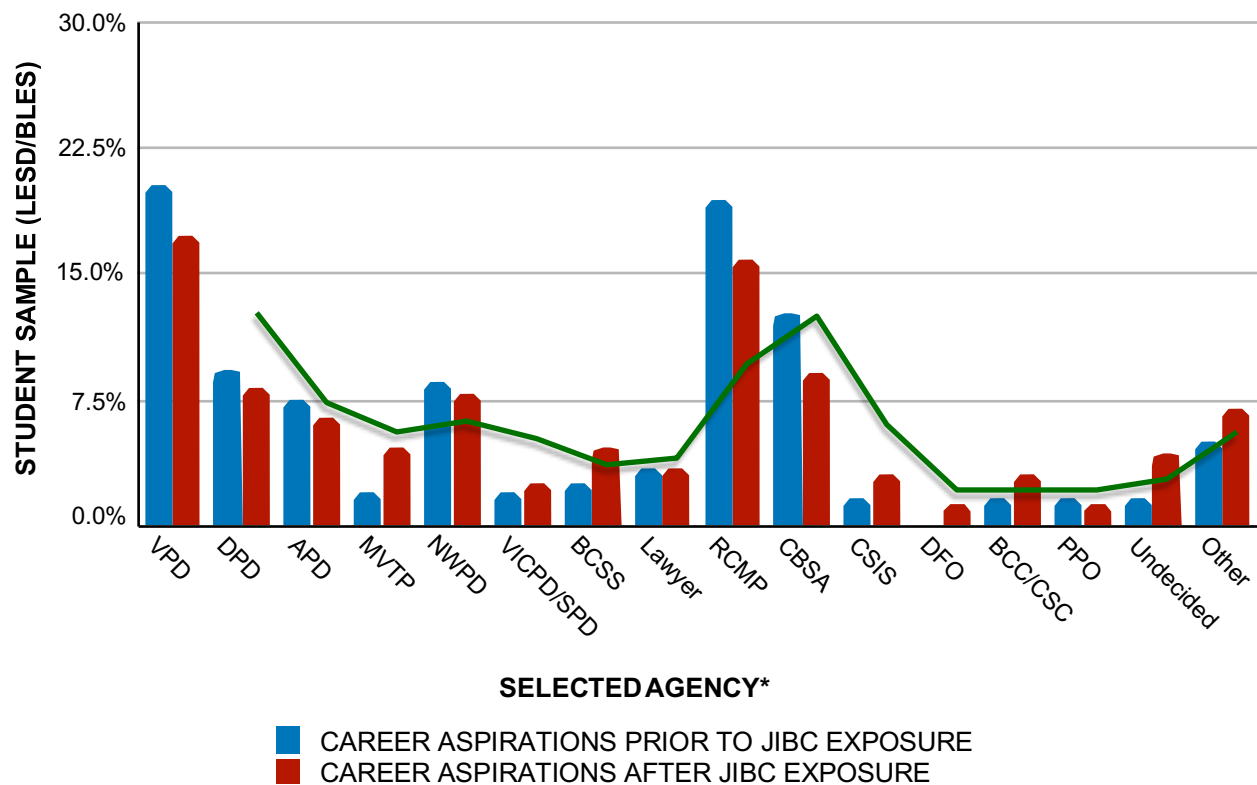
Quantitative Data Analysis

According to the qualitative research, three-common themes emerged that indicated a correlation between post-secondary education and career aspirations: 1) psychological and social motivators; 2) subject matter and education; and 3) entertainment and media. The quantitative primary data collected from seven-cohorts at JIBC supported the second theme, subject matter and education. The primary research highlighted that over-half of the 123-student participants had

changed their career goals following exposure to a law enforcement studies education at JIBC. Since JIBC provides specialized training for most of British Columbia's first responders, it was presumed that most students likely had a career goal prior to receiving a post-secondary education at JIBC. Of the sample student population who participated in the study, 98% indicated they had a career goal in-mind prior to attending their law enforcement studies program at JIBC. Furthermore, another 98% of those students indicated their career goals were within the public safety or law enforcement profession. Supporting the theme that subject matter and education can effect career choice, 93% of the student sample indicated that they were introduced to new career opportunities while attending JIBC. However an interesting statistic emerged, of the 93% of students who were introduced to new career opportunities, only 51% of the sample indicated their career goals had changed following their exposure to an education at JIBC. Of the student sample who indicated their career goals had changed, following their education at JIBC, 66% of those students indicated their career goals changed during the first or second year, namely during the students' LESD education.
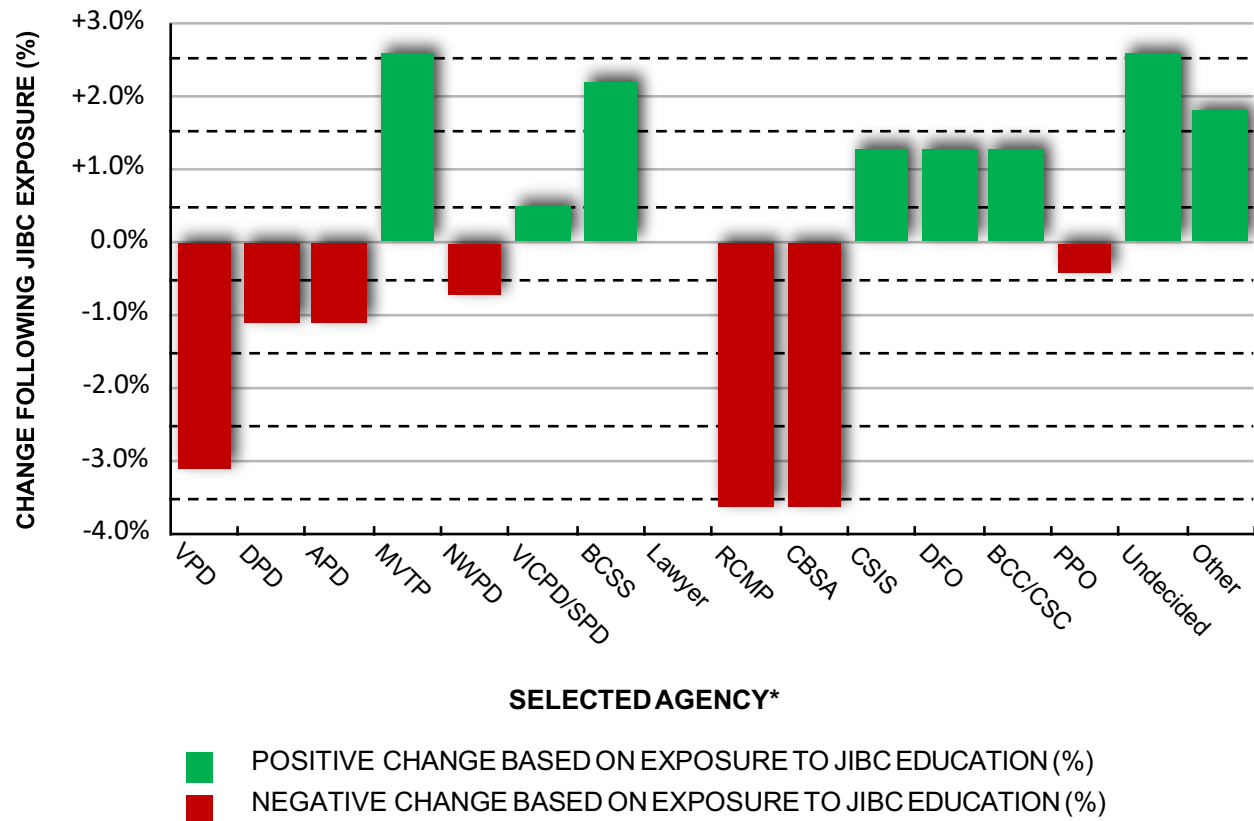
The top three-agencies students selected included: *Vancouver Police Department* (VPD), *Royal Canadian Mounted Police* (RCMP), and *Canada Border Services Agency* (CBSA). Prior to a law enforcement studies education at JIBC, students indicated their primary career choices included the following agencies: 20.3% with VPD, 19.5% with RCMP, and 12.7% with CBSA (Figure 1). Though the top three-agencies of choice remained, the quantity of students who chose that particular agency declined after their educational exposure. Following a law enforcement studies education at JIBC, students indicated their primary career choices declined to: 16.9% with VPD, 15.7% with RCMP, and 8.9% with CBSA (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Career Aspiration Trends of Law Enforcement Studies Students at the Justice Institute of British Columbia

SELECTED AGENCY*

■ CAREER ASPIRATIONS PRIOR TO JIBC EXPOSURE
■ CAREER ASPIRATIONS AFTER JIBC EXPOSURE

See Table 2 in Appendices for Abbreviation Definitions

The most dramatic change in career choice amongst students was a 3.6% decline with future careers with CBSA and the RCMP, followed by VPD with a decline of 3.1% (Figure 2). The two-most notable increases students selected was with *Metro Vancouver Transit Police* and the *Undecided* category, which both increased by 2.6% (Figure 2). The third-most notable increase was toward a career with the *British Columbia Sheriff Service* (BCSS), increasing by 2.2% (Figure 2). Of the 123-students who participated in this quantitative study, 57% indicated they would be applying to their agency of choice within six-months of completing their respective LESD and/or BLES programs.

**Figure 2. Change in Career Aspirations Following Exposure of a
Justice Institute of British Columbia Education**

SELECTED AGENCY*

■ POSITIVE CHANGE BASED ON EXPOSURE TO JIBC EDUCATION (%)
■ NEGATIVE CHANGE BASED ON EXPOSURE TO JIBC EDUCATION (%)

See Table 2 in Appendices for Abbreviation Definitions

Qualitative Data Collection

The primary research database used was JIBC's On-line Library system, with additional queries using Google Scholar. The JIBC Library accessed a variety of external databases including, but not limited to: EBSCO, ProQuest, PsychINFO, Academic Search Complete, ERIC, and SocINDEX. From the initial search parameters, approximately 1,266-sources resulted. To limit and focus the resulting sources further, certain exclusions were added to the advanced search parameters. To include the most current studies, the date parameter was adjusted to include 2010 through 2019, which reduced the resulting sources to 586. Furthermore, to enhance validity and credibility of the literature, only full-text academic journals from within Canada, the United States

of America (USA), Australia, and the United Kingdom (UK) were selected, which reduced the results to approximately 190 sources. Since education standards and law enforcement professionals execute their duties similarly to that of Canada's, these four-geographical settings were maintained throughout the remaining searches. Continuing with the aforementioned search parameters and varying the keywords, the queries resulted with 190-academic journals. Using *Google Scholar* with the same parameters, most academic journals were available at a cost. However, *Google Scholar* was able to provide an additional five sources that highlighted the benefits of education on career success, specific to a Canadian perspective.

Qualitative Data Analysis

From the various search parameters and resulting sources, twenty-two articles were selected for a more detailed review. From the twenty-two articles, a number of common themes indicated a link between post-secondary education and career aspirations. The correlation between higher education and a successful career began to emerge from the results. Though the motivations towards career aspirations or education varied, some common themes were apparent in most of the academic journals reviewed. The literature suggested three-major influencers on career aspirations: 1) psychological and social motivators; 2) subject matter and education; and 3) the glamourized influence through entertainment and media. As a result, many of the articles reviewed were repetitive with certain themes, as related to education and career aspirations. Finally, eight-academic journals were selected for a full and complete literature review.

Discussion and Findings

Most career aspirations start with setting a goal, which some students have had since childhood, while others had set goals in their adult years. Students who make efficient use of their

educational experiences were more likely to seek out the various career opportunities available to them. An integral goal amongst most post-secondary institutions was to teach students how to think critically while searching for credibility and validity. The media has glamourized law enforcement professions, where policing appears to be exciting and adventurous. However, as many experienced police officers have expressed, the reality can be very different. Therefore, a post-secondary education taught by educated and experienced professionals had undoubtedly helped clarify the myths presented in the media, such as in television and movies. The correlation between higher education and a successful career had emerged from the findings. Heckhausen et al. (2013) found, that focusing on education over experiences led to a more successful career outcome. Furthermore, "…a strong motivational commitment to educational goals, but not to career goals, is an important component of a successful transition to adulthood" (p. 1385). Therefore committing to, and completing a post-secondary education leads to a successful future, regardless of the final career choice.

Within the *Other* category of the questionnaire, eighteen-additional agencies or fields were identified as choices amongst students future career goals. These eighteen-additional agencies or fields accounted for less than 1% each (approximate cumulative total: 12%) which included:

- *Edmonton Police Service;*
- *Canadian Armed Forces;*
- *Canadian Armed Forces Military Police;*
- *Calgary Police Service;*
- *West Vancouver Police Department;*
- *Ottawa Police Service;*
- *Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit B.C.;*
- Conservation Officer;
- Park Ranger;
- *E-Comm 9-1-1* (Dispatcher);
- *Ontario Provincial Police;*
- *Port Moody Police Department;*

- *Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department;*

- Forensic Psychology;

- Forensic Sciences;

- Commonwealth Agency

  o (United Kingdom);

- Advancement towards a graduate degree; and

- Non-law enforcement related career.

Psychological and Social Motivators

Of the 49% student sample who's career goals did not change, psychological and social motivators were considered. Intrinsic motivators may remain, regardless of new opportunities presented in a post-secondary educational environment. As indicated by Lent et al. (2019), within the career self-management model, self-efficacy is identified as promoting goals and actions, directly and indirectly, by means of outcome expectations. The ability to manage specific tasks with positive outcomes helped shape goals towards effective career exploration and decision-making behaviours. Therefore, it can be suggested that of the students who have a career goal in-mind, the motivator to achieve that career goal is the basis for completing a post-secondary education. Hui and Lent (2017) suggested, that variables such "…as family influences, cultural values, occupational stereotyping, acculturation, and gender socialization are relevant to…career development, including interest development, decision making, and goal pursuits" (p. 98). However, Gautam, Nigam, and Mishra (2016) stated, those who wishes to fulfill post-secondary education, including graduate studies, carry certain aspirations in which the student wants to be placed after graduation. Furthermore, "career aspirations of every individual is to learn and grow in terms of knowledge and experience in any given field" (p. 58). Therefore, the subject matter and educational influences on career aspirations may also be impacted by psychological and/or social motivators.

Subject Matter and Education

The quantitative data empirically supported the impact that a post-secondary education had on career aspirations and goals. The *Justice Institute of British Columbia* educates students for a specialized field of study, specifically to prepare students towards a career as a first-responder. Though 49% of the student sample did not change their career goals following their exposure to an education at JIBC, over half did. Supported by quantitative data, 93% of the student sample indicated that new career opportunities had been introduced to them while attending JIBC. Therefore, it can be stated that subject matter and education does have an influence on career choice. A number of theories emerged as to why 51% of the student sample changed their career goals, to name a few: competition, strict rules for recruitment, and increased life experience. Additionally, 93% of the student sample indicated that they were introduced to new career opportunities, which may also influence why a student's career goals change.

Entertainment and Media

Of the three-common themes that supported career aspirations and goals, entertainment and media emerged as the weakest link towards career motivation. This is because the entertainment industry capitalizes on dramatic effects, where the reality of these careers differ greatly from what is portrayed in the media. For example, policing is not all high-speed vehicle pursuits and action-packed shoot outs like portrayed by Bruce Willis' character, John McClean, in the 1988 Hollywood blockbuster, *Die Hard* (Gordon, Gordon, Marks, Silver, Levine, & McTiernan 1988). Though some students initially chose a career goal in law enforcement or policing because of what they saw on television or in the movies, a qualified education on the subject matter related to the profession suggested that these motivators may be corrected or altered. Walters and Kremser (2016) indicated, that television and movies had a greater impact on first- and second-year students, as opposed to

third- and fourth-year students. Walters and Kremser (2016) continued, criminal justice teachers and professors had a greater impact on third- and fourth-year students by clarifying misinformation from the media. In today's information heavy and technologically advanced age, misinformation is abundant and it takes credible study into the subject matter to learn the realities within a career or profession, such as in law enforcement or policing. Barthe, Leone, and Lateano (2013) discovered, students who enrolled in criminal justice programs in the USA "…reported media exposure affected both perceptions of the justice system and major selection" (p. 13). It was not until students were enrolled in a criminal justice program where they learned the reality of the profession. Students who have been exposed to a formal education in law enforcement studies at the *Justice Institute of British Columbia* have also learned the core-realities of a professional career in policing and law enforcement in a Canadian environment. This reality could also contribute to another variable as to why students change their career goals after exposure to a post-secondary education.

Limitations of Study

The predominant limitations of this study were closely related to the localized and specialized nature of a post-secondary institute, its students, and the subject matter. Though both the *Law Enforcement Studies Diploma* program and *Bachelor of Law Enforcement Studies* degree program are provincially recognized, policing and law enforcement is a specialized and unique field. Students who are attracted to this education and profession have greater career focus than other post-secondary institutions that offer broad program choices. With that in-mind, it is difficult to determine whether this study could be applied to determine career aspirations at other post-secondary institutions, though the qualitative data applied across all academic programs.

A further limitation of this study was related to questionnaire's formatting and clarity of

instructions, which created some degree of error. The opening instructions indicated to provide only one-answer per question, however 37% of the questionnaires returned included multiple responses for questions four and seven. Questions four and seven were associated with the student's primary aspiration of law enforcement agency, prior to their educational exposure (4) and after their educational exposure (7). This error undoubtedly contributed to higher quantities for some agencies over others. With multiple agencies selected on 37% of the questionnaires, it was not possible to determine which agency was the student's first or primary choice, therefore it was decided that every agency selected was included into the final totals. This calculation undoubtedly skewed the accuracy of the chosen agencies by the student sample.

Ethical Considerations

The ethical considerations were presented to the *Research Ethics Board* (REB) at the *Justice Institute of British Columbia* prior to proceeding with the formal, group-administered study. This study was presented as both voluntary and anonymous which prevented individual identification, retraction, and editing after participant submissions. The benefits included, focused data for JIBC on student's career goals and how their programs had influenced students' futures. The results supported the assumption that new career opportunities in law enforcement were presented during the student's education, but also provided additional opportunities or career paths students may pursue towards a career in policing or law enforcement.

The risks included, whether the student participants would take the questionnaire seriously, which could have lead to erroneous or inaccurate results. This risk did occur when 37% of the questionnaires returned included more than one answer on both questions four and seven, which undoubtedly skewed the final results. Since the law enforcement studies program is a smaller community of students, some concern was anticipated whether a student could be identified if they

selected a career not chosen by other students. This risk did occur when some students identified unique and rare career choices in the *Other* category. However, to avoid detection, the *Other* category was compiled as one, so individual students could not be directly identified within the final summary.

Since the questionnaire was presented to seven-separate cohorts, during regular class time, it was considered that some students may feel obligated or pressured into participating. Though feelings of anxiety created by a sense of pressure or obligation could not be completely alleviated, the volunteer student administrators clearly expressed that participation was voluntary and any participant was "…under no obligation to participate and may decline, withdraw, or discontinue at anytime without prejudice" (Appendices, p. 35). Subjects who were not enrolled in the *Law Enforcement Studies Diploma* or *Bachelor of Law Enforcement Studies* programs were excluded from participating in this study, as the data required was based on individual-subjective responses related to the influence their student experience at the *Justice Institute of British Columbia* had on their career choices.

The questionnaire was designed to be unidentifiable and anonymous, with no request for personal identification, other than the law enforcement studies program the participants were currently enrolled in. The returned and completed questionnaires were scanned and backed up onto an encrypted hard-drive. Once the results from the original questionnaires were entered into *IBM*'s *SPSS* software, the original hard copies were shredded and therefore permanently destroyed. However, electronic copies remained as a backup throughout the completion of the research study.

Conclusion

Career goals may be influenced by a variety of motivators, both intrinsic and extrinsic. Ascencio (2018) suggested, in order to organize and sustain the behaviour and actions that lead to

a successful outcome, it is essential to set goals. A law enforcement studies education is specialized, to prepare students for a professional career in public safety and security.

Three-common themes emerged from the research which linked a post-secondary education and career aspirations: 1) psychological and social motivators; 2) subject matter and education; and 3) entertainment and media. The two-research methods not only supported the findings and results, but also provided possible explanations as to why career choice amongst students might change following an academic education.

Unlike general studies, where it is relatively easy to change majors, a law enforcement studies education is specific towards certain professions. Indecision can create unnecessary anxiety and challenges, if the student wants to change their focus. It is encouraged that families and students research their prospective career before they enroll, as misinformation of the criminal justice system is prevalent. Furthermore, families and students who are exposed to timely career guidance and advice allow them to make meaningful use of the resources and opportunities available to them, with a positive outlook on future careers with real-world benefits (Galliott & Graham, 2015). It is also important for educators and post-secondary institutions to have the resources available for students to collect valid information, to help them make a qualified and informed decision. Furthermore, educators may further assist students develop decision-making skills by reviewing past and present successes. Finally, criminal justice instructors and professors have a greater impact on students by clarifying misinformation early, that is portrayed in today's media.

Future research into motivations towards specialized careers may be explored at post-secondary institutions that offer specialized studies. This current study focused on law enforcement studies students at JIBC. However, this research may be expanded upon with similar studies of student samples within the *School of Public Safety* and the *School of Health, Community, and*

Social Justice at the *Justice Institute of British Columbia* to provide greater insight into the effects

an education at JIBC has on career choice for the next generation of first responders.

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Appendices

TABLE 1: Career Aspiration Trends of Law Enforcement Studies Students

OPTION:	BEFORE JIBC EXPOSURE %	BEFORE JIBC EXPOSURE #	AFTER JIBC EXPOSURE %	AFTER JIBC EXPOSURE #	EXPOSURE CHANGE %
VPD	20.3%	48	17.2%	40	(3.10%)
DPD	9.3%	22	8.2%	19	(1.10%)
APD	7.6%	18	6.5%	15	(1.10%)
MVTP	2.1%	5	4.7%	11	2.60%
NWPD	8.5%	20	7.8%	18	(0.70%)
VICPD/SPD	2.1%	5	2.6%	6	0.50%
BCSS	2.5%	6	4.7%	11	2.20%
Lawyer	3.4%	8	3.4%	8	0.00%
RCMP	19.5%	46	15.9%	37	(3.60%)
CBSA	12.7%	30	9.1%	21	(3.60%)
CSIS	1.7%	4	3.0%	7	1.30%
DFO	0.0%	0	1.3%	3	1.30%
BCC/CSC	1.7%	4	3.0%	7	1.30%
PPO	1.7%	4	1.3%	3	(0.40%)
Undecided	1.7%	4	4.3%	10	2.60%
Other	5.1%	12	6.9%	16	1.80%

TABLE 2: Law Enforcement Agency Acronym/Abbreviation Legend for Figure(s) 1-2

AGENCY:	ACRONYM/ ABBREVIATION:	AGENCY WEBSITE:
Vancouver Police Department	VPD	https://vancouver.ca/police
Delta Police Department	DPD	https://deltapolice.ca
Abbotsford Police Department	APD	http://www.abbypd.ca
Metro Vancouver Transit Police	MVTP	https://transitpolice.ca
New Westminster Police Department	NWPD	https://www.nwpolice.org
Victoria Police Department	VICPD	http://vicpd.ca
Saanich Police Department	SPD	https://www.saanichpolice.ca
British Columbia Sheriff Service	BCSS	https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/justice/courthouse-services/courthouse-roles/sheriff-services
Lawyer	Lawyer	https://www.lawsociety.bc.ca
Royal Canadian Mounted Police	RCMP	http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca
Canada Border Services Agency	CBSA	http://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca
Canada Security and Intelligence Service	CSIS	https://www.canada.ca/en/security-intelligence-service.html
Department of Fisheries and Oceans (Canada)	DFO	http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/index-eng.htm
British Columbia Corrections	BCC	https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/justice/criminal-justice/corrections
Correction Service Canada	CSC	https://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/index-en.shtml
Probation or Parole Officer	PPO	https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/justice/criminal-justice/bcs-criminal-justice-system/if-you-are-convicted-of-a-crime

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2019 - CAREER ASPIRATIONS SURVEY FOR JIBC LESD & BLES

INSTRUCTIONS: *Please select one option per question, that best answers each of the following eight (8) questions below.*

PURPOSE: *The purpose of this BLES Capstone study is to collect anonymous data from LESD and BLES students in their final year, in order to track career aspiration changes, from the start of their education at JIBC through their concluding year.*

CONSENT: *I understand that my participation in this project is completely voluntary and that I am free to decline to participate, without consequence, at any time prior to or at any point during the survey. I understand that the answers I provide below will be kept confidential, used only for the purposes of completing this BLES Capstone project, and will not be used in any way that can identify me. All survey/questionnaire responses, notes, and records will be kept in a secured environment. Once this questionnaire is submitted, being anonymous, you will be unable to modify, retrieve, or redact any answers provided. If you agree, please continue…*

1. Please indicate the law enforcement program you are currently enrolled in?
   ☐ LESD
   ☐ BLES

2. Before you started the LESD and/or BLES program, did you have a future career goal in mind?
   ☐ YES
   ☐ NO

3. Was your future career goal in public safety or law enforcement?
   ☐ YES
   ☐ NO

4. Before your law enforcement education at JIBC, which one of the following agencies (options) would have been your primary choice for employment?

☐ VANCOUVER POLICE DEPARTMENT	☐ ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE
☐ DELTA POLICE DEPARTMENT	☐ CANADA BORDER SERVICES AGENCY
☐ ABBOTSFORD POLICE DEPARTMENT	☐ CANADIAN SECURITY INTELLIGENCE SERVICE
☐ METRO VANCOUVER TRANSIT POLICE	☐ DEPARTMENT OF FISHERIES AND OCEANS
☐ NEW WESTMINSTER POLICE DEPARTMENT	☐ B.C. or CANADA CORRECTIONS SERVICE
☐ VICTORIA or SAANICH POLICE DEPARTMENT	☐ PROBATION or PAROLE OFFICER
☐ BRITISH COLUMBIA SHERIFF SERVICE	☐ UNDECIDED
☐ LAWYER	☐ OTHER: _____

5. Throughout your law enforcement education at JIBC, were you introduced to new career opportunities that interested you?
   ☐ YES
   ☐ NO

6. Throughout your law enforcement education at JIBC, did your future career goals change, and if so, at what point in your studies did your goals change?
   ☐ YEAR 1-2
   ☐ YEAR 3-4
   ☐ UNCHANGED

7. If you had a choice today, which one of the following agencies (options) would be your primary choice for future employment?

☐ VANCOUVER POLICE DEPARTMENT	☐ ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE
☐ DELTA POLICE DEPARTMENT	☐ CANADA BORDER SERVICES AGENCY
☐ ABBOTSFORD POLICE DEPARTMENT	☐ CANADIAN SECURITY INTELLIGENCE SERVICE
☐ METRO VANCOUVER TRANSIT POLICE	☐ DEPARTMENT OF FISHERIES AND OCEANS
☐ NEW WESTMINSTER POLICE DEPARTMENT	☐ B.C. or CANADA CORRECTIONS SERVICE
☐ VICTORIA or SAANICH POLICE DEPARTMENT	☐ PROBATION or PAROLE OFFICER
☐ BRITISH COLUMBIA SHERIFF SERVICE	☐ UNDECIDED
☐ LAWYER	☐ OTHER: _____

8. Being in your final year, have you or will you be applying to *any* law enforcement agencies within six (6) months of graduation?
   ☐ YES
   ☐ NO

Thank you for your participation!

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Justice Institute *of* British Columbia
STUDY ADMINISTRATION GUIDELINES

1. Please provide (*or handout*) each student with one, two-page survey.

2. Hello, my name is...[*volunteer name 1*] and this is...[*volunteer name 2*], we are both BLES students from Cohort 5. Today we are assisting our classmate, Jairus Korpa, administrator a survey that will be used in his final Capstone project.

3. The purpose of Jairus' Capstone study is to seek current JIBC students' perspectives on trends associated with career aspirations, related to their law enforcement education at JIBC.
   - *In other words, the data we are trying to collect is in relation to law enforcement studies students' career aspirations in general. Focussing on, before you started your education at JIBC, through your current career aspirations at this point in your studies.*

4. It is important to note, your participation in this survey is both **anonymous** and absolutely **voluntary.** You are under no obligation to participate and may decline, withdraw, or discontinue at any time without prejudice.

5. Since this survey is anonymous, with no way of identifying participants thereafter, once this questionnaire is completed, there will be no way to retrieve, amend, or redact any responses.

6. JIBC Faculty and Cohort Administrators may not be present during the survey as per the JIBC *Research Ethics Board*. (*5-Minutes Maximum*)

7. Please see the two-page questionnaire in-front of you:
   - The first page is a *Letter of Consent*, which you are welcome to keep, recycle, or return.
   - The second page is the *Official Questionnaire* with 8 multiple choice style questions. You will have 5-minutes to complete the survey, again, you are not obligated to participate. If you agree to participate, please ensure your completed copy is returned to one of the Administrators.

8. After 5-minutes, please pass your completed (or blank) questionnaires to the front and the Administrators will collect the results, which will then be passed on to the primary researcher.

9. If you have any questions about this Capstone project or the survey, please contact the principal investigator (Jairus Korpa) and/or JIBC's law enforcement studies program manager, Greg Keenan. Contact information is at the bottom of the *Consent Agreement*.

Thank you very much [*instructor*] and [*cohort #*] for your time and participation!!

NOTE: Please try not to exceed 15-minutes per class.

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1

Justice Institute *of* British Columbia (JIBC)
CONSENT AGREEMENT

The purpose of this BLES Capstone study is to seek current JIBC students' perspectives on trends associated with career aspirations, as related to their law enforcement education at JIBC. The research question this project intends to answer is, does an applied academic motivation at the Justice Institute of British Columbia effect a student's career goal, from before a student starts their JIBC education until their completion?

Your participation in this survey is both **anonymous** and **voluntary**. Being a voluntary survey, you are under no obligation to participate and may decline, withdraw, or discontinue at any time without prejudice. If you feel uncomfortable in any way during the survey session, you have the right to decline to answer any question(s), or to completely end the survey. Faculty and administrators from JIBC will not be present during the survey. All the anonymous data collected from this survey will be complied as a collective and will be presented on *Applied Research Day* at JIBC along with other Cohort 5 Capstone projects. This Capstone project, including the collective results, will remain in the JIBC Library indefinitely.

I agree that I am at least 18 years of age. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation in this survey. Participation is not associated directly with any of my courses, grades, or instructors. The answers (data) collected, are collected under the authority of the *Freedom of Information and Protection Privacy Act* for statistical research and administrative purposes only. Since this survey is designed for anonymity, I will not be able to amend, retrieve, or redact any of my answers once I have submitted my survey to the volunteer administrators. Though I have read and understand this consent agreement, I have not waived any of my legal rights.

This research study has been reviewed and approved by the *Justice Institute of British Columbia's - Review Ethics Board* (REB) for studies involving human subjects. If you have any questions about this Capstone project and its survey, please contact the principal investigator, Jairus Korpa at: <jairus.korpa@blue49.ca>. You may also contact JIBC's law enforcement studies programs manager, Greg Keenan at: <gkeenan@jibc.ca>.

I have read and understand the explanation provided to me and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Thank you,

Jairus Korpa

NOTE: *This consent agreement is consistent with the Tri-Council Policy Statement 2.*