

A Critique of the Career Aspirations of Youth who are in Conflict with the Law

BARTLETT, Jennifer, BSc, MEd (Cand.), University of New Brunswick; DOMENE, José F., PhD,
University of New Brunswick

Co-Author: MORRINSON, William, PhD

The youth justice system is designed to promote rehabilitation among criminally involved youth and to aid in their reintegration into society. Obtaining gainful employment is a critical component to successful rehabilitation and, by understanding the impact that the youth justice system has on adolescent career development, we can promote the formation of vocational goals, job-seeking behaviour and help these at risk adolescents overcome obstacles they may otherwise face. Unfortunately, little is known about the career development of criminally involved youth, their career goals for the future or the factors that influence their choices. The present study began to address this gap by exploring helping and hindering experiences that contributed to the development and achievement of career aspirations of criminally involved youth, using the Enhanced Critical Incident Technique. Preliminary results reveal that criminally involved youth have similar aspirations to other adolescents, but also that these aspirations have been substantially hindered by their involvement in crime and the youth justice system, as well as the social contexts in which they grew up. The emergent categories of helping and hindering incidents that arose in this study will be compared and contrasted to existing literature on factors that influence the development and achievement of career aspirations in typical youth. The implications of our findings for career counselling and programming will also be discussed.