

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN ACADEMIC DISIDENTIFICATION AND INCARCERATION IN AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to explore whether a direct relationship could be found between the unique occurrence of academic disidentification and the disproportionately high rates of incarceration among African American males. The concept of legitimate goals is considered as an essential variable that may be adversely affected by the presence of academic disidentification. A qualitative analysis utilizing a grounded theory approach resulted in a theoretical model, *Facilitation of Legitimate Goals*, positing two developmental paths toward internalizing legitimate goals. Twenty previously incarcerated African American males were interviewed to explore their satisfaction with their lives since incarceration, the past and present value they have associated with formal education, and the types of goals they currently pursue. The model emerging from the participants' data indicated a negative cycle in which academic disidentification acted as an intervening condition for high-risk activities that led to incarceration for each participant. A change trajectory followed, ending in the recognition of the importance of education. The adoption of legitimate goals subsequently occurred. It could not be concluded that academic disidentification directly resulted in incarceration or the absence of legitimate goals prior to incarceration for the study participants. The significance of the model and its implications are discussed.