

“DREAMKEEPERS”: SCHOOL EXPERIENCES FROM THE VOICES OF  
SUCCESSFUL ADULT AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES

A Dissertation  
by  
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Submitted to the Graduate School  
at Appalachian State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

December 2014  
Educational Leadership Doctoral Program  
Reich College of Education

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## **Abstract**

### **“DREAMKEEPERS”: SCHOOL EXPERIENCES FROM THE VOICES OF SUCCESSFUL ADULT AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES**

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As adults, African American males encounter a host of challenging problems. Among these problems are high incarceration rates, low college degree attainment, and high unemployment rates. A contributing factor to these problems is the lack of academic success in the school setting that African American men experience as youths. While there is an abundance of literature portraying the African American male in a negative light, this study focused on successful African American males and explored educational practices that contributed to their academic success. This study asked successful Black adult school leaders to reflect on their early school experiences and to discuss the impact of their school experiences on their academic success. In addition, this study explored the commitments successful adult males made to support young Black males and focused on the guidance these men provided to support school success.

In this interpretive qualitative study, a phenomenological approach was employed to document, in their own voices, the early school experiences of successful African American male school administrators. Ladson-Billings' (2009) characteristics and critical dimensions of culturally relevant teaching were employed to guide this study. Results indicated that the Black adult male participants experienced academic success during their early school

experiences and that they have success stories to voice despite the predominance of negative research in the literature. These African American male school leaders experienced teachers that Ladson-Billings would describe as *Dreamkeepers*.