

## ABSTRACT

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Higher Education  
Administration

VOICES FROM THE PIPELINE: AN INTERPRETIVE, CRITICAL RACE THEORY STUDY OF THRIVING AMONG UNDERREPRESENTED COLLEGE STUDENT ALUMNI OF A TARGETED PRE-COLLEGE PREPARATION PROGRAM (178 pp.)

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The purpose of this qualitative, Critical Race Theory (CRT) study was to better understand the lived experiences of underrepresented minority college students. Specifically, this study sought to identify themes across the students' experiences that contributed to their academic, interpersonal and intrapersonal success from a non-deficit, equity minded perspective. I employed a basic interpretive design with a CRT lens to amplify the voices of non-majority students by conducting semi structured interviews with 8 participants who had each attended the same pre-college program and enrolled at the same highly selective, research university. In so doing, I listened for counter narratives that challenged existing assumptions about the needs and experiences of underrepresented minority students.

Four themes emerged from across the student experiences including: (a) tone setting dynamics; (b) sense of belonging; (c) sense of self; and (d) defining success as growth. The experiences highlighted in these themes illustrate the ways that the participants in this study challenge the dominant discourse description of them as *at risk* or *high risk*.

The study findings call for a significant shift in thinking in order to better serve all students. First, they call out the ways that institutions perpetuate the *minoritization* of students of color. Second, the findings highlight the need to attend to the *accessibility* of our campus communities. Finally, they acknowledge that our current success conversation actually focuses on students *surviving* rather than *thriving*. Specific implications for educators, as well as suggestions for additional areas of inquiry are also addressed.