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*Educational Administration Quarterly* 2008; 44; 391 originally published online

May 2, 2008;

DOI: 10.1177/0013161X08315270

The online version of this article can be found at:

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## **Supporting Graduate Students of Color in Educational Administration Preparation Programs: Faculty Perspectives on Best Practices, Possibilities, and Problems**

Michelle D. Young  
Jeffrey S. Brooks

**Overview:** *This article presents findings from a study that examined faculty perspectives on how individual faculty members and institutions support graduate students of color in educational administration preparation programs.*

**Purpose:** *The purpose of this study was to identify strategies that faculty members and institutions employ to support graduate students of color. The authors were also interested in understanding challenges that face individuals and institutions as they seek to provide such support.*

**Data Sources:** *Data were collected through a series of focus group sessions and from individual interviews conducted with a diverse sample of faculty members during a 3-year period.*

**Findings:** *Findings suggested that effective support for graduate students of color in educational administration preparation programs entails proactive yet thoughtful, individual, and institutional work in four areas: (a) recognizing and engaging issues of race in educational administration preparation programs, (b) effective and race-sensitive mentorship, (c) creation and sustenance of multi-tiered and multi-purpose support networks, and (d) establishment of formal and informal support structures.*

**Keywords:** *administrator preparation; graduate students of color; race and educational administration*

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2004) projections for the year 2050, the non-Hispanic, White population of the United States is likely to increase by 7%. This modest increase is in stark contrast to projected increases among people of Hispanic origin (projected to increase by 188%), the Asian population (projected to increase by 213%), and the Black population

DOI: 10.1177/0013161X08315270

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(projected to increase by 71%). The same study also projects that by 2050, the non-Hispanic, White population will comprise only 50.1% of the country's total population, a sharp decline from the 77.1% of the population who reported their race as White in the 2000 census (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001).<sup>1</sup> However, as the nation's population grows increasingly diverse, schoolteachers and educational administrators are increasingly White. Although some educators and institutions have begun efforts to reconcile this inequity, Gay (1997) estimated that the number of teachers of color has declined from 12% in the 1970s to 6% in the 1990s and that statistics for school administrators of color are similarly discouraging. The 2003-2004 School and Staffing Survey estimated the total distribution of "minority" principals in public schools at 17.6%, although the minority student population was estimated at 39.7% (Strizek, Pittsonberger, Riordan, Lyter, & Orlofsky, 2006). Although these statistical projections make a compelling case for the necessity of reconsidering how educators and educational institutions engage issues of race, these numbers only tell part of the story and hide important trends in social dynamics.

Several scholars have argued that the United States is sharply divided along racial, gender, and social class lines (Delpit, 1995; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; West, 1998). "These divisions are clearly associated with exclusion, marginalization, and other negative outcomes, including unequal educational opportunity and achievement, and lead to disenfranchisement of large numbers of African American, Hispanic, American Indian, women, and poor students in our schools" (Lomotey, 1995, p. 297). By the year 2020, demographers predict that students of color will make up 46% of the U.S. school-age population (Miller, 1995). As this demographic shift will be phenotypically substantive, it will also be geographically widespread (Fluehr-Lobban, 2006). High concentrations of students of color will no longer be confined to the rural South or urban North but will instead be dispersed throughout the U.S. public school system.

In response to growing awareness of the need for more diversity within the ranks of America's school leaders, educational administration scholars have called for proactive measures and policies designed to attract people of color into school administration and into the professoriate (e.g., Allen, Jacobson, & Lomotey, 1995; Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Jackson, 1988; Leonard, 1988; Marshall, 1989; Marshall & Oliva, 2005; Young, Petersen, & Short, 2002). Yet despite some promising work and compelling recommendations by particularly committed individual scholars, a vast majority of educational administration faculty members remain silent on issues of race, making unclear the scope of the field's commitment to diversity. This

silence, and the concomitant lack of scrutiny and/or complacency that it implies, is no longer acceptable (Young & Laible, 2000). The inverse trajectories of national demographic trends and demographic trends among teachers and educational administrators have serious implications for universities, colleges of education, and educational administration preparation programs that demand immediate attention. In particular, educational administration scholars must begin to explore and interrogate the racial dynamics of their programs to respond to the needs of a changing student population (Scheurich & Laible, 1995; Young & Laible, 2000).

The purpose of this study was to contribute to a greater understanding of racial issues in educational administration preparation programs by identifying strategies that faculty members and institutions employ to support graduate students of color. In doing so, we sought to learn both about successful support practices and about challenges that face individuals and institutions as they seek to provide such support. This twofold purpose demands in-depth investigation of several interrelated and context-specific issues. Accordingly, we chose a qualitative methodology and conducted semistructured interviews with a diverse sample of educational administration faculty from institutions across the United States. Data were also collected from focus groups comprised of a diverse sample of educational administration faculty members from different institutions. The following multi-faceted research questions guided data collection and subsequent analysis:

1. How do individual faculty members in university-based educational administration preparation programs support graduate students of color?
2. How do university-based educational institutions and units (i.e., programs, departments, colleges, and universities) support graduate students of color?
3. What facilitates and/or impedes individual faculty members' and educational institutions' efforts to support graduate students of color in educational administration preparation programs?

We began this research with a broad and interdisciplinary survey of literature related to supporting graduate students of color in higher education. The subsequent section presents themes gleaned from this review and connects them with research conducted specifically on supporting graduate students of color in educational administration preparation programs. Following the literature review, we offer a brief discussion of research methods employed in gathering and analyzing data from faculty members. The article concludes with a presentation of findings and a Discussion section that links our research to extant literature and considers directions for future scholarship and implications for practice.

## FACULTY SUPPORT FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS OF COLOR IN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION PREPARATION PROGRAMS

During the first 75 years of the 20th century, much of the scholarship and teaching within the field of educational administration focused on the creation of a “science of administration” that could inform the preparation and practice of school leaders (Brooks & Miles, 2006a, 2006b; Campbell, Fleming, Newell, & Bennion, 1987; Cooper & Boyd, 1987). Yet as the field preoccupied itself with attempts to establish a theoretic, scientific, and technical knowledge base, these efforts “focused on the establishment and enforcement of performance standards rather than on equity standards” (Grogan, 1999, p. 518). Administrators, and the programs and faculty who trained them, implicitly (and at times explicitly) legitimized the notion that ignoring issues of race was tantamount to effective school leadership and administration (Jackson, 1988). As a result, although there are studies of faculty–student relationships in educational administration preparation programs (e.g., Crow & Matthews, 1998; Daresh, 2004; Grogan & Crow, 2004), few explore racial dynamics and even fewer are based on primary research.<sup>2</sup> However, since the 1970s a dramatic shift of orientation has taken place among faculty in educational administration preparation programs suggesting that times may be changing.

McCarthy and Kuh’s (1997) longitudinal study of educational administration faculty provides perhaps the most comprehensive examination of faculty perspectives and attitudes toward their work to date. The authors administered surveys to educational administration program faculty from across the nation in 1972, 1986, and again in 1994. Analyses of these data suggested that during those 22 years, faculty increasingly came to recognize that lack of racial diversity and inequity was a major issue in the field. When asked to relate their “perceptions of problems in their profession,” respondents’ returns show a remarkable trend toward heightened sensitivity toward issues of race. In 1972, 37% of professors of educational administration reported that the small portion of minorities in the profession was either rather serious or very serious, but by 1994 that number had swelled to 57%. Although there is a dearth of additional research to corroborate and expand McCarthy and Kuh’s (1997) findings (or that explores faculty behavior *in situ*), compelling evidence suggests that faculty in educational administration preparation programs are increasingly sensitive to issues of race and are committed to raising collective awareness of these issues among fellow scholars and practitioners alike (Tillman et al., 2003; Young et al., 2002).

Moreover, the intensity of conversations about issues of race, social justice, and equity in the field of educational administration have recently escalated to such a degree that (a) major national and international conferences traditionally devoted to strictly “race neutral” or “nonracial” themes have recently focused on disseminating and promoting research on diversity;<sup>3</sup> (b) substantive race-centered empirical and conceptual research appears in leading academic journals and in works from major publishers with increasing frequency (e.g., Dantley & Tillman, 2005; Gooden, 2005; Grogan, 1999; Marshall, 2004; Marshall & Oliva, 2005; Skrla & Scheurich, 2001; Young & Petersen, 2002); (c) several university-based educational administration preparation programs have reconceptualized their work around themes such as social justice and equity (Jackson & Kelley, 2002); and (d) one of the major recommendations of the landmark National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration work called for the following: “Programs for recruitment and placement of ethnic minorities and women should be initiated by universities, school boards, state and federal governments, and the private sector” (Griffiths, Stout, & Forsyth, 1988, p. xvii).

Although there is a need to further explore faculty attitudes toward concepts such as race and equity, it seems reasonable to suggest that a growing number of university faculty in educational administration preparation programs are committed to undertaking proactive measures that challenge longstanding ideological hegemony through their teaching, service, and research. Still, although there is promise in heightened awareness, there is little cause for celebration. As Young et al. (2002) pointed out, for a transformation to take hold as anything other than disconnected and random acts of isolated reform, faculty in educational administration preparation programs must first address the underlying epistemological, pedagogical, and philosophic assumptions that inform their practice: “We must have as a foundation for all of our actions a commitment to the development of leaders who can lead schools that are high performing for all children, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, class, and so on” (p. 155).

Furthermore, it seems unlikely that a conceptual “refocus” will be enough. Promoting race sensitivity is insufficient to ensure that social justice is practiced (Cambron-McCabe, 2005; Hafner, 2005; Larson & Murtadha, 2002). Both faculty and the aspiring academics and practitioners whom they prepare must take into account the social, political, economic, and policy milieus in which they work—in university and in school—and then learn to operationalize and concretize abstract concepts such as advocacy and equity. Given the aforementioned demographic trends, increasing pressures on school leaders, and emerging demands on the field of educational administration, faculty,

programs, colleges of education, and indeed universities, which do not address issues of race holistically and systematically, will remain “narrow, ill informed, and will not address the issue” (Young et al., 2002, p. 156).

### **Faculty Engaging Issues of Race: From Awareness to Intent...to Action?**

According to Margolis and Romero (1998) and Altbach and Lomotey (1991), the question, “What constitutes effective support for graduate students of color?” is complex and difficult to answer. These authors, and others, indicate that effective support includes an interrelated set of complex and protean factors. Such factors include (a) the diversity and alignment of curricular offerings, (b) recruitment and retention of faculty of color, (c) procurement and availability of financial assistance, (d) effective mentoring, provision of networking opportunities, and (e) assistance interpreting the hidden curriculum of educational institutions and graduate programs that can reproduce and perpetuate inequality (Freeman, 1999). Certainly, such a list fails to relate the dynamic and complex nature of these (and still other) related concerns. In the context of this research, we are most interested in understanding how faculty members perceive and engage these issues in their efforts to support graduate students of color in their programs.

It is unlikely that simply raising faculty members’ awareness to the factors cited in the previous paragraph will enable them to better meet the needs of graduate students of color or provide them adequate support. Although basic acknowledgement and understanding are important, they can only be a foundation on which more substantive interpersonal and institutional support structures and activities must be built. Coupling awareness with personal commitment to a race-conscious or anti-racist approach to practice is an important second step for each faculty member to consider (Brown, Davis, & McClendon, 1999; Scheurich, 2002; Scheurich & Laible, 1995; Young & Laible, 2000). Yet individual faculty commitment to engaging issues of race must be concomitant to more widespread institutional norms. Indeed, support will be most effective if an educational organization instills an ethic of proactive redundancy toward issues of equity in general, and issues of race in particular (Scheurich & Skrla, 2003). It is also important that policies and procedures are in place to protect and encourage faculty to support graduate students of color. Faculty in nonsupportive or hostile work environments may jeopardize their own employment or face other formal and informal sanctions by drawing attention to issues of inequity and inequality (Tillman, 1998).

## Individual and Institutional Support for Graduate Students of Color: Innovative Ideas and Best Practices

Traditionally, there is a fundamental dichotomy in terms of supporting graduate students—are there certain “best practices” that apply to *all* graduate students, or do graduate students of color need specific and *different* forms of support to facilitate and promote their success? Although there is probably a modicum of truth in both positions, a growing number of scholars recognize that a “difference-blind” (Larson & Murtadha, 2002) approach is insufficient in that it fails to address extant inequities that permeate educational institutions and all levels of society (Scheurich & Young, 1997). Many scholars who are discussed in this section argue that although there may be some effective support strategies that transcend race, support for graduate students of color is essentially and fundamentally different than the support that White students need and receive. Based on our review of the literature, support for graduate students of color can be conceptualized as occurring in five distinct yet interrelated phases of a student’s program: (a) recruitment, (b) orientation and induction, (c) faculty and peer mentoring, (d) in-program experiences, and (e) opportunities for career socialization and advancement.

*Recruitment.* It is insufficient to recruit graduate students of color using traditional means such as on-campus recruitment fairs, because access to on-campus events may exclude entire communities because of both proximity and cultural unease. Several studies have found that availability of transportation may be a barrier to recruiting graduate students of color and that people of color may view college campuses as a hostile or indifferent environment (Isaac, 1998). Likewise, recruitment methods such as mass mailing or posting program literature in schoolhouses may be ineffective because there may be cross-linguistic barriers and cross-cultural unease (Fordham, 1996). For example, among members of some communities, there is longstanding skepticism among educators of color that they will be adequately supported, represented, and valued in traditionally White universities (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Potential students may also not seek admission to university graduate programs because of a belief that even with the credentials of an advanced degree, they may not succeed because of institutionalized bias or they may feel that making such a decision will alienate them from their community (Fordham, 1996). Indeed, in some communities, the decision to pursue an advanced degree at a traditionally White university is viewed as accepting the choice to abandon one’s culture and adopt that of the White establishment. Put differently, in some communities of color, there

is a steep cultural and social price to pay for “acting White” (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986).

More effective recruitment strategies reach out to potential graduate students of color by holding events in schools and neighborhoods traditionally underrepresented and by staffing these events with people of color who can speak to the forms of support offered by the institution and by particular programs and professors. Rather than employ status-quo recruitment strategies, universities should instead consider that communities often have their own sophisticated and vibrant social communication networks. However, “discovering” and then “tapping into” these networks and engaging them via traditional recruitment is not only inappropriate but will likely prove at best ineffective and at worst offensive or exploitative (Ogbu, 1978). It is important to respect and honor the traditions and customs of communities and act accordingly after seeking counsel from individual community allies and formal organizations (Hall, 1990). In addition, effective recruitment of graduate students of color entails adequate pre-admission support, including detailed explanations of application processes and formal financial and social support programs employed by the institution (Elam, 1989; Isaac, 1998).

*Orientation and induction.* Once a student of color applies for and is accepted into a graduate program, additional forms of support are necessary to encourage success and retention. Universities should provide graduate students of color campus-wide, college-wide, and programmatic orientations that specifically address the particular needs and questions of students of color (Haring, 1999; Isaac, 1998). Furthermore, the effective orientation will not be a one-time, beginning-of-the-program experience but will necessarily introduce students to subsequent and complementary forms of ongoing support (Robinson, 1999). For example, an orientation in the first semester of a student’s program should include announcements about race-sensitive student and student–faculty support or interest groups, additional resources, and an extensive schedule of future events that students may attend that will allow them to ask questions that arise throughout their studies (Laden, 1999). It is also important that graduate students and faculty of color play a significant role in the development, implementation, and assessment of the orientation program and that the orientation address racial dynamics of social, academic, and professional issues (Granados & Lopez, 1999).

*Faculty and peer mentoring.* Graduate students of color will have a better chance of succeeding in their programs if faculty members assume roles beyond those of the traditional academic advisor and if graduate students of color are able to enter into meaningful intellectual and interpersonal

relationships with other graduate students (Freeman, 1999; Granados & Lopez, 1999; Robinson, 1999). Faculty *mentoring* is not just *advising* but, rather, a “dynamic, reciprocal relationship in a work environment between an advanced career incumbent (mentor) and a beginner (protégé) aimed at promoting the career and development of both” (Healy, 1997, as cited in Haring, 1999, p. 8). An effective mentor–protégé relationship is empathetic rather than sympathetic—a proactive partnership wherein each participant commits to an equal share of responsibility and commitment to the others’ success. This holds for both faculty–student mentoring relationships and also for student–student mentoring relationships, each of which provide opportunities for access to different kinds of experiences and information about academic and social expectations of the institution and the profession. In their interdisciplinary review of mentoring research, Hansford, Ehrich, and Tennent (2004) noted that when planning and implementing a formal mentoring program, organizations should

be aware of the growing body of research literature on mentoring, the need for program support at various levels, the importance of mentor training, the careful selection of participants, and the need for ongoing evaluations. If resources (both human and financial) are to be invested in mentoring programs, those responsible for planning and implementing programs must be willing to commit time, resources, and energy to such programs. Indeed, all parties have a responsibility to make mentoring work so that it can be a positive force for individuals and their organizations. (p. 536)

Still, despite these potential benefits, Hansford et al. (2004) mentioned that there is also a dark side of mentoring. Brown et al. (1999) cautioned that for mentors and mentoring programs designed to support graduate students of color to succeed, they must debunk and confront several myths:

1. *The myth that any senior person can mentor any junior person.* Faculty–graduate student mentoring relationships should be carefully chosen and entered into freely by each partner. As mentoring is a dynamic reciprocal relationship between two engaged partners, it requires a degree of care and commitment rather than a casual or “strictly business” approach.
2. *The myth that engaging with students during class, seminars, and scheduled office hours constitutes a sufficient commitment.* Instead, mentoring entails an additional set of commitments, which includes social and academic advocacy, career counseling, and a commitment to providing opportunities that can contribute to the mutual success of mentor and protégé.
3. *The myth that mentoring is only extra advising.* Again, advising is not mentoring. The former is a formal academic arrangement focused on program completion that may or may not be entered into freely; the latter requires a more substantive personal and professional commitment. It is certainly possible, for example, that someone could be an excellent advisor and a poor mentor.

4. *The myth that students of color can only be mentored by faculty of color.* This assumption is problematic for at least two reasons. First, as scholars of color are not well-represented in many educational administration faculty units, faculty of color may carry an inordinately large advising/mentoring load in relation to other faculty members. Second, leaving faculty of color to serve as mentors for graduate students of color is an absolution of responsibility and an implicit form of racism. Supporting graduate students of color is the responsibility of all faculty members, regardless of race.
5. *The myth that a mentor and protégé's research interests, philosophical positionality, and "polisocioecoracial" experiences must be a perfect match* (Brown et al., 1999, p. 114). An empathetic approach to the relationship and a commitment to an ethic of care, ethic of critique, ethic of community, an ethic of profession (Brooks & Normore, 2004; Furman, 2004; Starrat, 1997), and a reciprocal approach to success is at least as important.

*In-program experiences.* Jackson and Kelley (2002) suggested "a number of approaches have been developed to support the structure and pedagogy of administrator preparation programs" (p. 196), including the use of (a) problem-based learning instructional strategies, (b) cohort groups, (c) collaborative partnerships between preparation programs and external resources, (d) field experiences, and (e) technology.

Furthermore, graduate students of color must be supported throughout the duration of their academic program, including specialized attention at the coursework, comprehensive examination, dissertation, and possibly internship phases of their programs (Isaac, 1998). Curricula that do not represent perspectives from scholars of color and that do not adequately address issues of racial equity are likely to discourage graduate students of color and impart the implicit message that their views will not be respected or valued. To ameliorate the establishment or perpetuation of a "hidden curriculum" in educational leadership programs, faculty should be sure to examine and evaluate the materials that they use in courses and consider how certain viewpoints and perspectives may be marginalized (Grogan, 1999; McLaren, 1989). In addition, as educational administration scholar Michael Dantley noted during an interview published in the American Educational Research Association (AERA) Division A Newsletter (Brooks, 2005), if faculty members do not make an effort to effectively support graduate students of color as they begin to conceptualize their dissertation research, the possibility exists that their perspectives and research may not be legitimized.

*Opportunities for career socialization and advancement.* Research on the socialization of graduate students of color indicates that mentors must be aware of the way that various forms of marginalization interact with issues of race in their institutions. For example, a rich vein of inquiry

suggests that “race and gender are interlocking sources of marginalization in higher education” (Turner & Thompson, 1993, p. 356). These dynamics, and still others, place women graduate students of color at an accumulative disadvantage in relation to majority women and minority men (Clark & Corcoran, 1986). Moreover, although minority women face more numerous and complicated barriers than many of their peers, it does not get easier as these women advance toward graduation—the forces that facilitate failure take many forms throughout the socialization process. This demands that committed mentors and their protégés of color not rest once initial socialization into the program is over; rather, they must *both* constantly evaluate the student’s personal, organizational, and career socialization in the various and shifting social environments in which they have their socialization experiences, such as classrooms, departmental offices, and conferences (Clark & Corcoran, 1986; Menges & Exum, 1983; Nettles, 1990).

Effective support for graduate students of color includes opportunities for career advancement such as attendance at national conferences, publication opportunities, internship experiences, and chances to network with practitioners, scholars, and other graduate students of color within the university and nationally. Although many forms of support related to socialization and advancement are informal, interpersonal, and build organically from the dyadic mentoring relationship, there are also several promising and effective programmatic models (Crow & Matthews, 1998; Jackson & Kelley, 2002). Among these are the Puente Project, a California community college program that “addresses the needs of first-generation Latino college students from a cultural context” (Laden, 1999, p. 56) and the Holmes Scholars Network, “a national mentoring program for graduate students from racial and cultural groups currently underrepresented in the education professoriate who are preparing to become college or university faculty in teacher education” (Lamb, 1999, p. 150). Though a nascent program, educational administration graduate students of color can now benefit from such a national-level network. In 2003, the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) established the Barbara L. Jackson Scholars Network, which is designed

to create a network of graduate students of color who are studying in UCEA members’ educational leadership doctoral programs and who are planning to enter the professoriate. This goal is accomplished by providing a system of support for students of color across UCEA member institutions that will offer them specialized support as they continue as they pursue their degrees and then enter professorial roles. (UCEA, 2006)

These initiatives have helped to establish effective networks for students of color that assist them in attaining career goals. Of course, many universities, colleges, and programs offer various other forms of financial, social, and academic support. Although many of these are effective, such forms of support can suffer from a lack of sustainability or can be disconnected random acts of improvement rather than a coherent and integrated component of a strategic plan to support graduate students of color.

## METHOD

Data were collected using a qualitative methodology, primarily because the nature of the research demanded an integrated and comprehensive examination of multiple perspectives and data (Fielding & Lee, 1998; Silverman, 2001). We used two data collection techniques: focus groups and individual interviews. In the course of three consecutive years, we facilitated a total of four focus group sessions. These sessions included a total of 35 different faculty members and were conducted as three groups of 8 participants and one group of 11. In an effort to include a plurality of perspectives in each focus group, participants were purposively selected based on the following selection criteria. First, each focus group included three or four scholars whose research expertise included (a) issues of race and (b) leadership preparation. Second, focus groups also included faculty who were diverse with respect to the following:

1. *Years of experience.* Each focus group included faculty with 1 to 5 years of experience, faculty with 5 to 10 years of experience, and faculty with an excess of 10 years of experience.
2. *Race.* Each focus group included at least 2 participants who self-identified as African American, White, non-Hispanic, and Latino/a. Two focus groups included self-identified Native American participants, one focus group included an Asian American participant, and 5 participants did not self-identify.
3. *Gender.* The focus group sample included 19 men and 16 women.
4. *Institutional type.* Although a majority of participants ( $n = 28$ ) in this study were faculty at Carnegie Classified Research Extensive institutions, each focus group included faculty at non-Research Extensive institutions. All participants were from institutions that conferred a doctorate in educational leadership/administration.
5. *Academic rank.* Each focus group included faculty at the rank of Assistant, Associate, and Full Professor.
6. *Administrative/instructional assignment.* Although each focus group included a majority of participants who held full-time faculty research, teaching, and/or service lines, each group also included faculty who held positions such as program coordinator, department chair, associate dean, dean, and university president.

Focus group sessions were recorded, transcribed verbatim, and lasted between 70 and 90 minutes each.

In addition to these focus groups, we conducted 15 semistructured interviews with professors of educational administration, both face-to-face and via telephone. Eight of these interviews were with individuals who were also members of one of the four focus groups. The 7 remaining interview participants were selected through a form of network sampling (Silverman, 2001). These 7 interviewees were recommended by focus group participants as being faculty whose research and/or professional experiences made them knowledgeable on the topic of supporting graduate students of color. Considered as a whole, interviewees were likewise diverse with respect to the same criteria used to select initial focus group participants. The interviewee sample included 5 untenured assistant professors, 5 associate professors, and 5 full professors. Seven of these reported that they also held a formal administrative assignment such as program coordinator, department chair, or dean. Five interviewees self-identified as African American, 7 as non-Hispanic White, 2 as Latino/a, and 1 as Asian American. Eight interviewees were women and 7 were men.

Interviews and focus group sessions both began with the broad question, "What constitutes effective support for graduate students of color?" and were followed by prompts related to the following issues identified through our literature review, when necessary: (a) diversity and alignment of educational administration curriculum offerings, (b) recruitment and retention of graduate students and faculty of color, (c) procurement and availability of financial assistance for graduate students of color, (d) faculty and peer mentoring, (e) provision of professional and academic networking opportunities, (f) assistance interpreting the hidden curriculum of educational institutions and graduate programs, and (h) orientation and induction experiences.

Data were initially sorted using the categories listed above, and then within each of these categories, we explored the data using an inductive and iterative process of thematic coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994). After identifying descriptive themes and subthemes within each of these categories, we then sought to identify patterns across categories that might suggest theoretical foci that would help us understand these issues as interrelated phenomena (Richards, 2005). For example, an initial analysis guided by our review of literature suggested that strategic faculty support for graduate students of color was important, a more specific pattern of creating and sustaining multi-tiered and multi-purpose support networks emerged as we analyzed data. This and other analyses suggested a subtle, yet important, conceptual re-orientation that ultimately led to the development of four emergent categories, each of which is explained in the Findings section: (a) recognizing

and engaging issues of race in educational administration preparation programs, (b) race and mentorship, (c) creating and sustaining multi-tiered and multi-purpose support networks, and (d) establishing and sustaining formal and informal support structures.

To establish trustworthiness in this study, we used both participant member checks and triangulation of data from multiple sources (Creswell, 2007). Transcripts and analysis within focus groups were shared with participants to check for accuracy and also to gain perspective on descriptive and interpretive work at various points throughout the research process. We shared preliminary and more advanced analyses with participants for feedback and commentary. Respondents confirmed that analytic categories were consistent with their perspective, thereby increasing trustworthiness (Silverman, 2001).

## FINDINGS

In preface to our presentation of findings centered on how faculty in educational administration preparation programs support graduate students of color, it is important to point out that all interviewees suggested that certain activities and dispositions helped facilitate success for all graduate students, regardless of race. This foundation consisted of supporting students by making them aware of financial resources, counseling them in academic affairs, and helping them achieve career ambitions. Furthermore, faculty noted frequently that an overarching ethic of care in the faculty–student relationship and attention to individual needs undergirds specific and personalized support efforts. However, interviewees also explained that for graduate students of color, faculty members’ efforts to build, and build on, this foundation was a more complicated endeavor, requiring focused attention to particular issues. Our analyses of data suggested that faculty support for graduate students of color could be conceptually organized into four themes: (a) recognizing and engaging issues of race in educational administration preparation programs, (b) race and mentorship, (c) creating and sustaining multi-tiered and multi-purpose support networks, and (d) establishing and sustaining formal and informal support structures.

### Recognizing and Engaging Issues of Race

Interviewees reported that before graduate students of color can receive effective support, faculty members, graduate students, and administrators must first recognize and then engage issues of race, both personally and institutionally. Often, issues of race are simply not recognized in educational

administration preparation programs. Respondents explained that this was because of a variety of reasons. As one participant explained, "In many faculty units, issues of race are essentially invisible due to a lack of diversity among program participants." Because graduate students of color are in the demographic minority and faculty of color are not well-represented in educational administration preparation programs, issues of race are sidestepped, seen as unimportant, or shrugged away as superfluous to meeting the needs of a predominantly White student population. "Since they are White and most everyone around them are White, many faculty just don't think it's an important issue," noted one African American senior faculty member. White faculty who make their peers uncomfortable by raising issues of race may encounter institutional and interpersonal resistance in their efforts to raise the consciousness of their peers. One White faculty member explained that when raising issues of race among her peers, "it's not that everything is bad, it's that everything is dangerous." Interviewees feared informal sanctions, marginalization, and the real or imagined threat of jeopardizing their chances of securing tenure and promotion as impediments to raising issues of race with peers, students, and administrators. "It isn't safe to talk about race in higher education," one African American interviewee said, a sentiment echoed by a White interviewee in the following:

White faculty don't get [issues of race], don't try to learn about it, and they don't see it as important. They refuse to learn about it, but they know they feel threatened when the issues arise, so there can be negative consequences of studying or talking about race.

However, underrepresentation is not only evident in the diversity of students in the classroom or among the color of faces around faculty meeting tables but also in the intellectual content of instructional materials and research agendas of students and faculty. The curricula of educational administration preparation programs commonly include little or no scholarship from (or concerning) minority perspectives. Interviewees explained that although the field has made modest progress in this respect during the past 20 years, many "classics" are still used in preparation programs that completely ignore the social context of educational administration generally, and issues of race in particular. As a veteran African American university administrator and educational administration scholar explained, certain racist ideas still perpetuate a problematic mythology in the knowledge base and among students and educational administration faculty.

Twenty or thirty years ago, it was very common for students in teacher education programs to be exposed to works [which] argued that students of

African descent didn't have the training or the capacity of their White counterparts. That contributed substantially to the perceptions of people who were preparing to be teachers, and some ultimately administrators, about students of African descent and other students of color. For the most part, those works are no longer used in schools of education, but those attitudes still exist in schools of education about the capacity of students of African descent and other students of color to be as successful in the classroom or the university level and in the workplace, in the K-12 workplace.

Interviewees agreed with this sentiment and expressed frustration that a basic awareness of racial issues was not widespread in their own programs and in the field of educational administration. For although recognition is a necessary condition for action to follow, it must become a pervasive orientation that informs the work of individuals and organizational units if issues of race are to be meaningfully engaged and sustained by changes in institutional norms, programs, and policies. One interviewee lamented, "I'm often the only person who raises equity issues in meetings. People roll their eyes or answer with complete silence when I talk about it now." She continued by concluding, "This is why nothing is institutionalized except silence and racism."

Still, several faculty members expressed hope that recognition of issues of race had improved during their time as faculty or administrators and felt that the field of educational administration had made progress in diversifying its curriculum and knowledge base during the previous two decades. One faculty member explained that "it's better, but it's so far from where it needs to be." Other interviewees also suggested that there was little cause to celebrate. Indeed, as one faculty member noted, "There can be no rest" when seeking to engage issues of race because forms of marginalization and oppression change over time.

Oppression isn't static or monolithic. We have this idea of "here's the oppression and we're going to fight it and it is going to be vanquished or changed or dismantled," but oppression itself is adaptive and so you make advances on one front and the oppression doesn't stay in the shape it was when you were fighting it. It may give a little where you were making inroads but change and reestablish itself in some other place in order to survive. When you make a sort of "final attack" and then make an in-road in one place, then the system simply adapts to oppress you in some other way, and you know a lot of it is apparently benign.

Senior faculty in particular agreed with this perspective, and suggested that it is insufficient to include a multi-cultural course in the curriculum, rewrite a mission statement to include the word *diversity*, or simply hold conversations about equity. Engaging issues of race means that individuals

and organizations must pay acute attention to all facets of practice. As one senior faculty member explained, in addition to formal meetings and policy formulation, this includes informal encounters such as “the 5-minute conversations, but it also means the formal structures, the policies, the procedures. Every place you have access to advance this agenda you need to do it.” In summary, recognizing and engaging issues of race in educational administration preparation programs is not meaningful unless basic recognition of racial issues develops into a pervasive personal and organizational commitment to a race-conscious pedagogy of practice. Furthermore, this awareness must be accompanied by an ongoing and proactive dedication to acting on that vision by addressing a lack of diversity among student and faculty populations and revising curricula to include a plurality of diverse perspectives on educational administration.

### **Race and Mentorship: A Necessary and Complicated Set of Issues**

The potential for institutional and interpersonal racial dynamics (both formal and informal) to come into play during the recruitment, program of study, dissertation, and job search phases of a student of color’s experience in graduate school are great. Although it can be argued that all graduate students, regardless of race, must overcome issues of socialization on entering graduate school, interviewees explained that people of color are more likely to begin their programs lacking the social, political, and cultural capital necessary for success. The following responses are typical of our data:

The mentor–mentee relationship is important for all students but for students of color, it’s critical—it’s make or break for the student of color.

For [students of color], no mentor, no career.

There’s so much that a student of color needs. They don’t know the system like White kids, who understand it from a position of privilege and know how to work things to their advantage—students of color they need everything a White student needs and much, much more.

The attendant alienation and ennui that can accompany this experience makes the presence of a proactive and race-conscious mentor all the more important for graduate students of color. Certainly, students of color learn institutional mores and norms as they progress through their programs of study, but they can be at an initial disadvantage and must often behave in ways that are to them counterintuitive or that demand they act outside the boundaries of their own values, beliefs, and knowledge bases. As one faculty member of color

reflected on his experience as a graduate student: “The things I knew about people, about community, and about education were not valued. I was an outlier and it was very lonely.”

Interviewees explained that effective race-conscious mentors must be open and honest in raising issues of race, they must be willing to advocate on behalf of students both interpersonally and institutionally, and they must seek to create opportunities for students of color in all phases of their program and after graduation. “You have to be comprehensive,” one faculty member explained, “you can’t take anything for granted.” As several faculty members explained, this can be difficult but is necessary given long-entrenched social and cultural barriers that students of color face in institutions of higher education and in K-20 settings. The following narrative, offered by a senior faculty member of color recalling their own experience as a graduate student, was typical of other narratives offered by scholars of color:

When I first got [to graduate school], I had been assigned to an advisor who was a Black woman. When I arrived on campus, she was packing her books because she had been denied tenure. So when I actually started taking classes, there were no African American faculty in the School of Education. I started observing some things on the campus and particularly in my department. Access to professors in PhD programs was perhaps the most important factor in determining your ultimate success. Let me tell you why. White male students share race and gender with the majority of the faculty, which means that it is not inappropriate for them to go to lunch together, to go to dinner, to go over to the faculty member’s home, to spend time with them in the office because of the fact that they share gender and race. If you have these White male students who socialize in school, who have these entrees to socialize with the professors, mostly White male professors, and as a result, they get information about research assistantships, teaching assistantships, professional meetings, and opportunities to co-write papers and to do research with their advisors, and so that is a dilemma and it’s a challenge that we have to struggle against.

This lack of support and institutionalized racism makes the experience of graduate school a battle rather than an exploration of what one interviewee called “the world of ideas.” Importantly, race-conscious mentors must seek to broaden the boundaries of what is accepted as legitimate knowledge in this world of ideas. As a senior faculty member explained,

A doctoral student ought to be able to pursue research into areas concerning issues of race without it being a problem. There may not be a body of research that can inform their study because their interest is underrepresented in the literature. Many African American students find themselves detoured or derailed from what they really want to study because many times their advisors are not

aware that there is substantive and important literature outside the traditional resources of educational administration. They don't know what the literature says in terms of, for example, critical theories of African American identity, so they can't even begin to conceive of how that could inform a dissertation on leadership. Instead of looking at the dissertation as a learning process, some professors seek to maintain the status quo by trying to dissuade graduate students from studying what they really want to examine.

It is incumbent on a race-conscious mentor to support graduate students of color without intellectual coercion, and to help guide them although allowing for exploration of issues of race as a legitimate scholarly pursuit. Interviewees explained that often this called for the mentor to not only help the student with their research but also necessitated advocacy on behalf of the student with other committee members and faculty. One faculty member explained,

I have to intervene sometimes: with other faculty, with financial aid people, with other students, etc. Of course, I do it as carefully as possible and there are some battles that students have to fight on their own, but there are some moments in which being "Dr. So-and-so" is the only resolution. I don't like it, but it's the way things are.

Race-conscious mentors remain involved in, or at least aware of, extracurricular aspects of their students' success as well. As one faculty member put it,

I keep 'em straight. I have their cell-phone numbers and I call them late at night. College comes with many temptations, but they can be more dangerous for students of color than for Caucasian students because of where they might go and what they might do. It's outside the mainstream and that might cause problems.

According to interviewees, this awareness also meant helping students of color with job searches, introducing them to scholars of color in educational administration, and supporting them as they enter the field, as they may be moving into another situation made more difficult by institutional or interpersonal racism. Support can take many forms, including co-authoring research articles, helping those who enter K-12 settings by conducting research in their schools or districts, and providing a sympathetic ear or a critical eye to racial problems of practice. One White faculty member explained, "You have to show students of color that their perspectives matter in academe. They certainly do, but it is often hidden in educational administration programs."

However, with regard to mentorship, all respondents cautioned that a "trap" awaits faculty of color if their White peers do not adequately and

proactively support graduate students of color as effective race-conscious mentors. In such cases, faculty of color can be left to assume inordinately large advising roles as graduate students of color commonly gravitate to them seeking empathy. As several respondents explained, this situation puts faculty of color in a compromising position in which they feel compelled to take on graduate students of color but are not rewarded for extra work by the institution. The following quotes were typical of comments made by faculty of color:

The [students of color] actually come to me a lot and I, at times, have up to 60 master's students that I'm advising, aside from the doctoral students. It takes a lot of my time, but I feel that I need to be available to them.

So there I am, stuck because I recognize a need to support these people and to help them and to guide their experience and all that, but at the same time here I am overseeing 40 studies in addition to my own agenda.

I certainly have the largest number of students of color, there is no question about that.

Many faculty of color reported similar inordinate demands. Another respondent, an African American woman, explained how her situation placed even greater demands on her. In addition to advising and mentoring a disproportionate percentage of African American graduate students, she also found that regardless of race, many women sought her out as an informal mentor in whom they could confide. In addition, she reported that as the only qualitative researcher in her department, any doctoral student doing a qualitative dissertation, regardless of gender or race, attempted to recruit her onto their committee. These factors compounded her loads with respect to service and teaching, and her institution and peers made no effort to help her cope with these demands. Still, she felt compelled to help as many as she could. "After all," she said, "who will help them if I don't? They will be lost. And if that happens, what am I doing here?"

### **Creating and Sustaining Multi-Tiered and Multi-Purpose Networks**

Respondents suggested that there was a need to create and sustain multi-tiered and multi-purpose networks to best facilitate success for graduate students of color in educational administration preparation programs. By *multi-tiered*, we mean support structures should be developed within the program, department, college, university, community, state, region, nation,

and across international lines. As one faculty member put it, "It has to be at all levels to be equitable. There need to be allies, advocates, and friends throughout the system, who will do concrete things to advocate for students of color." By *multi-purpose*, participants suggested that there are a variety of social, academic, and professional forms of support for students. "Students of color have particular social and professional needs. We must meet all of them. If we can't, we have failed," one respondent argued. These networks are often informal, but in some instances, faculty, students, and administrators have taken the initiative to garner institutional or extra-institutional support for network-facilitation programs. One participant explained how they had participated in an effort to create such a network using institutional and extra-institutional resources.

We had a 6-week online mentoring institute where students actually participated with scholars of color all across the country. I was a mentor and an evaluator, so I had two roles. This was done online. When we got to AERA, we had a full hour mini-session sponsored by the Professional Development Committee, where we brought the students together again to talk about their needs, their experiences on the 6-week online mentoring experience.

Both the AERA and the scholar's institution supported this program financially and logistically.

Other respondents discussed the promise of a recently created, national-level mentoring program for graduate students of color in educational administration, the Barbara Jackson Scholars Program sponsored by the UCEA. As one faculty member suggested, although the program was only a few years old, it was already becoming "a vehicle for building a network of doctorate students of color, and then eventually that network [of students] will evolve into a network of scholars." Several interviewees mentioned the Jackson Scholars program and suggested that the program offered a rare opportunity for many graduate students of color in educational administration preparation program to

learn about jobs...learn about other students' work...learn the work of established and up-and-coming professors of color that are already in the field...and it can be a place where they discover people who look like them, a place where they can talk about their apprehensions, and about their programs and compare experiences.

Several respondents explained that networks and programs such as the Jackson Scholars program will ultimately be most useful when they operate not only within academic and professional domains but also if they serve a boundary-spanning function by reaching out to local communities,

practitioners, and organizations whose presence is not as strong in the field of educational administration. As one participant said, “There are amazing groups out there doing great things. We need to reach out to them.” For example, national organizations that participants mentioned included the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF), National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), National Indian Education Association (NIEA), and National Association of Asian American Professionals (NAAAP). Many participants also suggested the potential for research universities to create vibrant networks that include historically Black colleges and universities, Latino-serving institutions, and tribally controlled community colleges.

Interviewees explained that although graduate students of color often need academic and intellectual support, faculty should not neglect day-to-day issues. As one interviewee explained, it is important for graduate students of color to get “together with individuals with whom they can identify culturally or ethnically on some level, who may not serve as their mentors, but who can provide sort of a window to what is possible” in spaces as near as their academic program and as far reaching as international research conferences.

### **Establishing, Coordinating, and Sustaining Formal and Informal Support Structures**

Interviewees frequently pointed out that support structures, including but not limited to multi-tiered and multi-purpose networks, could work effectively whether they were formally recognized programs and policies or informal practices carried out by individuals and coalitions of like-minded folk. “You’d be amazed at how many people and organizations exist to support students of color, but they don’t talk—they don’t coordinate. They don’t know each other exist.” Importantly, respondents suggested that the most effective support efforts succeeded because they were part of an overarching strategic plan with a central commitment to enhancing the individual experiences of a diverse student population. As one interviewee said, “Even if the big-idea support programs for graduate students of color don’t last, they often allow people to make connections. Some do sustain and are great. We should emulate those.” Organizational units that ignored issues of race, engaged in piecemeal support, or relied on one or two key faculty members were cited as less effective than more systematic efforts. As previously mentioned, meaningful support takes place throughout the graduate experience, and each phase of the graduate student experience can be affected by formal and informal support.

Respondents suggested that formal support structures were important to the success of graduate students of color in each phase of their programs of

study. "It's crucial throughout," one respondent noted, echoing the sentiment of most. Proactive recruitment strategies such as holding informational fairs at off-campus community events, scholarship and fellowship opportunities, and purposeful hiring of a diverse staff to coordinate recruitment activities were mentioned frequently as particularly effective in attracting graduate students of color to programs. As one respondent explained with much fervor, "Get folks of color involved! If you are really interested in increasing diversity, put your wallet where your mouth is. Invite them in. Hire them!" Faculty members who worked in the few institutions that employed this strategy—purposeful hiring of a diverse and well-supported staff to coordinate recruitment activities—reported that it was particularly successful and showed great potential. "We've seen a tremendous increase in our number of applicants, and in our number of admissions," explained one dean, who spoke for several. Interviewees suggested many other formal support structures that directly supported graduate student of color, as follows:

1. substantive and race-sensitive orientation programs,
2. faculty–student study and reading groups centered on issues of diversity (including cohorts),
3. introduction to a diverse curriculum,
4. systematic introduction to faculty and graduate students of color in other fields of inquiry at the university,
5. race-sensitive multi-disciplinary research colloquia, and
6. financial support to attend at national-level conferences.

Although each of these promising practices suggests positive possibilities, faculty observed that as stand-alone programs, they held little hope of being effective. Instead, faculty, their organizational units, and their universities need to keep "equity goals central," as one faculty member repeatedly insisted, to their overarching strategic plans, purposes, and processes to truly support their graduate students of color: "Unless the fight for equity becomes an institutional norm, it won't make a difference—inclusion needs to replace exclusion at a macro level."

Faculty explained that informal support structures were also important to facilitating success for graduate students of color, yet they were most effective when they complemented a comprehensive formal program rather than replaced a formal program. Informal support takes many forms. Following are some typical faculty explanations of how they supported graduate students of color:

I meet once a month with all of my advisees, and we do mock dissertation defenses, mock thesis defenses, mock comprehensive exam defenses, for people who were preparing to do those defenses, so they were prepared when

they went to do the actual defense, and we also used it as an opportunity to praise students who had just recently accomplished things.

I told all of my students that if they went to AERA, I would provide them with dinner, and now I take about 30 students to dinner at AERA every year because they are continuing that tradition. We're continuing that tradition.

I get [students of color] together with individuals with whom they can identify culturally or ethnically on some level, who may not serve as their mentors, but who can provide sort of a window to what is possible.

Other respondents detailed additional informal forms of support such as helping graduate students of color find a place where they could get their hair cut because, as one faculty member explained, "Ethnic barbers can be hard to find if you don't know where to look," and introducing graduate students of color to one another.

Interestingly, although many respondents suggested that there is a need to formalize the informal support for graduate students of color that mainly comes out of individual professor's time and energy, others advised caution. Several interviewees expressed skepticism at making formal some of the informal support that they routinely supplied students. One fear was that the original intent of the effort would be lost if it became a "program" and had to justify its existence or funding through quantitative measures (racial quotas, reports on participation, etc.). For example, one respondent invited over graduate students of color for a potluck dinner twice a semester. Although they were certain that they could obtain institutional funding to support such events, they were hesitant and ultimately refrained from pursuing such support, as they might need to suddenly hassle with budgets, provide reports on activities, advertise, and do other duties outside the original intent of the endeavor.

## DISCUSSION

In contrast to a dominant ideology in the United States that espouses the belief of widespread opportunity, individual responsibility, an equitable application of justice, and encourages us to treat all people as individuals, many scholars have argued that race influences social perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors in ways that place members of certain racial minority groups at a disadvantage (Fluehr-Lobban, 2006). Research suggests that this inequity occurs in formal and informal educational settings throughout the United States (Delpit, 1995; Miller, 1995) and that race influences attitudes and behaviors of educational administrators in the nation's public

schools (Brooks & Jean-Marie, 2007; Larson & Murtadha, 2002; Lomotey, 1995; Marshall & Oliva, 2005; Scheurich & Skrla, 2003; Young & Laible, 2000). Although higher education scholars have investigated and interrogated the influence of race on students in postsecondary settings (Altbach & Lomotey, 1991), few studies have focused on issues of race manifest in educational administration programs, and none have examined faculty perspectives associated with supporting graduate students of color in university-based programs. This study contributed to our understanding of these issues and identified strategies that faculty members and institutions might establish, sustain, and evaluate as they seek to improve their individual and collective support for graduate students of color in educational administration preparation programs.

Findings from this study are in keeping with research in other postsecondary settings in suggesting that a color-blind approach to supporting graduate students of color is at least incomplete and is likely to send students both implicit and explicit messages that their perspectives are not valued or that they are not welcome in institutions of higher education (Altbach & Lomotey, 1991; Brown et al., 1999; Nettles, 1990). This message is conveyed implicitly through curricula that exclude the work of scholars of color, through weak peer and faculty mentoring, through a lack of financial commitment and social resources, and through the absence of scholars and administrators of color among program faculty. Moreover, analyses of the data in this study were similar to research conducted by Ogbu (1978) and Fordham and Ogbu (1986), who found that race-negative messages begin long before the student arrives on campus, especially in traditionally marginalized communities and with respect to predominantly White colleges and universities and colleges. Faculty in this study explained that overcoming these negative messages through proactive community outreach and recruitment is essential, as many potentially outstanding graduate students of color never apply to institutions where they feel, or may actually not be, welcome (Margolis & Romero, 1998).

To help ameliorate these negative social forces, faculty interviewed in this study explained that although race-responsive recruitment is a critical issue, there is also a great deal of work to be done to improve support for graduate students of color once they are admitted to a program. This begins with a need for all faculty, administrators, and graduate students to raise their level of awareness as to what constitutes effective support for graduate students of color (Jackson, 1988; Laden, 1999). However, as many scholars have pointed out, awareness is insufficient—in order for substantive change to occur action must follow. In particular, participants noted a need for university-based educational administration faculty and programs to make a

paradigmatic shift *away* from impersonal advising and *toward* authentic mentoring graduate students of color. This seemingly subtle distinction is actually substantial in that mentors and protégés are equally vested in each other's success, although advisors direct advisees from a position of relative authority (Robinson, 1999). For educational administration students, effective faculty and peer mentoring also includes providing ongoing socialization and networking opportunities in the interrelated domains of (a) K-12 educational settings; (b) the programmatic, departmental, college, and university levels; and (c) the educational administration professoriate.

Importantly, faculty interviewed in this study explained that supporting graduate students of color in educational administration preparation programs is not just something that happens between a mentor and protégé. Instead, outstanding mentors help graduate students of color establish and sustain multi-purpose and multi-tiered support networks. This means that well-supported graduate students of color should be able to turn to peer and faculty within the academic units with which they are most directly associated and also throughout all levels of the university. Several universities and educational administration preparation programs have developed effective induction and mentoring programs to support their graduate students of color (Jackson & Kelley, 2002). However, support within the walls of the program or university is insufficient. Multi-purpose and multi-tier support networks should extend both into local educational communities and also connect to scholars and practitioners at the national and international levels (Young, Petersen, & Short, 2002). Programs such as the Holmes Scholars Network and, more specifically, the UCEA Barbara L. Jackson Scholars program show great early promise and have even more potential as effective support structures but must continue to provide sustained networking, scholarship, and mentoring experiences as they develop and grow.

Data from this study suggested that although it is important to create support structures such as induction, outreach, and mentoring programs, it is equally important that these formal forms of support are complemented by informal support from peers and faculty throughout the various networks that support a graduate student of color (Hansford et al., 2004). Activities such as a mentor and protégé going to lunch together, invitations to a peer or faculty member's home, casual conversations about career possibilities, and authentic compassion from genuinely concerned and race-conscious colleagues are important forms of support (Brooks, 2005).

As a final discussion point, it is important to recognize that raising awareness of issues of race in educational administration preparation programs is not easy work and can result in unintended negative consequences for faculty members and students (Tillman, 1998). Advancing conversations and

advocating for race-sensitive curricula, policies, and practices can be contentious work, yet as participants in this study attested, it is necessary work (Young & Laible, 2000).

## CONCLUSION

Justice Blackmun wrote in the 1979 Bakke case, "In order to get beyond racism, we must first take account of race" (*Regents of the University of California vs. Bakke*, 1978, p. 2806). Indeed, according to scholars, such as Levin (1999), Grogan (1999), Cambron-McCabe (2005), Larson and Murtadha (2002), and to faculty members interviewed in this research, a color-blind approach within educational administration preparation programs seems more likely to perpetuate the inequity and exclusion embodied in the statistics that we presented in the introduction. Participants in this study suggested that although the work can be difficult, even dangerous, the time has come to acknowledge inequity and to engage it with an effective and sustained agenda of programmatic and personal action.

As educational administration faculty continue (or begin) to recruit educators of color into educational administration preparation programs that have been traditionally and predominantly populated by White students, organized by White faculty, and informed by a concomitant knowledge base, faculty must be race-conscious and proactive if educational administration preparation reform is to move from empty (though well-intended) rhetoric and toward substantive and equitable reform (Scheurich & Laible, 1995). Put differently, to effectively support graduate students of color, faculty must move thoughtfully and boldly from awareness to advocacy, and finally into action. Faculty committed to facilitating and enacting such change must increase awareness and concern among colleagues, graduate students of color, and White graduate students regarding issues of race and focus on understanding how best to support the success of future leaders of color. Given long-standing bias embedded in both scholarship and practice, faculty in educational administration preparation programs have an obligation to move beyond abstractions and heightened awareness and into substantive research and action (Young & Laible, 2000).

This research identified salient issues that face graduate students of color in educational administration preparation programs from the perspective of program faculty. Although the study revealed positive and inspiring work on behalf of some faculty members and organizational units and suggests that the field has made modest progress with respect to raising issues of race, it also calls into question whether educational administration graduate

programs offer adequate support to aspiring leaders and scholars of color and whether or not faculty and institutions are acting or are just “aware” (Grogan, 1999). Importantly, this research also suggests that faculty members who would practice a race-conscious or antiracist pedagogy in their research, teaching, and service activities do so at a potential risk to their academic careers. Setting aside the important ethical and equity implications of these conditions, the study also raised another issue—how long can a field that has long struggled to recruit students of color into its ranks remain viable if the ontological, institutional, and interpersonal norms remain hostile to the students that it must serve continue? It seems clear that if faculty in educational administration preparation programs refuse to take account of issues of race in their teaching, service, and research, their programs face the prospect of rendering themselves obsolete (Brooks, 2007; Grogan, 1999; Larson & Murtadha, 2002; Marshall & Oliva, 2005; Young & Laible, 2000). The time has come for faculty in educational administration preparation programs to join the conversation on race in higher education and take seriously the call to work against long-standing negative effects of a legacy of implicit and explicit racism in educational administration programs (Jackson, 1988). Although some meaningful conceptual and empirical strides have been made in recognizing impediments to graduate students of color in educational leadership programs, there remains a great deal of work to be done.

Farmer (1993) argued that “in the academic community, much is written about racism, race dynamics, and racial attitudes, yet little is done about these same issues personally, departmentally, or institutionally. Race is viewed abstractly” (p. 201). Participants in this study suggested that faculty must move beyond recognition of issues and instead proactively engage issues of racial bias in their work and in the institutions they serve. They must strive to understand how issues of race impact their work as mentors and move beyond traditional models of advising to form meaningful mentor–protégé relationships. They must help create and sustain multi-tiered and multi-purpose support networks for graduate students of color that connect them to the worlds of both practice and scholarship. Furthermore, applauding the work of a few individual activists and race-conscious is not enough and it is not an advocacy. Faculty, administration, and graduate students—of color and White students—must *all* recognize that establishing and sustaining formal and informal support structures is difficult but necessary work that may or not be rewarded within the current systems of their university or in their fields of practice. Finally, it is imperative to recognize that confronting issues of race demands not only strength but also endurance—if change is to take hold in educational administration programs, all stakeholders must join the

effort to support graduate students of color, sustain it over time, and hold fast in the face of tremendous institutionalized and interpersonal obstacles.

## NOTES

1. "Census 2000 showed that the U.S. population on April 1, 2000 was 281.4 million. Of the total, 216.9 million, or 77.1%, reported White. This number includes 211.5 million people, or 75.1%, who reported only White in addition to 5.5 million people, or 1.9%, who reported White as well as one or more other races. Census 2000 asked separate questions on race and Hispanic or Latino origin. Hispanics who reported their race as White, either alone or in combination with one or more other races, are included in the numbers for Whites" (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001).

2. A few notable exceptions are Mendez-Morse (2004), Tillman (1998, 2002), and Tillman et al. (2003).

3. See Brooks (2002) for a discussion of these themes.

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