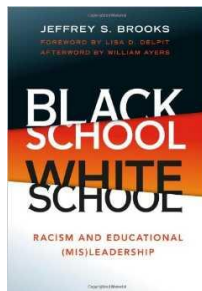# Professional Book Review

Brooks, J. (2012) *Black School, White School: Racism and Educational (Mis)Leadership.* New York: Teachers College Press. 155 pp., ISBN-10: 0807753122 $27.95 (cloth).

Reviewed by Kathryn Fishman-Weaver, University of Missouri, U. S. A.

Race and racism continue to be important topics in the fields of public education and educational leadership. However, much of the literature masks these issues by talking around instead of about race. In *Black School, White School: Racism and Educational (Mis)Leadership*, Jeffrey Brooks tackles issues of race and racism directly. This is a leadership book, intended for educational leaders and researchers of educational leadership. Brooks draws on the scholarship on leadership (Northouse, 2010) specifically distributed leadership (Camburn, Royan & Taylor, 2003; Goldstein, 2004, Spillane, 2006) and works from a social scientist and social justice perspective (Apple, 1990, 1995, 1996; Donaldson, 2006; Giroux, 1988; and Goldstein, 2004).

Black School, White School is organized into three parts. Part I: *From Social Justice to Racism* outlines Brook's framework of distributed leadership for social justice (Chapter 2) and introduces the reader to the separate subcultures of Black and White leadership at DuBois High School (Chapter 3). Part II: *Racism and Educational Misleadership* contains lengthy transcripts from educational leaders and teachers in Brooks' study (Chapters 4, 5, 6). Building on anthropologist Edward Hall's (1959) work, Chapter 7 uses the concept of "silent language" to illustrate the discrete and hidden ways racism (and other forms of injustice) played out in DuBois High School. Chapter 8 explores Brooks' title notion of educational (mis)leadership. Brooks defines misleadership as "behaviors that prevent the attainments of goals, or that prioritize individual goals over group goals" (p. 101). Part III: *Lessons Learned and Possibilities for the Future* is a very short section, compared to the previous two. In the concluding chapter, "Moving Toward a New Educational Leadership," Brooks suggests specific places where educational leadership practices can (and need to) change. *Black School, White School* is bookended by contributions from two scholars Brooks positions himself with: Lisa Delpit and Bill Ayers. Each chapter of the book reads as a distinct article/section. When taken together the chapters paint a holistic picture of the ways leadership was racialized at DuBois High School.

Black School, White School is based on two years of ethnographic data at an urban high school. Brooks' claims are supported by interviews, field notes, and observations in his focus site, DuBois High School. However, Brooks also brings in quantitative data both from his focus school site and from national statistics on equity, access, and achievement. Brooks intentionally places this book in conversation with other scholars looking at the role of race in school (Collins, 2009; Darling-Hammond,

1995; Delpit, 1995; Fordham, 1996; Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b, 1997; Lopez, 2003; Ogbu, 1978; and Tatum, 1999, 2007). The purpose of Brooks' study (p. 4) is to explore how race and race relations influenced the educational practices of the teachers and administrators at DuBois High School.

Brooks' central claim is that educational processes and outcomes are highly racialized. His book is a call for interrogating and reflecting the ways racism continues to matter in school leadership. However, within the field of educational leadership there is very little direct talk about race and racism. Instead, much of the existing research is color-blind or difference-blind. Brooks claims that such research is simply bad social science. The story of DuBois High School is the story of two distinct leadership subcultures. At DuBois, unfortunately, no one in administration or teaching was "willing to bridge the rift between the Black and White leadership subcultures" (p. 117). Naturally, this leadership failure also leads to a failure in serving students. To begin the work of untangling racism within educational leadership practice, Brooks advocates both formal and informal strategies to get educational leaders talking about race (e.g., book groups, professional development, pointing out issues in the hallway, cafeteria, etc.) However, these conversations must be followed with action, which in turn is followed with reflection. This is an ongoing and recursive cycle, which in the tradition of critical race theorists stresses the importance of personal stories.

Black School, White School is an important read for all scholars concerned with educational leadership. However, it does have a few limitations. First, student voice is absent from Brooks' study, or at least this write-up of the study. Although this is a book about leadership culture, not student (or even necessarily school) culture, student voices could have offered an additional layer of perspective to the distinct leadership subcultures at DuBois. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 offer compelling (and, in the case of chapter 4, horrific) transcripts of interviews and conversations with the educational leadership at DuBois. However, the unpacking of these transcripts happens in separate chapters, leaving the reader initially inferring instead of getting Brooks' analysis. Helping the reader make sense of the data within these chapters might have strengthened the arguments in the text. DuBois is in many ways a unique school, particularly in the racial diversity and success of their International baccalaureate program. While Brooks does a good job of pulling in national data and trends on race and leadership, there were areas where the political and cultural climate of the DuBois school might have been addressed more directly.

The main contributions of *Black School, White School* are twofold. First, Brooks brings to light issues of race and racism in educational leadership. This is an important and often absent topic from the scholarship on school leadership. Second, Brooks begins the work of addressing next steps for educational leaders who seek to lead with greater cooperation and equity. We need that hope in our schools; but we need it, as it is laid out in *Black School, White School*, with the clear understanding that our hopes for social justice will only be realized by giving voice to and engaging in the hard work of addressing the ways race and racism continue to impact schooling practices.

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