

Epilogue to the 2013 Edition¹

Conceptualizing the Cultural Prism

Janice E. Hale, Ph.D.
Professor of Early Childhood Education
Wayne State University

It must be borne in mind that the tragedy in life doesn't lie in not reaching your goal. The tragedy lies in having no goal to reach. It isn't a calamity to die with dreams unfulfilled, but it is a calamity not to dream. It is not a disaster to be unable to capture your ideal, but it is a disaster to have no ideal to capture. It is not a disgrace not to reach the stars, but it is a disgrace to have no stars to reach for. Not failure, but low aim is sin.

Dr. Benjamin Elijah Mays
The Late President Emeritus of
Morehouse College and Mentor to Men

Benjamin Mays, the legendary president of Morehouse College who was a mentor to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., wrote a book entitled, *Disturbed about man* (1969). In that book, Dr. Mays wrote:

It will not be sufficient for Morehouse College, for any college, for that matter to produce clever graduates, men fluent in speech and able to argue their way through, but rather honest men, men who can be trusted in public and private – **who are sensitive to the wrongs, the sufferings, and the injustices of society and who are willing to accept responsibility for correcting the ills.**

I thought of the title of that book when I began to review the literature related to cognitive, learning, behavioral, cultural styles of African American children. My objective was to assess the

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progress that was made since 1982 when *Black Children* was published. The landscape that I surveyed was very disturbing to me.

As I have traveled the country for speaking engagements, I have received many commendations from numerous school superintendents and other scholars who said that they could not have conceptualized their dissertations if it had not been for the guidance they found in *Black Children*. As I review the literature, I see that people have jumped in. People have written masters theses and dissertations. People have gotten tenure and promotion with articles that basically repeat what has been previously written with a new thought added on here or there. This is not a criticism of those who have produced scholarship with the intent of making a contribution. It is an evaluation of the situation.

Most of the scholarship that is produced by African American scholars is in the form of dissertations. There is not a great deal of post-doctoral research, mostly because of the lack of funding. White students at major universities serve as research assistants to white professors and break off a piece for their dissertations. The white professor can also enable them to get spin off grants to establish their post-doctoral research. That is how the system works. When a Black graduate students is committed to doing de-constructive research to become a trailblazer in African American educational psychology, there are in most universities no faculty member who is doing research that can launch them. Once they join a faculty, too often they are the only African American on the faculty and there is little opportunity to collaborate and receive mentorship. So, people do what they can to publish and contribute as best they can. The majority of African Americans leave the academy pretty quickly for higher paying “real” jobs. African American men have almost ceased pursuing the doctoral degree.

Again, this is not a criticism of those individuals who have labored as I have labored with very little support. However, these scattered attempts that have been made do not a Revolution

make. The most glaring omission as I review the scholarship that has been produced is that **the scientific foundation has not been created in 30 years to support this area of inquiry**. The science is not there. *Black Children* was written as a “Call for the Science”.

First of all the **definition** of what we are studying is not there. Secondly, the **instruments** have not been created to measure what we are talking about. What people have done is to use whatever is available that purports to measure or comes close to measuring what we are talking about because that immediately generates data that can be reported and written about in dissertations and articles that count toward degrees and tenure. Thirdly, we need to collaborate on an interdisciplinary basis to **create the science** to support culturally appropriate instructional practices and child and classroom management procedures. People have begun (myself included) to generate pedagogies that are based upon inadequate science. I did not intend to generate a pedagogy in the 1st edition of *Black Children*. I even stated that it was not a “how to teach Black children” book. But I was requested by my publisher to speculate about how Black children should be taught in that last chapter. Fourth, the problems with inadequate science have been compounded by **imprecision in the measurement of social class** as pertains to the achievement of African American children. Fifth and Sixth, we have created **ineffective teacher training and in-service training** (around what we do know) to change the attitudes and practices of often hostile teachers. Let’s consider each of these issues in turn.

Definitions

One of the lessons I gleaned from the furor following Rev. Wright’s NAACP speech was the confusion between several renditions of cognitive/learning style. Rev. Wright cited right brain/left brain theorists. Then, there are field independent/field dependent theorists. Additionally, there is Cohen’s analytical/relational learning style. To add to the confusion, there are other dimensions

found in instruments created by Rita Dunn (1990) and in Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) instruments (Claudia Melear et. al., 1994).

Hilliard (1989) points out that scientists who have studied learning styles from different academic disciplines have reported amazingly similar findings from their observations of different aspects of group styles. They use different terminology, yet the specific descriptors of the behaviors that fall under the various labels are quite similar and sometimes identical to one another.

Brain researchers talk about “left brain” and “right brain” behavioral patterns. Psychologists such as Rosalie Cohen talk about “analytic” and “relational” cognitive styles.

Anthropologists such as Warren Tenhouten have spoken about “science” and its “mirror image.” Psychiatrists such as David Shapiro have noted “obsessive compulsive” versus “hysterical” behavioral styles (p. 67).

My original intent in this essay was to distinguish between the above mentioned theories. When I was besieged by reporters after Rev. Wright’s speech, they only wanted me to comment on whether Rev. Wright was correct or mistaken by saying that African Americans are left brain and European Americans are right brain. One radio talk show host asked, “Dr. Hale, are you saying that the **brains** of Black people are different from the **brains** of white people?” They were extremely disinclined to listen to my attempts to discuss the cultural styles of African American children which I felt was the central issue. They essentially wanted me to say that Rev. Wright was wrong. When I maintained that he was right, then they wanted me to delve into a detailed discussion of right brain/left brain theory, as if I were a brain scientist. The dimensions of the right brain/ left brain theory as well as the dimensions of field independent/field dependent theory are very congruent with the dimensions of analytical/relational learning style. In my review of the literature, I found

several papers that defined each perspective and compared the focus of each (McCarthy, Bernice and Lieberman, Marcus, 1988; Anderson, 1988; Bell, 1994; Fierro, 1997; and Bonner,2000).

Charts are provided (McCarthy, Bernice, Lieberman, Marcus 1988; Anderson, 1988; Bonner, 2000, p. 651) that are similar to those created by Asa Hilliard (1976) in the 1st edition of this volume (Hale: 32-35). Anyone who likes charts will love Anderson (1988). A close examination of the various charts that have been created reveals that several writers (Anderson (1988); Bonner (2000); Hunt (1993) collapse the 3 learning styles descriptors and highlight the overlapping categories. So many literature reviews of these concepts have been written that it is not necessary to delineate the fine points of each theory, here.

In Hilliard's 1976 California research, he contrasted African and African American culture with European and European American culture. The dimensions he selected were in the areas of religion, language, and music. He focused on central tendencies within the groups. His position was that a given individual in many ways may be very much like most of the members of his or her historical groups of reference. He notes:

“For example, most individual African Americans are very much a part of a core African American culture, yet some may operate on the behavioral margins of their historical group of reference. Some others may operate in ways that are quite outside the norms of that group” (p. 371).

He states further that behavior is nonetheless dependent upon the nature of the cultural socialization process to which individuals are exposed and expresses the belief that a unique African American core culture can be empirically described.

Hilliard (1989) defines style as “consistency in the behavior of a person or of a group that tends to be habitual – the manifestation of a predisposition to approach things in a characteristic way” (p. 67). He notes that some investigators seek a biological basis for style. He found it more useful to focus on the cultural basis. He points out that style is learned and therefore can be changed or augmented. In his opinion educators have a difficult time accepting the notion of varieties of culture and style because many Americans have embraced the notion of the nation as a “melting pot,” as both an ideal and a reality. Some have a hard time believing in America as being a blending of cultures and in cultural pluralism at the same time. However, he sees no conflict between these two concepts. One test of democracy is the degree to which religious pluralism, political pluralism and cultural pluralism can exist. He also points out that educators are caught on the horns of a dilemma. At the same time they are being called upon to be sensitive to the styles that the children in their classrooms present, they are also warned not to stereotype groups of people. They are told that all individuals deserve to be able to reveal themselves as they really are and that teachers should not prejudge pupils. These directives seem to be in conflict with each other.

Hilliard (1989) adopted the definition of culture set forth by Paulo Freire, the Brazilian educator. Freire defined culture as anything that human beings make. Hilliard suggests that “people choose to *make things* out of the elements available to them in their environment, in keeping with their motivation to do so and their historical frame of reference” (p.66). Therefore, any cultural characterization of a person or group is a statement about the results of human choice, not about natural properties such as mental capacities. So, it is an error to compare or interpret the cultural substance of one group in terms of the cultural substance of another as is done using culture-bound instruments that are designed to provide information about intellect, cognition, personality or self-concept. According to him, it is appropriate to assess cultural assimilation or similarity.

Hilliard maintains that culture is what gives ethnicity its strength and meaning. A human group shares ways of doing things. “Culture provides group members with a deep sense of belonging and often with a strong preference for behaving in certain ways” (p.66).

Hilliard (1989) writes that discussions of cultural matters in education suffer when race and class are confused with culture. This writer is not convinced by his attempts to remove social class from the equation. I understand his objections to making race synonymous with African American culture. First of all, race is a biological construct. Secondly, a person of the Black race may or not be closely identified with the mainstream of traditional culture in the Black community. However, in my opinion, it is not as neat to dismiss social class considerations because of the period of time historically that the majority of African Americans were relegated to particular economic sectors which have cultural considerations. I agree totally with his statement that “any meaningful discussion of style thus requires a highly sophisticated sense of cultural dynamics” (p. 66). This insight foreshadows the discussion of creating the **Cultural Prism** that is the upshot of this essay.

Hilliard (1989) suggests that style should be considered on its various levels – cognitive, learning and behavioral. He makes the following general points:

- Styles are learned, not innate.
- Like any other learned behaviors, style can be changed.
- A person can learn to use more than one style, and to switch when appropriate. Linguists call this “code switching.”
- Style tends to be rooted at a deep structural level and so may be manifest in a highly generalized way (p. 67).

Hilliard (1989) stated that behavioral style is an aspect of culture that he called “group personality.” He pointed out that it is one thing to show that “invisible culture” exists. It is another thing to show that culture is meaningful in pedagogical terms. Unfortunately, he notes,

there has been little opportunity for a rigorous and systematic scrutiny of applied pedagogy that incorporates insights from the style theorists. As a result, much of the discussion about style has taken on more of the character of rhetoric than of scientific pedagogy” (p. 65).

Hilliard (1989) believes that the behavioral style issue is important and useful in some limited circumstances which are listed below, but that it is very premature to draw conclusions for classroom strategy based on style or to prescribe pedagogical practice on that basis. He does believe that greater sensitivity to style issues can make meaningful contributions to pedagogy in the future. He was unconvinced that the explanation for the lower performance of African American children would be found in pursuing questions of behavioral style. It was his opinion that children, no matter their style are failing “because of systematic inequities in the delivery of whatever pedagogical approach the teachers claim to master – not because students cannot learn from teachers whose styles do not match their own” (p. 68).

Asa Hilliard has been called into service as the standard bearer in defining and defending what has become culturally appropriate pedagogy. However, this writer was profoundly disappointed when Hilliard essentially changed disciplines and became a self-taught student of African American history and anthropology. He (Report of the New York Board of Regent’s Learning Styles Report, 1987) described the change in his research interest to the New York Board of Regent’s Learning Styles Panel in the following words:

Since 1976, I have pursued other research interests, at least one of which was a part of the (Hilliard) 1976 study. That area of interest is African and African American history and culture. In addition, I have also studied effective instructional strategies. While behavior

style including cognitive style, remains an area of interest to me, it has not been my priority area of research. . . . (p.23).

My feeling was that Asa Hilliard was uniquely positioned to conduct the kind of “rigorous and systematic study of applied pedagogy that incorporates insights from the style theorists” that he pointed out was needed to push this frontier. He had the status to obtain the funding that was necessary for empirical documentation to blaze the path for the rest of us to follow. Asa Hilliard, to me was the battering ram, the lighted path for my scholarship. He was the first person senior to me in his generation the give support for my scholarship. The African American scholars I worked with gave me fellowships and created a mentor/mentee relationship, but they suppressed new ideas that were not theirs. The white scholars didn’t help me develop my ideas, but they didn’t suppress them. The “old school” African American scholars had an investment in the scholarship they had created that was published, funded and ordained in the compensatory education movement. They selected me as an up and coming scholar, but they wouldn’t let me come up.

Therefore, once I found support in the scholarship of Asa Hilliard, I was deeply disappointed that he “went to Africa.” He pulled together study groups to delve into the mysteries of Egypt and the Nile. It is interesting to me that he felt that it wasn’t worth pursuing the issue of African American behavioral style because he didn’t see that path as being transformative in the educational fortunes of African American children. Yet, I encountered no article in which he expressed the belief that studying African American and history and culture would significantly impact the stubborn pedagogical issues facing the Black community. It seemed that he chose the historical and anthropological path because it was interesting to him.

However, the **Cultural Prism** conceptualized in this document could help resolve the tension between proponents of differing dimensions of inquiry. Some perspectives are mutually

exclusive, don't get me wrong. We have to forsake some paths in order to embrace others. But, that is not the case for every dimension that is described below.

As time went on, I became increasingly disturbed about the situation of African American children and the fact that there was no demonstrable improvement of their educational fortunes despite all of our efforts. In fact, the situation was worsening. A meeting "by invitation" was planned by Asa and others in the middle 1990's. The meeting was held in Detroit as a central location. Everyone attended at their own expense. Dr. Maulana Karanga and his wife were there. Dr. Haki Madhubuti and Dr. Wade Nobles were there. I was there as were several others. I cannot remember the stated purpose of the meeting, but those who were present were scholars and there was an Afrocentric overlay. We were divided into groups according to our disciplines. I was in the education group with Asa. I faintly remember Asa stating as a purpose that there was a need to reach consensus on implementing Afrocentric curricula in schools. The standards were unclear and there was a need to reach consensus on what constituted Afrocentrism.

My response was that I was concerned about what is happening to African American children in the public schools related to academic achievement. I felt that our leadership was needed to improve their fortunes and close the achievement gap. Asa said to me that "we cannot change the public schools." I will never forget that moment. I was shocked. At the end of our deliberations, I either was selected or seized the moment to give the report from our group. I passionately argued for us to come together and take action to improve the educational fortunes of African American children in the public schools. Asa silently gazed upon me much as you would a rambunctious daughter or younger sister. He was very kind and gentle and did not oppose me in any way. However, the coordinators of the meeting rebutted my perspective. I departed the meeting after the lunch break and did not return. I was not invited to any other meetings and several were held.

This event crystallized a difference of opinion between me and Asa. I think that the episode disturbed Asa, as well. A couple of years later, we were both speaking for a conference sponsored by Brenda Townsend at the University of South Florida in Tampa. Asa was the keynote speaker. I was in the audience. At the end of his address, Asa exclaimed, "We must find a way to change the public schools." The audience applauded enthusiastically. I was surprised and pleased with the declaration and felt that we had come full circle.

When I say that I differed from Asa, I do not mean to suggest that I departed from Afrocentrism or anything Asa wrote or believed in. I mean that my belief is that everything we do should be directed toward fighting for educational excellence for African American children, closing the achievement gap is only the first step. As V.P. Franklin has stated, our goal must be to prepare African American children for their leadership role among African peoples throughout the world in the twenty-first century. Educational mastery and excellence are the first steps toward that end.

Hilliard's (1989) article when read closely reveals the basis for his belief that it wasn't worth it to continue to pursue scholarship that would result in a change in the way African American children are taught in school. He states that in the real of world of pedagogy:

. . .teachers have the freedom to create their own unique, ad hoc approach to the design of instructional strategy. Uniform strategies are generally not required. This fact alone would make it difficult to change in any consistent way the manner in which all teachers react to various styles, assuming that it were desirable to do so (p. 68).

Having said that, Hilliard (1989) offers his opinion on the ways that understanding cultural style can have meaning by delineating four main areas:

1. Misunderstanding behavioral style leads educators to make mistakes in estimating a student's or a cultural group's intellectual potential. The consequences of such errors produce mislabeling, misplacement, and the ultimate mistreatment – inappropriate teaching of children. If stylistic differences are interpreted as evidence of capacity rather than as an expression of preference, a long chain of abuses are set in motion.
2. Misunderstanding behavioral styles leads educators to misread achievement in academic subjects such as creative expression. He gives the example of differences in the storytelling styles between African American children and their teachers which result in the teachers making the judgment that the children's stories have no order at all.
3. Misunderstanding behavioral style can lead educators to misjudge students' language abilities. When students and teachers differ in language, teachers sometimes use their own language as a normative reference. When the difference is framed as an objective for instruction, there is no suggestion that the child is somehow impaired. They speak the language they learned from the significant people in their lives.
4. Misunderstanding behavioral style can make it difficult to establish rapport and communicate. When teachers have low expectations of students, they don't use the full range of their professional skills to educate them. If a teacher mistakes a child's differing style for lack of intellectual potential, the child will likely become educationally deprived as the teacher either doesn't teach him effectively or "teaches down" to the child's estimated capacity to learn. This involves simplifying, concretizing, fragmenting and slowing the pace of instruction (p. 69).

Hilliard (1989) concludes with the statement that is it “too early for us to say how or whether pedagogy (classroom teaching strategy) should be modified in response to learning styles (p. 69). He also maintains that educators need not fear that addressing style differences would make them guilty of stereotyping students. “Empirical observations are not the same as stereotyping. But the observations must be empirical, and must be interpreted properly for each student” (p. 69).

Creation of the science to empirically document learning style

Meaningful Implications for Instruction. Hilliard (1992) pointed out that:

It is one thing to determine that behavioral style distinctions exist and that cultural behavioral style distinctions also exist. It is quite another thing to make valid pedagogical applications of the information about these styles. **An argument could be made that distinct styles (behavioral, cultural, and learning styles, for example) exist without drawing any meaningful implications for instruction.** On the other hand, an understanding of style may very well help us to solve some of the stubborn pedagogical problems that exist today (p. 372).

Herein lies the key issue as I reflect about the 30 years that have passed since the publication of *Black Children*. What is the value in identifying cultural themes that even affect some aspect of instruction if there are **no meaningful implications for instruction?** A review of where we are in empirical research leads me to the thought that in addition to identifying cultural themes that have instructional implications, perhaps we, as scholars, should enter through a different door and delineate the key points of instructional disconnect that contribute to diminished achievement on the part of African American children and use a dynamic **Cultural Prism** to generate scholarship

that provides creates a meaningful solution. In my review of the literature, I do not see this match. People are completing theses and dissertations, achieving tenure and promotion, building graduate programs – in effect surviving in the academy, but we are not significantly pushing this frontier of knowledge in such a way that the fortunes of African American children are advancing as a result of our scholarship. In this 3rd Edition of *Black Children*, I am calling for us to Step It Up, if we are going to see meaningful change in my lifetime!

Instruments

A fundamental problem with the weakness of the science lies in the instruments that have been used to measure learning and cognitive style. The instruments are not measuring what we are talking about, yet they have been represented in research studies as if they do. Instead of measuring what we are talking about, we have ended up talking about what the available instruments measure. The tail is wagging the dog.

Scholars have conducted studies using instruments, the better known ones of which are the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) (Melear and Richardson (1994) and instruments on learning styles created by Rita Dunn (1990). They administered these instruments to Black and white children and reported the findings, looking for ethnic differences. I am not sure why Rita Dunn was invited to the Board of Regents' Panel on learning styles when I was not. Her instrument was not created from any cultural theoretical frame of reference. When an interest in learning styles arose, her instrument was brought into service to measure what we were talking about regardless of whether there was a "goodness of fit." It has just been used to collect data to see whether there are Black/white differences. There is no cultural theoretical framework and in Hilliard's words, there are no "*meaningful* instructional implications" that you can glean from her data.

The first step in strengthening the science in the area of African American learning styles and cognitive styles is to create salient instruments that measure the cultural styles of which we

speak. The Grandmother study reported in this volume was an effort to create the science of which I speak.

There is a need to step back from collecting data and collaborate to create an instrument to measure the pedagogically related cultural styles of which we speak.

Imprecision in the Measurement of Social Class

An extremely important issue that must be rectified to improve the science related to understanding the achievement patterns of African American children is the measurement of social class. In my opinion, there needs to be a major overhaul in the evaluation/measurement of what constitutes “middle-class” as it relates to the educationally related achievement patterns of African American children. I would like to set forth the argument here that a new index of social class *as it is related to school achievement* needs to be empirically developed. Identification of the poor is easy. Free or reduced lunch is acceptable as a criteria for those who have low income. Income level, educational level, housing, social affiliations, the status of the family car are all acceptable criteria in determining who is poor and who is not. My argument is that studies are being conducted comparing white middle-class children and what are being represented as African American middle-class children using faulty instruments and producing questionable data. Studies are being conducted comparing lower-income African American children with what are being represented as African American middle-class children yielding some confounding data.

Problem number one with these data is that those who deny that there is a distinctive African American culture evoke a “culture of poverty” theorem identifying socioeconomic status as the salient feature in African American children’s achievement. Yet, those proponents cannot produce data that documents that “middle class” African American children perform in school exactly like or even comparably to middle-class white children. In order to win the argument that social class is the key and only factor, then the proof should be in the “pudding” of identical

achievement levels and patterns between African American and white middle class children. Those data do not exist. This point was made by White (1992).

A part of the reason that those data do not exist is that social scientists have not provided us with the tools for accurately measuring social class **as it relates to school achievement**. A central problem is that most of the African American children researchers are calling “middle class” are not accurately categorized for the purposes of understanding school achievement.

The African American community of Shaker Heights Ohio was so disturbed by the incongruity between the achievement levels of white and African American children in Shaker High School, an affluent suburban public school of Cleveland, that they commissioned Dr. John Ogbu, a Nigerian scholar from the University of California, Berkeley to study their community, their families and the school to make recommendations. His study was published in 2003. I read his study with interest because I lived for seven and a half years in an adjacent suburb to Shaker Heights -- Beachwood, Ohio -- when on the faculty of Cleveland State University. I was very familiar with the angst of affluent African American families who were perplexed by the fact that they had “moved on up to the DELUXE apartment in the sky”, yet, their educational and cultural attainment was not being reflected in their children’s performance at school. The one family I knew whose African American daughters emerged from Shaker Heights High School as Rhodes Scholars had a white mother.

The late John Ogbu was Nigerian. The experience of having been raised in an intact culture that was not flavored by the African American slavery experience is reflected in his writing. My personal experience with high achieving professional Nigerians is that they grew up in strong patriarchal families with extraordinary achievement orientations transmitted at least to the males by their fathers. The ones I know grew up in polygamous families, so I don’t know what was transmitted to the females. His perspective is a very no-nonsense critique of the extent to which the

African American families are attuned to the “rat-race” set by the white Super Moms in suburbia – although he doesn’t frame it that way. Essentially, he set forth the opinion that the Black families focused on providing their children with material possessions but there “academically disengaged.”

I agree with him that the African American mothers he studied who are called “middle-class” are not in synch with the Super Mom “rat-race” in affluent schools. This phenomenon was discussed in detail as the “Superbaby” syndrome elsewhere (Hale, 2001: 133-134). A white educator was quoted in this volume (Hale, 1986: xv) as stating to me that white parents, as he sees it, do not object to Black children receiving a good education. They just want them to receive it in the schools as they presently exist. They object to changing the schools to accommodate the learning styles of Black children because they fear that such changes will have a deleterious effect on the achievement of white children. The resistance to equity for African American children is more virulent than that. My evaluation is that white parents do not want Black children to “catch up” with their children educationally. The words of Christopher Jencks that were quoted in *Unbank the Fire* (Hale, 1994) bear repeating right here:

Despite the pious rhetoric about equality of opportunity, most parents want their children to have a more than equal change of success – which means, inevitably, that they want others -- not all others -- but some others, to have less than equal chances (p. 119).

We know who those “some others” are. Dr. A. Wade Boykin² (2009) reported that in implementing the Talent Quest model of his Capstone Institute, his Howard University team

² Professor at Howard University and Director of the Talent Quest Model of School Reform sponsored by his Capstone Institute, made these comments in a keynote address at the Conference on Research Directions (CORD) sponsored by the Institute for the Study of the African American Child, (ISAAC) College of Education, Wayne State University on Hilton Head Island, South Carolina.

designed an intervention that would enable African American students to access advanced placement classes in a target high school. The team disaggregated the skills that were needed on the part of the children to achieve that goal. Those efforts were met with resistance by the white parents who pressured the principal to terminate the initiative. Boykin's team had to retreat from assisting the African American students in accessing advanced placement classes. They shifted to helping the students access honors classes which was a lower tier of accomplishment and was not contested by the white parents. This effort had nothing to do with "changing the school". This effort pertained to decoding the culture of the school to enable African American students to succeed on par with white students.

The extent to which white parents want the "upper hand" educationally was shocking to me as a mother and I am middle class by my definition. I had never experienced this competitive spirit of "hide and seek" in predominately Black schools that I experienced in predominately white schools and described in *Learning While Black* (Hale, 2001: 50-88).

What was more shocking was the collusion with white mothers by the teachers in the school who were fellow mothers who had children in the school as well as being in their upper middle-class cultural group. This is a relatively recent phenomenon in American popular culture. It is safe to say that most American parents were not themselves raised in this cultural stream since it came to fruition in the 1980's. In the discussion of my experiences with my son in an affluent private school, (Hale 2001: 51-88), I documented from personal experience that it is truly possible to travel through the school in year by year with other parents and be so closed out of the real flow of what is happening (that affects your child's fortunes) that an African American parent can legitimately not know what is going on.

It is my contention that the salient issue is the incorrect judgment that one can designate the white and African American families as being middle class simply because they live in

neighborhoods that make them eligible to attend the Shaker Heights Public School system. This is pretty much the essence of middle class in the scientific literature – income level. An issue that is salient to school achievement is who is generating that income and how much must come from the mother.

My credentials are that I am second generation college educated. My parents were both holders of graduate degrees. I also was an undergraduate sociology major. Social class has always been of interest to me because, being the daughter of a Baptist pastor, I was raised in a class-blind environment. African Americans join churches to obtain an elevation in social status. Being the victims of racial suppression of employment opportunities, African Americans seek to transcend their status in the white controlled society and obtain enhanced self-esteem within the African American community. African Americans do not want a pecking order within the church -- an extremely important social institution that provides escape from the injustices of the outside society. So, as a preacher's daughter, my parents did everything they could to raise us so that we were unaware of outside occupational and status distinctions between church members – unless it pertained to offices and statuses within the church. It wasn't until I took a course on Social Stratification at Spelman College that I began to understand how social class was determined by sociologists.

When I was married in Cleveland, I was a part of a very circumscribed friendship group wherein all of the women held the Ph.D. degree and our husbands were graduate degreed professionals. When I moved to Michigan and began to raise my son, I joined a local chapter of Jack and Jill, (a national social organization of middle-class families) as well as traveling other pathways that gave me the opportunity to observe and decode African American upper income couples. It was the first time I was exposed to a large number of upper income African American families and had the opportunity to note a variety of family configurations. My father who was a

sharecropper's son whose story I told elsewhere (Hale, 1994) felt very strongly that he not only wanted to achieve a college education as his fundamental step toward upward mobility, but he also felt that his wife should be the holder of the baccalaureate degree. He was very proud that my mother graduated from Spelman College and also attained the masters degree in early childhood education from The Ohio State University. I was raised to believe that there should be educational symmetry between husband and wife.

It was interesting to me to observe couples I encountered where the husband was a physician, auto industry executive, accomplished lawyer or some other high status, high paid professional who was married to a nail technician, auto show model, flight attendant, secretary, hair dresser and similar working class occupation with the expected educational level. Some of these families lived in 2-3 million dollar homes. They had three car garages and had all of the bells and whistles generated by the breadwinner's income. Because of the neighborhoods they resided in, the children attended the top shelf affluent schools. These families would be without a doubt categorized as "middle-class" by any social science instrument in current use. However, the school district would be perpetually puzzled when the child coming from this home going to school doesn't perform on par with white "middle-class" children.

The family is categorized as "middle-class" based upon the educational and income level of the father in the family. Yet, it is the mother who is the point person in creating enrichment experiences for the children and negotiating the schools. As relates to school achievement, there is a need to create a more precise indicator of social class for African American families.

There is also the family configuration wherein the mother provides the most substantial portion of the income of the family. The ramifications of those demands on her ability to negotiate her child's educational life need to be factored in. I once heard a conversation among two white teachers at my son's private elementary school. They were discussing an African American mother

and why she worked so many hours. This was perplexing to them when as white women, they were accustomed to the income generated by their white male husbands which enabled them to teach in such a school with very little financial remuneration. Of course, their children received a private school education for a very low cost which was an untaxed benefit. The African American woman they were discussing was Harvard educated and held an extremely prominent and high paying position in the auto industry. Her husband was self-employed. Clearly, she was the financial anchor in her family and it revealed itself in her deviation from the patterns they were familiar with. A quote by Andrew Young in this volume (Hale, 1986:68) bears repeating here. Andrew Young was once questioned in a television interview about the fabulous homes Blacks in Atlanta own. He said that they were indeed fabulous, but everyone in the houses was working to support them!

An accurate indicator of social class as it **relates to the study of *school achievement*** needs more precise criteria such as:

- the educational level of the mother, if she is primarily responsible for the academic development of the child and negotiating the schools – as most mothers are;
- An additional index is the degree to which her time is freed up from earning income to navigate the child's home educational activities (see the discussion in Hale 2001: 131-135);
- navigate enrichment activities;
- navigate the schools;
- comparisons should be made to the time she has to devote to caring for elderly parents and assisting extended family members;
- an important additional consideration should be the number of children she is responsible for;
- a birth order factor for each particular child (Conley 2004), and

- a whole compendium of volunteer and obligatory activities that are not child-related – church, civic, social, fraternal that she does for her own fulfillment or to anchor a satisfying social life for the couple and the family. This is the mother who chairs the city-wide United Way campaign or is President of the Missionary Society at her church. They offer high end voluntary service to their community, but the time commitment detracts from the time that is available to develop their child(ren) academically.

The focus on determining social class as it relates to school achievement should be on quantifying the educational and cultural level of the mother. There are also significant within group differences for mothers who are college graduates. A mother who is a teacher would have a higher school negotiation index than a mother who is a mechanical engineer. They may have the same number of post-secondary years of schooling, but the teacher would have a higher level of expertise in navigating her child's journey through school.

The educational level of the father can translate well into the income level of the family. However, a more salient factor is the degree to which his income frees his wife from producing income. But, for it to count for the child educationally, it has to translate into time spent and expertise in negotiating the schools. He can't just have a high income and she matches it with a comparable demanding occupation. For example, a physician whose earnings enable his wife who is teacher to be a stay at home mom would create a higher index than a physician whose wife earns as much money as he as a high powered attorney. Her occupation would involve time away from child rearing as well as having an expertise in a different field.

Additionally, an evaluation of how a non-working mother spends her time should be factored in. Is she playing bridge, going to the casino and bowling or is she serving as the Room Mother at her child's school? Present socioeconomic measures that factor in educational and income level of the family do not provide an accurate reading on the degree to which a particular

family is equipped to prepare their children to compete in what has become an increasingly rabid, competitive school environment. This issue is discussed in detail in Hale, 2001: 131-136).

In Bowman (2002) vocabulary differences between African American and white children were discussed. It was documented that white children knew twice as many words as African American children upon school entry in preschool and the margin of difference endured throughout elementary school. These differences in vocabulary depth persisted even when social class was held constant.

Another interesting finding related to social class emerged from Wake County, North Carolina. This school district reassigned every child in the county to achieve a distribution of 40% affluent and 60% lower income children in each and every school. The affluent children were primarily white and the low income children were African American and Hispanic. This distribution resulted in an improvement in academic achievement for both groups. This hypothesis emanated from the Second-Sense. However, when I looked for a citation to reference the initiative, I discovered that the school board is in the process of planning a reversal (Khadaroo, 2010).

There have been court decisions forbidding school districts to integrate based upon race. This was a promising path to diversifying schools based upon the income level of the children's families. Predictably, the white parents fought it and elected school board members who would reverse the strategy. No thought is given to creating schools that will produce equal outcomes for all children. The white parents want to keep their children close to home in the affluent school districts. Less resistance is erected in today's world against busing Black children to better schools than is erected against busing white children to integrate the schools.

Ineffective Teacher Training

As we strive to improve the science upon which effective teaching practice is built, we have to address the charade which is university teacher training and in-service teacher training for cultural

diversity. I shudder to think that many of the students I teach will one day teach African American children. Many of them are so blatantly racist, they don't even know what to hide.

Teacher training programs in colleges and universities need courageous conversations about race throughout the curriculum. Every predominantly white university that I have taught in has a 2 hour course for imparting everything students need to know about urban education – code for African American children. The reason most courses are only 2 hours rather than a normal 3 hours (in a semester system) was because of fights over the initial addition of the courses at all in the '70s. A compromise was to offer a nominal 2 hour course in “multicultural education.” Even when those courses are offered in universities located in urban areas with a majority African American population, the faculty insist that *every conceivable ethnic group in the world be included equally*. Additionally, they require the inclusion of every type of diversity known to modern man – sexual orientation and gender, exceptionality, hair style, language, religion, socioeconomic status, body image and age. These requirements were almost put into place by the white faculty members to assure that the white teacher education students would not be irritated by having to be taught how to teach African American children effectively. Yet, they maintain that their students are taught to be “urban educators.”

At one point, I had to go to the AAUPT union to block a Hispanic coordinator of the multicultural program at a university at which I taught. He was attempting to require me to use a specific textbook that I did not participate in choosing. He also wanted to require me to use the accompanying computer generated test package to evaluate my students. He opposed my strategy of teaching my students how to teach children of various ethnic groups within the context of their culture and learning styles. I was able to prevail because of academic freedom. I don't know how pervasive these conflicts are, but they have certainly colored my experience teaching courses in “multicultural education.”

White students avoid being seen as racists by not discussing race. They don't have the language to discuss race without being racists. They aren't used to hearing race discussed – at least in mixed race settings. They might discuss it with their friends in all white settings, but they are not accustomed to discussing it with African Americans present. When I discuss race in my classes, they define me as a racist because they define any discussion about race as racist. Using words like at-risk, culturally deprived, minority, poor children, children of poverty, perpetuates this problem – it doesn't solve it.

Courageous conversations about race are needed by all faculty members with students who are training to be teachers. Too often the onus falls on a lone African American faculty member to carry the burden of transforming the culture of a college -- alone. I have been in faculty meetings where the faculty were divided into groups and asked to describe the ways in which “diversity” was incorporated into their courses. I was the only one in my group talking. When there is no infusion of “diversity” throughout the curriculum, then, the students can just complain about what they don't want to hear from one faculty member. The information is alien to them and they resist engaging with it. They don't understand the concept of academic freedom. They feel that they can report an African American faculty member for presenting content they don't want to hear and it will cease and desist. It is amazing that students feel that they should dictate course content. In too many cases, they are treated as customers at universities that are fighting for enrollment.

White students in my classes have complained about hearing anything about African American children in courses other than their 2 hour multicultural course where they feel it must be tolerated. They have said to me that even though they were being trained in Detroit or Cleveland, they plan to teach in Iowa where few African Americans reside. They report not seeing a need for the information I was trying to impart in their future teaching careers. Yet, when I am invited to provide in-service training for local schools, I see my former students sitting in the audience, forced

to listen to what they resisted listening to in my classes (by reporting me to my department chair for every word I said). One of my Black students told me that they were so angry because they weren't used to hearing anyone talk about race like that.

On the other hand, a principal from Dayton, Ohio invited me to do in-service training for a school with all white teachers who teach all Black children. He reported that they had never gone to school with Black people. They had never lived in a Black neighborhood. The only Black people they have ever seen are on TV. They were teaching in his school because this was the best job they could get.

Also, there is a historical model of what an African American professor should be at a white university. That person should be race neutral. There is also resistance to being graded by a Black person. Many of my students have never experienced having a Black person have power over them.

Howard Horton (1994) said it best:

Demographically, urban America has changed dramatically. But tortoise-like, most U.S. colleges of education still primarily employ white middle-class professors to teach white middle-class students how to teach in white middle-class schools. Most white teachers in urban schools are there because they are stuck there. Very few of them seek such positions on graduating because they know that they were not prepared to teach in such settings. (p. 267).

I would like to interject here that when I was in teacher training at Spelman College³, we, as student teachers were reprimanded by the director of student teaching because we had indicated that

³ Spelman College is a historically Black college in Atlanta, Georgia which is dedicated to the education of African American female students.

we wanted student teaching placements in predominantly Black schools. This was in 1970 when the Atlanta Public Schools had been required to integrate the teachers in their school system. She felt that we should embrace the mission of pioneering the integration of the faculties of the white schools in that community. We were astounded. We told her that the only reason we had decided to become teachers, at all, was to impact on the educational fortunes of Black children. It was unthinkable to us that we were going to utilize our Spelman College education to improve the teaching of white children as our calling. Apparently she took pride in the fact that Spelman College could funnel their best student teachers to white schools in the name of integration. This conception of “progress” was totally anathema to our vision of racial progress.

Ineffective In-Service Training.

Recommendations for improving in-service training of teachers have been made elsewhere (Hale, 2001: 182-183). In addition to those comments, I have been involved in mega in-service training days in which every teacher in the school district was assigned to a training session such that everyone in a building heard a different speaker. There was no effort to engage in any long term planning for change. Everyone just ran around and heard some feel good speeches and then went on to business as usual.

Once I was invited to make a presentation to 500 teachers in Columbus, Ohio. I presented my entire model for school reform in a full day training session. Following the presentation, the teachers -- African American and white -- greeted me and stated that they agreed with everything I recommended. However, they all noted that they, alone as teachers, could not effect the sweeping changes I was calling for. They pointed out that the school board, the superintendent, the executive directors and principals should all have been included in the audience because it would take central office administrators to the model work.

The same school district invited me to make a presentation to all of the Executive Directors in their central administration. However, as far as I know, they heard my presentation and went back to business as usual. A principal in a Milwaukee school spoke with me after a presentation and commented that so much training is thrown at them, but no one really works with them to implement anything. She was eager to arrange for me to consult with her and several other principals on a regular basis. We started off with a group who expressed the same interest. However, by the time it came down to structuring a consulting relationship, we ended up with only about 2 out of 19 principals signed up who were initially interested in the concept. The administrators felt that the cost was too high for only 2 principals. I received a standing ovation for the workshop. However, there was gap between their appreciation for the ideas in the model and the buy-in to implement those ideas in their building.

In my experience, generally practicing teachers have been more receptive to my scholarship than students in training. I think that students don't see the value of the information. Once when I presented my scholarship to student teachers at the university at which I taught, a group of students walked out of the presentation. I have been treated with more respect and dignity by school districts than I have been accorded at universities at which I have taught. Perhaps when one is employed as a teacher in a school, the climate is not as conducive to walking out and engaging in similar demonstrative responses.

Drive-by In-service Training. A. Wade Boykin (2009) described the type of in-service training provided to teachers by school districts on the subject of understanding African American children's cultural styles as **drive-by in-service training**⁴, so I know that it is not just me. In the numerous years that I have been providing training in this area, the typical workshop is a one-time 2 hour session. The longest time that was provided for me to work with a group of educators was a 2

⁴ This is a facetious comparison of one-shot in-service training to drive-by-shootings in high crime areas.

day training session that happened one time in my career (in Milwaukee, Wisconsin at a charter school). Never was I provided the opportunity to return to work a second time with the same faculty. Never was I provided the opportunity to train a staff and then observe in classrooms and engage in long term planning for implementation.

There is no way that we are going to make progress in enabling practice teachers to utilize the **Cultural Prism** without an ongoing, intensive, effective plan for in-service training. Teachers are not emerging from the academy equipped to make a difference in urban education. Trust me, I have spent my career teaching in institutions that purport to do that. All I have seen is one two-hour course and the requirement of a field placement in an urban setting. Many students engage in elaborate maneuvers to side-step that requirement. Further, there is no attention given to placing students in exemplary settings where they can absorb the wisdom of creative, skilled, innovative teachers. Placements are made to teachers who request student teachers and there can be many reasons for that. The cooperating teachers who supervise student teachers are not recommended as master teachers, they self-nominate. I haven't in my career been aware of any screening process or recommendation process that pairs students with master teachers. I have supervised student teachers myself and have been appalled at the placements. I found myself in the position of having to get the cooperating teacher straightened out before I could work with the student teacher. Then, of course, the cooperating teacher reported me to the teachers union that complained about me to the Director of Student teaching at my university. The Director of Student Teaching once asked the union representative whether I had said anything that was incorrect. The union person said that what I was saying was not incorrect -- the teacher just didn't want me to say it. Presto change, I found myself assigned to supervise students in the affluent suburbs where I would find less malpractice to point out and complain about. The reason given to me was that I was being placed

close to my residence for my convenience. I haven't seen anything in the required placement of students in urban settings that prepares them to be **change agents** in inner city schools.

Valiant Efforts

We must continue to push the cultural styles frontier. I have identified several studies that were published between 1982 when *Black Children* was originally published and 2012 the time of this writing. Two studies (Melear and Richardson, 1994; Watkins, 2002) grappled with various stages of moving from theory to hypothesis to the collection of empirical data. Two studies (Diller, 1999; Rowser and Koontz, 1995) made the attempt to go from theory to classroom practice. The article by Diller shares the journey of a white teacher who seeks mentoring in using culturally appropriate pedagogy in her classroom of African American children in the area of literacy. The article by Rowser and Koontz apply Hillard's cultural styles themes to mathematics instruction. The scholarship of Anderson (1980) and that of McDermott, Piternick, and Rosenquist (1980) provide examples in the discipline of science where cultural themes enhance pedagogy. The scholarship of Coggins and Campbell (2008) is highlighted as an example of connecting the cultural perspective to the arena of public policy. It is of critical importance to move beyond arguing among ourselves about who is right and who is wrong to begin to interpret what we know to school districts, legislators and those who make public policy.

Melear and Richardson (1994) created an overlay with the cultural themes identified in *Black Children* and collected data corroborating my hypotheses. She collected data in four counties in North Carolina to determine whether the learning styles I described (Hale, 1986) could be identified among African American elementary and high school males through the use of the MBTI. Learning styles differences between the white and African American males were found for children in the 6th and 11th grades. Differences were not found for students above the 12th grade an interpretation is that perhaps those with non-mainstream learning styles may have dropped out by the 12th grade.

Angela Watkins (2002) designed a study to explore empirical validation of the cultural themes of communalism and cooperative learning described in the scholarship in this volume (Hale, 1982, Hilliard, 1976, Boykin 1983 and others). Her study explored help-seeking behaviors among forty-four 2- to 5 year old African American girls and boys. She coded observed help-seeking behaviors and tallied variable frequencies (source of help, age, type of help solicitation, and kind of activity). Associations between variables were examined.

Her findings demonstrate that preschoolers tend to go to peers in request of academic help. This implies that African American preschoolers are ready and willing to work in cooperative learning structures. The data revealed that children approached teachers more than peers for social help. She also studied the developmental nature of communalism and cooperation at the preschool level for African American children. There was evidence that even though toddlers sought help more than preschoolers, both toddlers and preschoolers tended to approach peers more than teachers for help.

Literacy. Debbie Diller (1999), a white classroom teacher wrote a very perceptive article in which she drew upon the scholarship in *Black Children* (1986) and that of others (Smitherman, 1977; Delpit, 1988, 1992; Strickland, 1997). She identified the points of disconnect between her teaching and the responses of the African American children she taught. She sought mentorship from African American teachers and scholars about the cultural styles of the children. She used this mentorship and her observations to identify strategies for teaching to the styles of the children in her classroom. She also created new strategies for working with African American parents.

I am highlighting this article because Diller exemplifies the path we need to take as we seek to create the scientific foundation called for in generating this innovative pedagogy. She began by reading the scholarly literature on African American culture and learning styles. She then sought mentorship from friends who were African American teachers. Next, she created a study group

within her building where the learning and cultural styles of the African American children were discussed. She observed in the classrooms of African American teachers who were successful in teaching African American children and recorded their strategies. She attended seminars on vernacular Black English and mastered the fine points of culturally appropriate literacy strategies with African American children. Once she formulated the strategies, she consulted with an African American scholar Dr. Lisa Delpet) for support, refinement and validation of her strategies. This article is highlighted, not because the strategies are empirically documented. The article is highlighted because of the paths she took in generating them. This odyssey of Diller epitomizes the dynamic collaboration between white and African American teachers and scholars that are needed to push this frontier.

Given the fact that this area of inquiry is in its infancy, we need to capitalize upon the insights of scholars and practitioners to create this dynamic collaboration.

Among the insights that Diller gleaned from her inquiry were:

1. Cultural discontinuity was identified as a central problem. She observed the mismatch between the culture of the school and the culture of the home. She videotaped her class with the camera focused on the children, not her as the teacher.

2. Incorporation of multicultural literature in instruction. Her African American teacher/mentor revealed to her that there is a disconnect between African American parents and libraries.

3. The power of speaking to the children “like their mommas do.” African American teachers pointed out that African American children like explicit language rather than an inductive, indirect, questioning voice.

4. The children learned best with the comfort and stability of a daily school routine with minimal changes or interruptions.

5. African American teachers recommended the teaching style that parallels the performer style describe in *Black Children* (Hale-Benson, 1986) which captured the children's attention.

6. Incorporating the "feel" to learning recommended by African American teachers that incorporate the rhythm, rhyme and movement discussed in this volume (Hale-Benson, 1986). She found that the children found delight in chanting and moving to the beat of poetry.

7. She also noticed that the children embraced the cultural themes highlighted in this volume (Hale-Benson, 1986) of cooperation and sharing. She noticed that when she structured cooperative learning activities, most of the children appeared to be more engaged. For example, the children observed a spider hanging from their classroom ceiling. They began to research information about spiders. The children became very interested in the topic. Most of the children chose to work with partners to write and share their research on spiders. They enjoyed the support of their classmates.

8. This white teacher became more comfortable talking about race. So, when a child accused her of not liking him because he was Black, she followed Paley's example in *White Teacher* (1979).

I handled the matter head-on. I held out my hand beside his and said, 'You do have black skin and I have white, but that doesn't mean I don't like you.' I explained that my job was to help each child in our classroom, and that although I sometimes didn't like his actions, I did like him. I gave him examples until he began to giggle. 'I like you because you help other children and show them how to do things. But sometimes you start yelling, and it bothers the other kids who are trying to learn. You need to just tell that old tongue of yours to control itself. You're the only one who can do that. I can't grab your tongue and make it quiet, can I?' Brian never played the race card with me again (p. 824).

9. Absorbed the literature on the situational rules of communication. Through this pathway, she was able to honor the vernacular linguistic culture of African American children while teaching them to code-switch to master mainstream language for success in school and upward mobility.

10. She began to read stories from Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines' (1988) *Growing Up Literate*. These were stories about families with limited economic resources that provided abundant literacy opportunities for their children. She dismissed her preconception that children of poverty had limited literacy experiences. She began to interview the children about literacy experiences in their homes. They were questioned about favorite books, people who read or told stories to them and about the kinds of activities they did with their families. She compiled the data and planned classroom activities that built upon the information gathered. She found that that the children enjoyed playing cards and games at home with their families, so she included more sight words and spelling words in the format of card games.

An ABC News special report (1994), "Common Miracles: A New Revolution in Education" highlighted innovative schools that had a "games" room. The children played various games so that they could identify the delight they garnered from those activities. The teachers then sought to transfer that enjoyment to engaging in classroom learning activities.

11. She encouraged parents to volunteer in the classrooms. She asked them to read aloud to small groups of children; let them hold hands with the children as they walked to lunch. She noticed that "the children seemed more relaxed when someone who looked like their mother was there to help. They'd sometimes open up and tell the parent helpers things they'd never tell the teacher."

12. She engaged the parents in telling the teacher about their children outside of school.

13. The parents appreciated having the teacher model reading to their children. The parents appreciated the explicit demonstrations. They admitted that they didn't know the best way to help their child academically and were reluctant to do anything because they didn't want to "mess up" what the schools were doing.

Some African parents told me that they have accents and didn't read to their children because they were afraid their accents would confuse their youngsters. I asked them if they talked to their children with their accents and they said that they did. 'Did your child learn to talk?' I'd ask. They'd smile and realize that they weren't harming their children (p. 828).

14. Her focus was to adapt her teaching rather than try to get the children to change. She agreed with Shields (1995) that the more teachers acknowledge, respect, and build on the skills, knowledge, language, and behavior patterns that children bring to school, the more likely children will become engaged in academic learning.

15. She agreed with the research that documents the high degree of physical movement on the part of African American children, particularly males. She agreed that it enhanced the achievement of the children when opportunities were provided for active learning. As she experimented with rhythm, rhyme, movement, interactive discussion, cooperative activities in a structured school environment, she began to see many more of the children in her classroom succeed.

Mathematics. Jacqueline Rowser and Trish Koontz (1995) share my judgment that even though an interest in learning styles blossomed in the 1970's, that scholarship was rarely implemented in the classroom. They suggest that teachers felt that time constraints and other roadblocks made matching a student's cultural learning styles with teaching styles unrealistic.

Rowser and Koontz juxtaposed Hilliard's (1976: 38-39) taxonomy of cultural styles with learning activities they observed in classrooms.

(Format this information into a Focus Box with a shaded background. Permission has been granted)

Many African American students tend to respond in terms of the whole picture instead of its parts.

“For example, when studying quadrilaterals, investigate all of the quadrilaterals at the same time, look for similarities and differences instead of studying one shape at a time. A sample introductory lesson follows.

In small groups of two or three students, have students sort the quadrilaterals in *figure 1* into two sets. The students must determine the attribute used to sort the shapes. Ask each group to explain how they sorted the shapes into the two sets. Some students will sort by parallel sides or by shapes with right angles. Others will sort by equal sides, by fat and skinny shapes, or perhaps by straight and tilted sides. All of the reasons should be accepted. The idea that shapes can be investigated along many different dimensions is important.

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- Place Figure 1 about here
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Next ask each group to sort the quadrilaterals into three sets: shapes with two pairs of parallel sides, or parallelograms; shapes with only one pair of parallel sides or trapezoids; and shapes with no parallel sides. The students should continue to investigate each subgroup as a whole while looking for specific characteristics by which they could establish another subgroup, as shown in *figure 2*.

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Many African American students tend to prefer inferential reasoning to deductive or inductive reasoning.

Throughout history, inference has played a vital part in constructing mathematical knowledge and must not be thought of as an inferior way of knowing. According to Joseph (1987: 22-26), it is generally accepted that mathematical discoveries develop only after rigor in deductive axiomatic logic is used. Thus, intuitive or empirical methods are viewed as having little, if any, mathematical value. However, ancient mathematical documents, such as the Moscow Papyrus (c. 1980 B.C.) are considered valid proofs without being symbolic.

An inference is a judgment made from observations or evidence. The evidence, however, can be misleading and can lead to a faulty judgment. For example, a student may infer from a drawing that a triangle is a right triangle when in fact it may not be.

Inductive reasoning forms generalizations from many specific cases. Like inference, the generalizations may not be accurate when the observations are not accurate or when all possible cases have not been studied. An example of faulty inductive reasoning might be the following. After converting a page full of fractions, such as $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{3}{4}$, $\frac{7}{8}$, $\frac{2}{5}$, and $\frac{5}{8}$, into decimals. LeRoy concluded that all fractions can be made into decimals that do not repeat.

Deductive reasoning proceeds from a general statement, includes a specific statement satisfying the hypothesis of the general statement, and then leads to the conclusion. For example, if the perimeter of a square is four inches and a square has four equal sides, then each side is one inch long.

Both deductive and inductive reasoning rely heavily on many pieces of detailed information. Hilliard (1976: 38) points out that the preoccupation with specifics – too many individual details or cases – at the possible loss of a sense of the whole tends to disturb the learning style of many African American students. For these students, the gestalt, not the particular, is often more important. An analogy can be made with teaching writing: teachers stress the importance of expressing the thoughts first before examining details of grammar. Although a need to teach inductive and deductive reason exists, teachers should respect the fact that many African American students approach logic from a different perspective. Inference is an important step in constructing mathematical knowledge. Encourage all students to discuss what they have inferred from models and story lines. Help them reflect on and clarify their inferences by offering an open and accepting environment for all reasoning skills.

Many African American students tend to approximate space, number, and time rather than stick to accuracy.

Generally in the United States, promptness and accuracy are expected. However, in studying mathematics, approximations can be just as important as accuracy. Children, in the past and now, are convinced in school that mathematics is the study of the precise and that only one correct answer and only one correct algorithm are possible.

The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics recommends in the *Curriculum and Evaluation Standards for School Mathematics* (1989: 37) that children investigate and understand when it is appropriate to estimate and when it is appropriate to calculate an exact answer. If indeed many African American students tend to approximate space, number, and time, teachers need to recognize this approach as an asset, not a deficit.

Helping all students recognize that *both* approximations and precise answers are appropriate depending on the given situation is of utmost importance.

If only exact answers are stressed throughout students' K-12 experiences, then the majority of students would answer the following problem incorrectly. A certain large airplane holds 312 passengers. If 30,316 people want to fly from New York to Paris on this type of airplane, how many airplane trips will be needed to fly all of the people to Paris? In the Mathematics Education Trust's "Testing Using the Calculator Test," over 60 percent of the participants using calculators chose 97.166 66 trips as their answer. Teachers need to encourage all students to recognize that an exact answer is not always reasonable.

Primary teachers help children develop number sense in the early years by accepting a response that eight blocks will fit into a box designed to hold ten blocks. The teacher encourages the child by placing the eight blocks in a box and saying, "Yes, eight will fit into the box. Can you find another number of blocks that also might fit? Is a closer fit possible?" Secondary teachers also need to respect approximations as part of number sense. Many secondary students become frustrated with factoring because they have been trained to think that their first guess should be the correct answer. For a student who tends to learn through approximations, a teacher's expectations of exact answers too soon or all the time can create unnecessary frustration. Teachers should discuss with students when and why an approximation is acceptable and when an exact number is necessary. Clearly makes this procedure part of the teaching routine.

African American students tend to prefer novelty, freedom, and personal distinctiveness.

By using a variety of assessments, teachers can better accept alternative forms of expression. For example, mathematics can be applied to art, music, and architecture. By

including real-life applications of mathematics, teachers help students make more conceptual connections. Making presentations, writing in journals, building models, and other individual or group assignments can increase interest and success in mathematics by offering students the freedom to express their mathematical knowledge in alternative ways. For example, students should be assigned a data-analysis project requiring them to choose a topic, design the study, collect and analyze the data, and choose appropriate ways to display and report their findings. When students are given the freedom to choose topics important to them, their completed projects will often exceed the teacher's expectations. Students may choose to analyze data about religion, dress, sexual preference, or environmental concerns, to name a few possible topics.

Another project may request that students design a student recreation center. The cost of the building depends on cubic feet of space, materials used, necessary furniture and equipment, labor costs, and other details decided on by the class. Applying many rich geometry and algebra concepts becomes necessary when completing this project. What perimeter of the building makes the largest area? Is floor space directly related to the volume of the structure. Would a three-story building be more economical than a one-floor plan? Is economics always the deciding factor in a design? These two examples give students the freedom to show their individual creativity.

In sum, when teachers become more aware of, and sensitive to the diverse learners in a given classroom, they will be more likely to implement a variety of pedagogical techniques that will enhance learning for all students. **(End of Focus Box)**

Science. In the Preface to the 2nd Edition of *Black Children* (Hale 1986: xv), I call for more documentation of the reasons for the success of Black colleges in educating Black students. Such documentation would support the provision of a distinctive educational experience

for Black children at earlier ages. The suggestion that African American children would benefit from a culturally congruent post-secondary experience is not as virulently attacked by the educational establishment as the proposal that preschool, elementary, and secondary education should be changed. Presumably, the white establishment doesn't attack the concept that Black colleges produce success with African American students because what they do does not affect them. There is no suggestion that any changes are called for in the schools white children attend. Because the establishment is not as threatened by documentation of cultural themes that can be found in the success of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), it might be easier to secure funding for such studies.

Anderson, J.A. (1988) points out that the most successful science/pre-medicine programs in the country can be found at Xavier University in New Orleans. Xavier, a historically Black University places more African Americans in medical school than any other university in America. Not only do they place more students who are admitted to medical school, they produce more students who graduate and achieve their medical degrees than any other institution. He notes that:

...”the program builds confidence and skill in its predominantly black population by creating an aura of family in which cooperation is highly valued, bonding between the students and faculty is encouraged, and a maintenance of positive ethnic identity is fostered. Learning occurs in a socially reinforcing environment. Incidentally, the director of the program is a white male. One does not have to be the same race/ethnicity to identify and capitalize upon the cultural/cognitive assets of minority populations.” (p. 8)

Anderson (1988) points out further that African American student encounter problems when they attempt to adapt to the theoretical, often abstract reasoning process that is utilized in mathematics and the hard sciences. Most courses in both math and science teach the theory of the

discipline in an abstract sense before the student is exposed to the practical applications in laboratory exercises. This has always been the sequence of training in mathematics and science and coincides with the Anglo-European cognitive style, especially that of males. The approach of giving students direct experience with applications of formal concepts and laws is not as valued and utilized as much by teachers. I cannot help but interject here that when I attended high school in an inner city, defacto segregated school, no laboratory experiences were provided in biology. My first exposure to a biological lab was as a freshman at Spelman College. So, even if a teacher wanted to put a laboratory experience first, there was no opportunity to do so.

McDermott, Piternick, and Rosenquist (1980) found such an approach to be extremely successful in helping minority students succeed in physics and biology at the University of Washington. Brown (1986) at the University of San Diego found that the same approach worked in her mathematics lab.

Public Policy Arena: Thurgood Marshall needed Kenneth Clark – Brown Decision

1954. There is a law in Florida, The African and African American History Law (Florida Statute 233.061 [1] [f]) creates a fiduciary obligation and requires that African American History be infused into all courses and all grade levels from PreK-12 in all Florida public schools. All elected officials (school board members, legislators, superintendents) as well as other educators are obligated to ensure that the spirit and intent of this law are carried out. This obligation extends to those in higher education to design teacher training programs that can implement the courses in the classrooms in which they teach. I would like to know who the legislative team was in the Florida State Legislature that designed and passed this legislation. One of the realities of life in America is that legislation and litigation has not had the intended results when applied to changing inequities affecting Black children (Brown v. the Board of Education 1954 and countless other legal decisions,

including the 1972 decision of the Supreme Court to desegregate the public schools). Legislation that is intended to oppress the aspirations and fortunes of African Americans is enforced, such as Plessey v. Ferguson (1896) that legalized “separate but equal.”

There was an interesting occurrence when the African American Community Coalition of Palm Beach, Florida requested that the Palm Beach County School Board incorporate African and African American History into the curriculum used in the Palm Beach County public schools. A school board member, Dr. Art Johnson, in response to the Coalition ‘s request, said that unless the Coalition could provide research showing that the teaching of African and African American History would enhance student performance in language arts and other subject areas, he would not support the request for incorporating it into the curriculum. This is interesting, given the fact that this was a **state law**. Apparently, this white public official felt that the enforcement of laws related to African Americans is discretionary.

The article written by Coggins and Campbell (2008) was prepared at the request of the Coalition to perform the requested research and prepare a response to Dr. Johnson’s stipulation. The focus of this scholarship was in the area of multicultural education and focused on the following three premises:

1. Teaching about the achievements of African Americans enhances student literacy and achievement in schools;
2. Multicultural Education can be taught successfully to all students;
3. Minority students including African Americans benefit from the instruction of curriculum that reflects their history (p. 48).

This article is not presented as an “end all and be all” solution. Communities have to move on what they can “wrap their arms around.” Lobbying for “multicultural education” is a starting point that has value in the education of African American children. However, it is not the totality of

changes that are needed in the education of African American children. This article is highlighted as an example of the manner in which scholars need to connect with parents and community activists to supply architects of public policy with the tools they need to effect change. The Brown decision was a stellar example in which Lead Attorney Thurgood Marshall and his team were buffeted by the scholarship of Drs. Kenneth and Mamie Clarke. They provided empirical data that document that the “separate but equal” doctrine of education was psychologically devastating to Negro children. As we push for the science, we have to also become active in the public policy arena.

Conceptualization of the Cultural Prism

My current thinking is that to analyze the academic challenges faced by African American children, we need a broader concept that I am going to call a **Cultural Prism**. The concepts of learning style and cognitive style have become obtuse and muddied for our purposes. The nomenclature and specifics of the behavioral processes that have been identified by existing instruments make it very difficult for teachers and administrators to absorb and translate them into practice. When I originally wrote *Black Children*, I was seeking to develop an argument that would be heuristic and open up a fertile path of scholarship. I now feel that this perspective is diminished when it is limited to classroom pedagogy, especially because there are a panorama of components related to schooling that contribute to a child’s educational success and achievement. All are impacted upon by culture. There is a need for a **Cultural Prism** in developing strategies to work effectively with African American parents; design effective classroom management strategies; promote nurturing child behavior management; eliminate student push out from high school; intervene in child failure; understand distinctive patterns of performance in particular subject matter areas, on assessment measures and as mediated by gender.

Du Bois (1903) said that “The Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world . . .” It is my position that the scholar/educator who is

proficient in utilizing the **Cultural Prism** must be gifted with a Du Boisian first-sight, second-sight, third-sight, fourth-sight and fifth-sight which are all necessary to decode the difficulties African American children are experiencing in school. The professional who utilizes this **Cultural Prism** must be proficient in each area and must be able to move seamlessly between each dimension. If a phenomenon is not explained by one dimension, the expert should be able to shift to the subsequent-sight for a salient hypothesis. The reason we are stuck where we are is that we have experts who can operate in only one dimension or the other and maintain that the answer is found in the only dimension they understand and have commerce with. This is the reason why we don't have the luxury of only having scholars collaborating with scholars of one discipline and practitioners working in isolation in school districts rejecting any meaningful collaboration with scholars. To construct this approach, we are going to have to create a dynamic partnership across disciplines and between scholars and practitioners.

This broader concept of **Cultural Prism** requires:

1. **First-sight:** an understanding of African and African American history and culture as a context for behavior.
2. **Second-sight:** an understanding of the socioeconomic exigencies of African American life.
3. **Third-sight:** an understanding of African American child development, learning, cultural and behavioral styles.
4. **Fourth-sight:** an analysis of statistics related to achievement patterns of African American children.

5. **Fifth-sight:** an ability to identify discrepancies in educational practice that affect African American children which constitute malpractice. These discrepancies apply to instructional practices in addition to administrative decisions.

Specifically:

First-sight: an understanding of African and African American history and culture as a context for behavior. While this dimension does not include race as a biological factor, it includes an understanding of racism. Any scholar who seeks to interpret the educational profile of African American children must be grounded in the history and culture of African and African American people. There can be no valid oppression-blind analysis applied to the situation of African American children. All of the ramifications of racism are included in this category.

Second-sight: an understanding of the socioeconomic exigencies of African American life.

This dimension incorporates social class considerations in interpreting the achievement patterns of African American children. This dimension is essential because of the extent to which the largest numbers African American people have emerged from and been relegated to the lower social class in America. This dimension also encompasses the need to create the science to accurately assess social class as it relates to school achievement for African American families. This issue will be discussed in more detail below.

Eva Chun (1987-88) points out two themes that become intertwined in the areas of ability grouping and tracking that negatively affect children in the lower socio-economic strata. She identified two themes:

1. socioeconomic status bias in educational policies and
2. preference given to intellectually-advantaged students rather than to non-college track students.

Alexander, Cook and McDill (1978) contended that tracking serves the interests of higher status parents who exploit such mechanisms to ensure their children's success. Higher status parents know how to manipulate the system to achieve their children's placement in gifted or honors tracks. They know the significance of these placements in obtaining admittance to the most prestigious colleges which result in their children entering networks that improve the chances that they will be recipients of prestigious and high paying jobs.

According to Alexander, Cook, and McDill (1978) following are the detriments of tracking for children of lower socioeconomic status:

- Tracking channels scarce resources to those who have the least need for them.
- Students in non-college tracks are denied access to students, teachers, counselors, and information that would broaden their interests, challenge their abilities, and improve their performance.
- Non-college tracked students are discouraged from competing with those students who are initially more advantaged, and thus are not required or even encouraged to strive for academic excellence.
- Students in non-college tracks are looked down upon as being unintelligent. As a result, they fail to develop attitudes and insights concerning education and institutional functioning that would allow them to compete successfully with their more advantaged classmates for post-schooling resources and rewards.
- Non-college track students are shunted into curricula that will impede their prospects for success in college. If they persevere in their college aspirations, they will be relegated to junior and community colleges which will further diminish their expectations.

- Being in a college track increases the probability of applying to college and enhances one's prospects for being admitted. Thus, sorting processes within high schools may substantially affect the later attainment of children from lower or higher socioeconomic strata (pp. 47-66).

In addition to inequities within schools, there are the ever present socioeconomic inequities of school funding. Howard Horton (1994) pointed out that:

U.S. education is primarily a state function, therefore each state has the obligation to see that all school districts are equally funded, that is, per pupil expenditure should be equal for all.

Per pupil spending in Boston public schools should be comparable to that in the public schools of Brookline, Cambridge, Newton, or any other Massachusetts community.

However, it appears that Massachusetts citizens and those of other states prefer to spend \$35,000 to \$50,000 per year to keep an African-American youth incarcerated than \$10,000 a year to educate that youth. (p. 267).

Third-sight: an understanding of African American child development, learning, behavioral and cultural styles. This involves a grounding in empirical research related to African American child development that is not included in mainstream texts. *Black Children* was a stab at trying to pull together elements of African American child development that pertain to learning. A comprehensive volume on all aspects of African American child development is clearly called for. “How to teach Black children” manuals and “How to parent Black Children” books do not fulfill this category. It is difficult to achieve a grounding in African American child development from reading bits and pieces of empirical studies distributed over an infinite number of publications. There should also be course offerings in the academy that offer a comprehensive overview of African American child development and pedagogy.

Fourth-sight: an analysis of statistics related to achievement patterns of African American children. Every educational entity has data. These data are trotted out by everyone. However, there seems to be a limitation in the ability of school districts and advocacy organizations to apply a **Cultural Prism** to the interpretation of these data. When there is no culturally appropriate interpretation of the achievement data and patterns, there is no subsequent creation of remedies and interventions – only hand wringing.

A simple example of the ways in which school districts and other collectors of data can never create solutions is in the fact that they report data by ethnic group and by gender but not by **ethnic group by gender**. That is, they can divide data between males and females in one data set. They can also give you a break down of achievement by grade level and by ethnic group. However, if you ask for data on Black males and Black females, the data is not available.

There is a chapter in my forthcoming book, *Education in Black* in which I delineate the work I did with a Texas school district in explaining why African American children's performance fell below that of Hispanic, white and Native American children during an intervention.

The school district did not have a data set that compared the performance of African American boys compared to African American girls. I pointed out to them that the differences in patterns by gender were extremely important in figuring out what was driving the variance. My team thought deeply and came up with an entity outside of the school district that had the race by gender break down. Through swift work, they were able to have that data set dropped off at our work site for my review. I was able to show them that a whole new world opened up when we could break down the ethnic patterns by gender. Just the fact that school districts do not even keep the data of ethnic group by gender blocks a significant path to interpretation and intervention.

The educational difficulties of African American children are well documented. There are advocacy groups who owe their entire existence to the alarming statistics they collect and lament.

However, because they do not have the **Third-sight**, the beat goes on. The statistics get worse and they collect more contributions for their organizations. However, nothing improves for African American children.

The work of Dr. Ivory Toldson (2008) (2011) is an example of this dimension. Dr. Toldson, a professor at Howard University is a Senior Research Analyst for and his work is funded by the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation. His scholarship is highlighted as an example of this dimension because he accessed existing data bases and subjected them to statistical analyses that revealed new findings and insights. His studies explored factors that statistically improve the educational outcomes for African-American males by analyzing academic success indicators from four national surveys: *Health Behavior in School-age Children* (HBSC: N=1225), *National Crime Victimization Survey: School Crime Supplement* (NCVS-SCS: N=849), *National Survey of American's Families* (NSAF: N=2497) and *National Survey on Drug Use and Health* (NSDUH: N-1208).

The Executive Summary reports that the research adheres to the standards for *Scientifically-based Research*, which are mandatory for application to federal educational policy and academic instruction. This research:

1. applies systematic and objective procedures;
2. uses empirical and experimental methods;
3. involves robust data analyses that have the statistical power to test hypotheses and justify conclusions;
4. uses valid data and corroborates findings across multiple measurements, and
5. has been subject to peer review by independent experts. The findings will assist policymakers, educators, school advocates and families to plot the path to academic success for school-age African-American males.

***Fifth-sight:* an ability to identify discrepancies in educational practice that affect African American children. These discrepancies apply to instructional practices in addition to administrative decisions.**

This dimension stems from identifying educational malpractice that is perpetrated against African American children. It is essential that educators are made aware of micro and macro expressions of such malpractice. In Hale (2001) I gave examples of **micro** malpractice in the episodes I reported in the treatment of my son in an elite private school. In my forthcoming book, *Education in Black*, I will present in detail a report I prepared as a consultant for a Texas school district that gives examples of the **macro** expressions of such malpractice in the treatment of African American children. In some cases, the malpractice is not intended, it is defacto, but malpractice, nonetheless.

Jere Brophy (1983) described a protocol of interactive behaviors of teachers who, for whatever reasons have low expectations of their students. The research shows that teachers tend to:

- demand less from low-expectation students (“lows”) than from high expectation students (“highs”).
- wait less time for lows to answer questions.
- give lows the answer or call on someone else rather than try to improve the lows’ response through repeating the question, providing clues, or asking a new question.
- provide lows with inappropriate reinforcement by rewarding inappropriate behaviors or incorrect answers.
- criticize lows more often than highs for failure.
- praise lows less frequently than highs for success.
- fail to give feedback to lows’ public responses.
- pay less attention to lows and interact with them less frequently.

- call on lows less often than highs to respond to questions.
- seat lows farther away from the teacher than highs.
- use more rapid pacing and less extended explanations or repetition of definitions and examples with highs than with lows.
- accept more low-quality or more incorrect responses from low-expectation students.
- attempt to improve more on poor responses from highs than from lows.
- interact with lows more privately than publicly.
- in administering or grading tests or assignments, give highs but not lows the benefit of the doubt in borderline cases.
- give briefer and less intuitive feedback to the questions of lows than to those of highs.
- use less intrusive instruction with highs than with lows, so that they have more opportunity to practice independently.
- when time is limited, use less effective and more time-consuming instructional methods with lows than with highs.

Overall, Brophy (1983) indicates the following in relation to differential treatment of ability groups and/or tracks:

- that teachers are more demanding of and give longer reading assignments to their high groups. Teachers interrupt low group students more quickly when they make a mistake in reading. Teachers are more likely to give the low group students the word or prompt them with graphic or phonetic cues rather than semantic or syntactic cues that are designed to help them intuit the word from its context;
- that with low groups, teachers were observed to have been less clear about their objective, to make fewer attempts to relate the content of their courses to students'

interests and backgrounds, to be less reasonable in their work standards, to be less consistent in their discipline, and to be less receptive to student input;

- that high track classes have teachers who plan and implement more independent projects and tend to introduce more higher-level and integrative concepts. Low track teachers stress more structured assignments dealing with basic facts and skills;
- that high track classes are seen more as an academic challenge, so teachers plan them more thoroughly. Low track teachers, in contrast, are less well prepared and are much more likely to spend time correcting papers or allowing students to do activities of their own choosing rather than teaching academic content (pp. 631-61).

When I served as a consultant with the aforementioned Texas school district to explain the lower performance of African American children, we reviewed the issue of poor performance on an assessment of eighth grade mathematics. I raised the question of which math courses each group had taken prior to taking the test. There was no repository for such data. At my suggestion, my team collected that information by creating a tally from school records. We found from our data collection that many of white children who scored well on the test were taking Algebra II (had taken Algebra I and Geometry) and most were in classes on one of the three levels of courses above basic eighth grade math (Algebra I, Geometry or Algebra II). None of the African American children were enrolled in any course higher than basic eighth grade mathematics. These “data” reframed the question of why the African American children were performing poorly to the question of where one needs to be in the sequence of mathematics classes to perform well on the test. It then becomes important to examine strategies for getting African American children on track to begin Algebra in at least the 8th grade.

I always say that who takes Algebra and when they take it is the most political issue in education. I was once in Kansas City for a consulting assignment and spoke with an educator who

pointed out to me that most of the fundamental mathematics concepts are imparted to children by the 3rd grade. In 4th and 5th grade, the children just learn how to multiply and divide with 3, 4, 5, digits. In 5th, 6th, and 7th grade math cover marginally significant concepts related to basic math. He said that this was originally placed in the curriculum because at the turn of the 20th Century, most pupils were marking time until they could drop out of school in the 7th grade. Algebra was reserved for the 8th grade because it was a college preparatory course. So, there has historically been a divide between those who dropped out in the 7th grade and those who took Algebra in preparation for college.

When my son was in an elite elementary school (Hale, 2001) he was given the Iowa Test of Basic Skills in the 4th and 5th grades. On his 5th grade test, he scored 1 grade above grade level in mathematics. On that basis, he was accelerated in math in such a way that he began Algebra I in the 8th grade. However, his white male friends in the class scored higher, *I was told*, and were accelerated in such a way that they began Algebra I in the 7th grade. This is how the acceleration works that results in white children moving through the mathematics sequence and having more courses under their belts when they take the 8th grade mathematics test. This has nothing to do with African Heritage Theory of culture or even African American child development. This insight comes from being able to put on 3-Dimensional glasses and see through discrepancies in educational practice that affect African American children. This is the **Fourth-sense**, a dimension that must be a part of the **Cultural Prism**.

Another example drawn from this dimension is the discussion in Hale (2001:131) of the instructional accountability infrastructure that is derived from the volunteer activity of white mothers in affluent school districts. James Comer's (1999) school reform model acknowledged the manner in which excellence is delivered to white children through the volunteer leadership offered by white mothers. However, his solution of trying to import that same strategy to transform inner

city schools didn't work. The point in understanding these educational discrepancies is not to employ a one size fits all solution. One size fits nobody. The point is to see an essential element for success that is present in one setting and missing in the other. The next step is to construct a strategy that is culturally appropriate in the African American setting that fulfills that function. These culturally appropriate strategies are what I describe in the Culturally Appropriate Pedagogy school reform model contained in within that volume (Hale, 2001: 131).

The foundations that commissioned, funded, and ordained Dr. Comer's work, essentially want to wave a magic wand and "train" lower income African American mothers to function in their children's schools like white upper income mothers do, who are highly educated and supported economically by white husbands. No effort is made to provide the lower income African American mothers with the educational and economic assets that would transform their lives overall, enabling them to function comparably in that context. They just want to change the one thing -- how they relate to the schools.

The pressures and exigencies of life at each social class level for Black mothers is delineated in detail elsewhere (Hale 2001:135-136). The gatekeepers in this society want to tinker around the edges instead of creating fundamental change.

The Comer Model is an example of identifying cultural discrepancies in educational settings, but not going far enough in creating a *culturally appropriate solution* to rectify the situation. This is not the fault of the Comer team. Their limitation is that they viewed the landscape using only the **Fourth-sense**. They took it as far as they could, with good intentions.

An article by Eva Chun (1988) identifies dimensions of educational practices that discriminate against African American children. The focus of her analysis centered upon ability grouping and tracking in classrooms. She defined ability grouping as the sorting of students into instructional groups based upon alleged differences in ability. She also pointed out discrepancies in

teacher expectations about the present and future academic potential of students. She documented the self-fulfilling prophecy which is the tendency for students to become what teachers expect them to be. Chun also reviewed the research that documents the effects of race and socioeconomic status on teacher expectations that contribute to the self-fulfilling prophecy effect.

Institute for the Study of the African American Child (ISAAC)

Dr. Wiley Bolden, a professor at Georgia State University commented when I was a doctoral student there that a critique of the work of others should be offered only when one has generated a body of work. Criticizing others without a comparative body of work relegates one to the level of an agitator. I realized that it was not mine to advise, critique, admonish, and seek to give direction to the efforts of others. I had spent the majority of my life tuning my instrument and it was time to begin playing my tune.

With that admonition in mind, I have created the **Institute for the Study of the African American Child (ISAAC)**. ISAAC is located in the Teacher Education Division of the College of Education at Wayne State University. ISAAC can best be described as a civil rights organization. The Mission of ISAAC is to foster African-American education and child development through research, dissemination of information, training, community services to parents and clinical services to children. ISAAC strives to expand awareness and understanding of critical issues related to the achievement of African American children by illuminating policy issues at the local, state and national levels.

The Mission of ISAAC is carried out through five interrelated areas: 1) Research; 2) Community Services; 3) Clinical Services; 4) Training; and Public Policy. Up-to-date information can be obtained on our progress by visiting our web site at: **www.isaac.wayne.edu**. We have no

funding. We have no budget. We have no paid employees. All I have is friends who make donations and a constituency who pay for memberships.

An important purpose of ISAAC is to create a viable intellectual infrastructure of scholars who can secure a seat at the table when paths are charted that affect the educational fortunes of African American children. There is no such infrastructure of education scholars today. Our goal is to move beyond collecting statistics to creating a solution that has **an impact** on the problem. We believe that it is vital to create interdisciplinary coalitions, but we also believe that there is a need for educational scholars to take back the turf that has been ceded to psychologists, lawyers, physicians, businessmen, and philanthropists. The “establishment” has coroneted **anyone who steps forward from any field as “gurus” of African American education**. Even though they have not had one educational course they are anointed as the visionaries for educational change. This turf is not going to be handed to us. We have to reclaim our turf. The goal of ISAAC is to create a collaboration of educational practitioners and scholars who can provide intellectual guidance for public policy in the area of African American education.

It is my contention that we, who want to affect change for children have to think **outside of the funding**. Some of the organizations that receive corporate funding with boards dominated by persons from corporations have had their missions reduced to healthy snacks and jumping jacks. A central problem is that in the words of Dr. James Young, “Everybody can do education.” Every single person alive feels that they have the solution to educational problems. Bill Gates, who dropped out of Harvard and created Microsoft feels that by virtue of his fortune, he knows more about education than I do.

A chapter in my forthcoming book, *Education in Black* is devoted to the rationale for, and design of ISAAC. Suffice it to say here, that the intent of ISAAC is to effect in the words of Asa Hilliard, “*meaningful*” change in the educational fortunes of African American. Too many

organizations that purport to help Black children are collectors and be moaners of the statistics. However, they have been in existence for decades and have not presented a meaningful solution as the statistics get worse and worse. We intend to create some meaningful solutions by creating coalitions and harnessing the contributions of volunteers. For example, most of the scholarship that is produced that focuses upon the achievement of African American students comes in the form of master's theses and doctoral dissertations. One of the goals of ISAAC is to create a collaborative research agenda – a blueprint, if you will. This will provide graduate students with meaningful topics in line with our Mission to draw from when they matriculate in white universities and don't have mentors to guide the selection of research topics. Another goal related to collaboration is to identify mega research projects that scholars of this area of research can work on together in securing funding for large scale data collection.

Some significant projects have emerged from places such as Howard University which is a mecca for African American scholars and graduate students. The rest of us work in isolation in universities that feel that one scholar of African American education is sufficient. Modern technology has opened the door through “go to meeting” technology, skype and other media that enable us to meet, network and collaborate as if we were in the same place. ISAAC is 100% virtual. So, we can mitigate our lack of funding and proximity of space by utilizing the tools that are available to us through modern technology. ISAAC provides an opportunity for collaboration between scholars, practitioners and activists across university walls and geographical boundaries.

Nat Turner, Harriet Tubman and John Brown did not wait for the Emancipation Proclamation to make something happen. Likewise, African American children cannot wait for foundation executives to embrace our Mission. An important facet of our thrust is to offer services to families and children through our Community Service and Clinical Service components that will have the dual effect of enriching the lives of African American children as well as generating an

income stream that will fund our vision of liberation. Our challenge is to create a network of angels who can understand our Mission. The per capita charitable contributions of African Americans exceed those of white Americans. It is critical that African Americans who make charitable donations place as much value on funding a long term plan for liberation as they place on handing out of turkeys at Thanksgiving and distributing free athletic shoes at basketball camps.

Dr. Vincent Harding⁵ explained when I was a student at Spelman College that we are involved in a struggle that began long before we were born and which will extend long after we have passed from this world. It is ours to discover the contributions we can make during that little dash that separates our birth date and death date.

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⁵ Former Chair of the History Department at Spelman College, author, first Director of the Institute of the Black World and of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Social Change in Atlanta, Georgia.

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