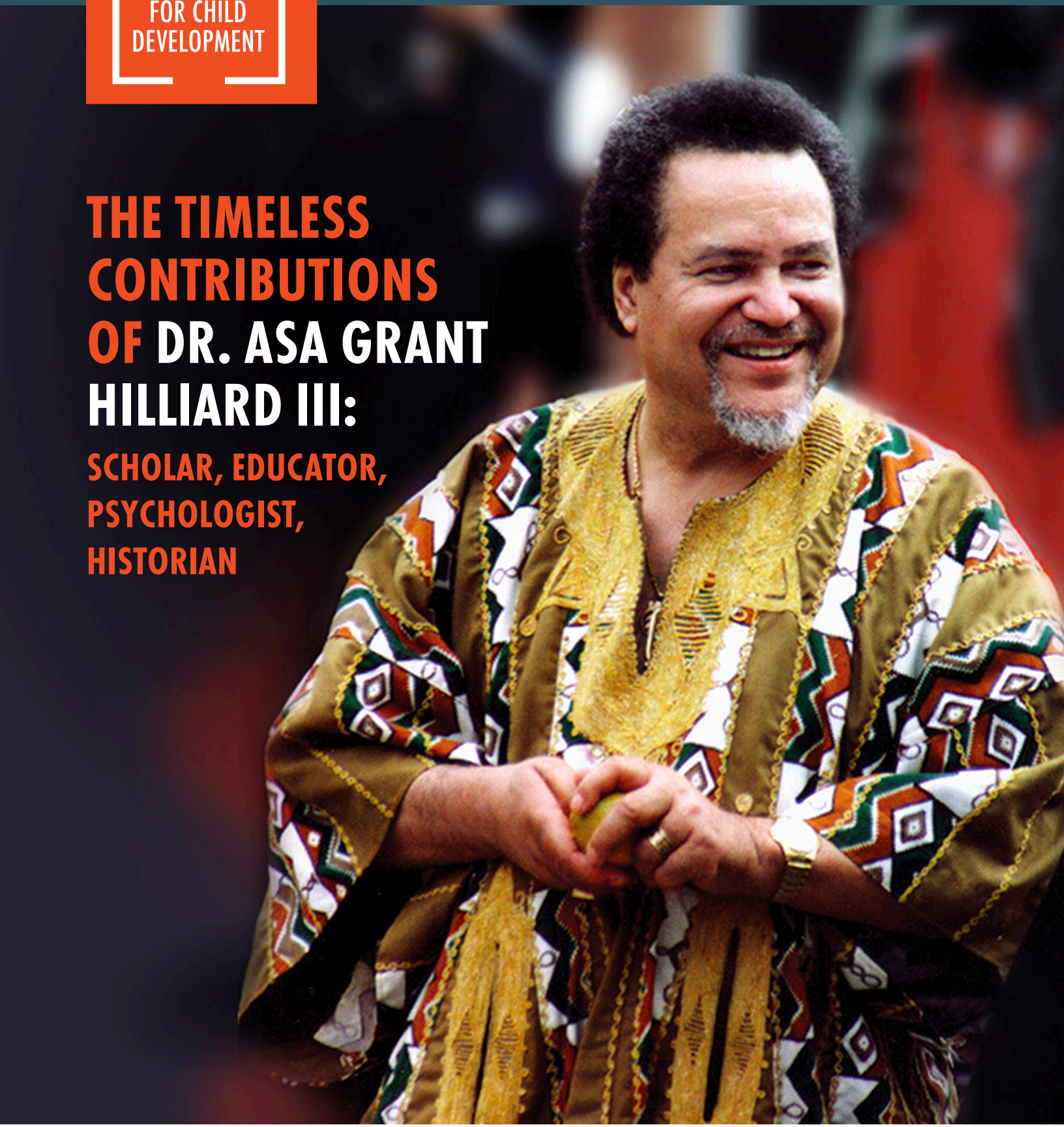
FOUNDATION FOR CHILD DEVELOPMENT®

SCHOLARS OF COLOR SERIES

THE TIMELESS CONTRIBUTIONS OF DR. ASA GRANT HILLIARD III:

SCHOLAR, EDUCATOR, PSYCHOLOGIST, HISTORIAN



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AUTHOR NOTE

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SUGGESTED CITATION

Harper Browne, C., Rashid, H., & Young, J. C. (2024). *The timeless contributions of Asa Grant Hilliard III: Scholar, educator, psychologist, historian*. Foundation for Child Development. https://www.fcd-us.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/The-Timeless-Contributions-of-Asa-Grant-Hilliard-III.pdf

FOUNDED IN 1900, THE FOUNDATION FOR CHILD DEVELOPMENT works at the intersection of research, policy, and practice to support young children in reaching their full potential. Its mission is to harness the power of research to ensure that all young children benefit from early learning experiences that affirm their individual, family, and community assets, fortify them against harmful consequences arising from poverty, racism, prejudice, and discrimination, and strengthen their developmental potential.

OVERVIEW OF THE

SCHOLARS OF COLOR SERIES

The Scholars of Color Series celebrates scholars' contributions that transcend academia to advance social justice for young children.

The Foundation for Child Development's Scholars of Color Series celebrates and amplifies the invaluable contributions of scholars of color, whose work extends beyond academia. These scholars, from diverse fields such as developmental psychology, early childhood education, and education policy, share a commitment to enhancing the lives of children marginalized by racism, xenophobia, and economic inequality. They challenge White-centric, middle-class norms and celebrate the cultural strengths of children and families from communities of color. Their work paves the way for more inclusive, equitable, and culturally responsive research, policy, and practice.

Launched in 2022 amidst a period of significant societal and political turmoil in the United States, the Series responds to a profound backlash against racial and social progress. This backlash includes attacks on diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, as well as the passage of anti-DEI laws and anti-immigrant policies that disproportionately harm communities of color. The Series highlights the enduring legacies of these scholars, whose contributions—focusing on marginalized populations—remain underrepresented in mainstream theories and in the evidence cited in policy and practice (Kim et al., 2023; Rosino, 2016).

> Ultimately, the Scholars of Color Series serves as a **collective call to action**.

As part of the Foundation's commitment to championing social justice for young children marginalized by racism, xenophobia, and economic inequality, the Series emphasizes how these scholars transcend traditional boundaries through their mentorship and by challenging White-centric evidence, practices, and policies.

Ultimately, the Scholars of Color Series serves as a collective call to action, aiming to inspire and empower a new generation of scholars to strive for a more inclusive, equitable, and just society for all children, their families, and communities.

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INTRODUCTION

For more than 50 years, Dr. Asa Grant Hilliard III was a major contributor to the evolution of the early care and education (ECE) profession. His scholarship contributed to a profound paradigm shift in scholars' and students' thinking about promoting educational excellence among African American[1] students, conceptualizing and measuring human intelligence, improving teacher preparation strategies, and reaffirming the humanity of people of African descent. Marian Wright Edelman, founder and president emerita of the Children's Defense Fund, described Dr. Hilliard as "a special kind of freedom fighter who. . . . worked to spread cultural wellness by helping Black people become grounded in their African heritage and expel the negative self-images acquired from the dominant culture" (2007, para. 2).

Dr. Hilliard [is] "a special kind of freedom fighter who. . . . worked to spread cultural wellness by helping Black people become grounded in their African heritage and expel the negative self-images acquired from the dominant culture."

Dr. Hilliard advocated for school curricula and pedagogy that integrated accurate African and African American content into subjects at all educational levels (e.g., Hilliard, 1997a; Hilliard, Payton-Stewart, & Williams, 1990). He challenged common misconceptions about the educability and intellectual capacities of African American children (e.g., Hilliard, 1974, 1998a, 2000a); the validity and utility of standardized[2] intelligence tests and the concept of "intelligence quotient" (IQ; e.g., Hilliard, 1981a, 1984b, 1996a); and ancient Egyptian (Kemetic) history and culture (e.g., Hilliard, 1985, 1992a). He believed that teaching, learning, and testing are shaped by ideological and environmental influences (Hilliard, 1997b). Thus, he emphasized and demonstrated the importance of grounding critical analyses of dominant deficit perspectives about the capabilities and experiences of African American children in biological and social science evidence, as well as historical, political, and cultural contexts.

From 1980 until his death, Dr. Hilliard served as the Fuller E. Callaway Professor of Urban Education at Georgia State University in Atlanta, Georgia, with joint appointments in the Departments of Educational Policy Studies and Educational Psychology and Special Education. He was a founding member of the National Black Child Development Institute and the Association for the Study of

[1] The cultural labels "African American," "People of African Descent," "Black," and "African" are used interchangeably in this document, as was the case in Dr. Hilliard's writings.

[2] *Standardized* means that a test is administered in a predetermined manner, such that the questions, conditions of administration, scoring, and interpretation of responses are consistent for all who take the test. *American Psychological Association (APA) Dictionary of Psychology*, https://dictionary.apa.org/standardized-test.

Classical African Civilizations. Dr. Hilliard was a Board Certified Forensic Examiner and Diplomate of both the American Board of Forensic Examiners and the American Board of Forensic Medicine. He served as lead expert witness on the validity and inherent bias of intelligence and achievement tests based on the failure of psychometricians[3] to consider cultural and linguistic diversity in the development of these assessment tools and in the interpretation of testing data. These cases included three landmark federal cases–*Larry P. v. Wilson Riles* (1979) in California, *Mattie T. v. Holladay* (1981) in Mississippi, and *Deborah P. v. Turlington* (1983) in Florida–and two Supreme Court cases–*Marino v. Ortiz* (1988) in New York City and *Ayers v. Fordice* (1992) in Mississippi (e.g., Hilliard, 1983, 1992b; Hilliard & Amankwatia, 2003).

As a renowned consultant, Dr. Hilliard worked with various school districts, universities, government agencies, and private organizations–including serving as superintendent of schools in Monrovia, Liberia and Dean of Education at San Francisco State University–and produced an extensive portfolio of articles, technical reports, chapters, and books. His writings addressed issues related to unpacking the impact of racism and white[4] supremacy on educational opportunities and outcomes (e.g., Hilliard, 1978, 1997a, 2001; Hilliard, Jenkins, & Scott, 1979); promoting excellence in African American students (e.g., Hilliard, 1991a; Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2003); conducting socially responsible and culturally responsive educational and program evaluation (e.g., Hilliard, 1984a, 1989); and understanding the implications of African philosophical systems and socialization practices for the education of students of African descent (e.g., Hilliard, 1986, 1995a, 1995b).

For over 30 years, Dr. Hilliard led study groups to Egypt and Ghana as part of his mission to teach the truth about the history of Africa and the African diaspora. In 2001, Dr. Hilliard was enstooled as Development Chief for Mankranso, Ghana, and given the name Nana Baffour Amankwatia II, which means "generous one." On August 13, 2007, he joined the pantheon of ancestors while leading students on the 20th annual study tour of the Nile Valley in Egypt. Dr. Hilliard was truly a "generous one"–generous with his brilliance; time; talent; and dedication to the affirmation, humanization, and centering of African peoples and culture throughout the diaspora.

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[3] A psychometrician (also called psychometrist) is "an individual with a theoretical knowledge of measurement techniques who is qualified to develop, evaluate, and improve psychological tests." *American Psychological Association (APA) Dictionary of Psychology*, https://dictionary.apa.org/psychometrician.

[4] In this document, *white* is written with a lowercase *w* when referencing the ideology of white supremacy but is written with an uppercase *W* when referencing the racial group.

This paper will provide an overview of three key areas of Dr. Hilliard's vast scholarship—the use, misuse, and validity of standardized intelligence tests; the education and socialization of African American children; and ECE teacher preparation—as well as address the impact of racism and white supremacy in each of these areas. While it is not intended to be an exhaustive overview, the paper also will illuminate the current relevance of Dr. Hilliard's transformative scholarship and underscore the importance of reconceptualizing the education of African American children in a way that values, affirms, and promotes their intellectual potential and strengths. Direct quotes are used extensively in the paper to give an authentic voice to Dr. Hilliard's perspectives.

Dr. Hilliard's timeless scholarly contributions live on and remain relevant for students, practitioners, researchers, and policymakers in multiple disciplines. The Asa G. Hilliard III papers and digitized audiovisual materials are currently housed at the Atlanta University Center, Robert W. Woodruff Library. The collection includes manuscripts of articles, books, speeches, and reports; documents related to trials in which he served as an expert witness; photographs and videos of presentations; and other records from his work at San Francisco State University and Georgia State University, as well as from organizations of which he was a member.

In addition to the authors of this paper, Dr. Hilliard's wide-ranging scholarship has influenced the perspectives and work of numerous prominent Black scholars who have made significant contributions to various fields, such as Dr. Carol Brunson Day, past president of both the National Black Child Development Institute and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC); educational leaders Drs. Madge Willis, Itihari Toure, Chike Akua, Ruby Burgess, Mario Beatty, Linda C. Tillman, and Janice Hale; and multidisciplinary researchers Drs. Tonia Durden, Iheoma Iruka, Charles Finch, DeReef Jamison, and Daniel Black. Dr. Wade Nobles, one of Dr. Hilliard's closest friends, described him as a scholar-warrior who provided for his students and junior colleagues guidance, direction, and a model of intellectual excellence characterized by courage and humility (2008). Students should study, learn from, and build on Dr. Hilliard's legacy as these and many other scholars have done.

CHALLENGING THE VALIDITY AND UTILITY OF STANDARDIZED INTELLIGENCE TESTS

For much of his career—in particular, in his earliest work—Dr. Hilliard challenged the definition, utility, and validity of the construct and measurement of intelligence. He wrote:

> Over the years, I have been interested in the study of several interrelated topics. I have been interested in the validity of mental measurement in its relationship to education; . . . in the study of history and culture as it relates to assessment and teaching and learning; . . . and finally . . . in the study of racism/white supremacy in science. . . . All of these things are a part of the context within which the study of IQ, intelligence, and their application take place. IQ test results are confounded and uninterpretable in the absence of an understanding of all of these. (Hilliard, 1996a, pp. 2–3)

Dr. Hilliard's criticism of IQ testing centered on several key issues: definitional problems, questionable validity and utility, ignoring intervening variables, disregarding individual contexts, asserting impartiality, and the racist roots of intelligence testing.

DEFINITIONAL PROBLEMS

Efforts by Western psychologists to scientifically study human intelligence date back to the late 1800s, yet there has never been a standard, widely accepted definition of this construct (Hilliard, 1975; Lanz, 2000). "Intelligence" has been defined by leading Western figures in numerous diverse ways (Legg & Hutter, 2007). In challenging the lack of a commonly accepted definition of intelligence (1975), Dr. Hilliard charged: "It is this lack of . . . an operational definition that places research and practice in this area in such a poor light. Ideally, we should have . . . some general agreement as to the nature of intelligence, its origin, [and] its pattern of dynamics" (1994a, p. 151). Although the construct has been studied and used without an agreed-upon definition, numerous psychometric instruments have been developed that profess to measure intelligence quantitatively. Dr. Hilliard stated:

> The study of intelligence has led to [the] development of *instruments* that purport to measure it. We have *practices* in education that make use of the results of attempts to measure "intelligence". We have *beliefs* about the meaning of results. And we have *public policies and institutional structures* growing directly out of beliefs about intelligence and tests purporting to measure it. . . . Yet there is no precise correspondence between the standardized tests called intelligence tests and some mental activity called intelligence. (1994a, pp. 147–148)

QUESTIONABLE VALIDITY

Dr. Hilliard (1991b) argued that since "the construct [of] intelligence remains undefined operationally among the community of scholars" (p. 111), intelligence tests fundamentally lack construct validity—that is, they lack the ability to accurately measure the construct they were designed to measure: intelligence. He concluded, "It's a little hard to measure precisely when you don't have agreement on the construct" (Hilliard, 1998b, para. 17, #1). Dr. Hilliard critiqued intelligence tests as also failing to meet the criteria for predictive validity (1975, 1994b), in that IQ scores fail to accurately predict a future outcome measure. Although IQ scores are alleged to be the strongest single predictor of academic achievement, he asserted "existing psychometric predictive validity models fail to describe, to control for, or to account for intervening variables[5] between IQ testing and measures of achievement" (Hilliard, 1984b, pp. 165–166), such as the quality of teaching and learning experiences. Thus, given the lack of construct and predictive validity, Dr. Hilliard (1991b) concluded, "tests to measure intelligent behavior cannot be shown to be universally valid instruments" (p. 111). Decades later, scholar Ibram X. Kendi expressed the same concern as Dr. Hilliard about the lack of predictive validity. He said, "These tests have failed time and again to achieve their intended purposes: measuring intelligence and predicting future academic and professional success. The tests, not the Black test-takers, have been underachieving" (Kendi, 2016, para. 17).

QUESTIONABLE UTILITY

Dr. Hilliard challenged those he called "IQ psychologists" (1984b) to demonstrate pedagogical utility with respect to intelligence testing. That is, he called on them to provide scientifically sound evidence that the prevailing definitions and theories about intelligence, the use of intelligence tests, and the knowledge of a child's IQ have improved teaching and learning (Hilliard, 1981b, 1984b, 1989, 1994a, 1991b, 1996a). His critical examination of IQ psychologists' publications consistently revealed that "there are no empirical data to show that the use of IQ tests results in more positive learning outcomes for children" (Hilliard, 1981a, p. 2). Yet, he continued to stress that if IQ tests are to be used in school settings, "there should be empirical evidence to show that the use of testing and the IQ in educational settings is associated with at least some of the types of student growth considered important to us, be that intellectual, social, or emotional" (Hilliard, 1994a, p. 151). Dr. Hilliard emphasized that he did not oppose efforts to measure cognitive ability.

> I want to make it clear that I do not oppose research and the attempt to define intelligence and to measure it systematically. What I do oppose is acting as if those tasks have already been completed. I do not oppose attempting to use what is learned from the study of how the human mind functions to improve education process. What I do oppose is acting as if non-pedagogically trained psychologists and non-instructionally related mental measurement devices have a meaningful and beneficial application to the design of effective instruction for students. (Hilliard, 1994b, p. 440)

[5] An intervening variable is a factor that accounts for an observed relationship between two other variables. *American Psychological Association (APA) Dictionary of Psychology*, https://dictionary.apa.org/mediator.

As a strong supporter of the valid and nondiscriminatory assessment of children (Hilliard, 1981b), Dr. Hilliard suggested, "the future will bring increasingly valid models of how the mind works. . . . [But] that time is not now for the standardized IQ tests which are in widespread use in schools" (Hilliard, 1991b, p. 111). Thus, he rejected and actively challenged predominant beliefs that intelligence is fixed, that intelligence tests are universally applicable to all children, and that accurate measurements of intelligence with existing tests are even possible (Hilliard, 1991b, 1996a, 1998b). Dr. Hilliard was fully committed to this mission because, as he stated: "IQ testing and unvalidated ideas about intelligence in education have led to many abuses . . . . We must not permit the use of any instrument, belief, or practice that contributes to the failures of students" (Hilliard, 1994a, p. 155).

"**IQ testing and unvalidated ideas about intelligence in education have led to many abuses**. . . . We must not permit the use of any instrument, belief, or practice that contributes to the failures of students."

IGNORING INTERVENING VARIABLES

Dr. Hilliard rebuffed the position of IQ psychologists who argued that a wide variety of definitions was acceptable in the measurement of intelligence because diverse intelligence tests tended to be positively correlated with each other (1984b). He contended:

> We should not live in awe of the fact that a given thing tends to be mildly associated with something quite like itself. On the other hand, we should be embarrassed as scientists that virtually all of the IQ correlations which are reported in the literature are based on many studies that repeat a simple unscientific error. That unscientific error is the failure to control for known major sources of variation in experimental or general testing conditions, and to ignore this failure in subsequent interpretation. (Hilliard, 1991b, p. 114)

Accordingly, he identified a major failure in intelligence test studies as not controlling for the variations in instructional treatment—a critical intervening variable (Hilliard, 1984b, 1991b). He indicated that, consistently, psychometricians and researchers erroneously presume equivalent teaching and academic experiences, as well as equitable treatment, across diverse groups of students who take the test when, in fact, "nothing could be further from the truth in most cases in the schools. . . . There are compelling data which suggest that if this were done (i.e., controlling for variations in instructional treatment) the famous or infamous IQ correlation would evaporate" (Hilliard, 1991b, p. 114). He noted that "test manuals that report validity studies do not reflect attention to intervening variables. . . . Indeed, I have found almost no evidence in the psychometric literature that this inadequacy is even recognized" (Hilliard, 1984b, pp. 165–166).

DISREGARDING INDIVIDUAL CONTEXT

Dr. Hilliard also criticized intelligence tests as failing to consider the context within which a test taker exists and how context may influence both their responses as well as how their responses are scored and interpreted by others:

> If they can ever agree on what intelligence is, and if they can ever measure it, they will have to take context into account. . . . [T]he context is what gives meaning to a response (para. 17, #3). . . . You cannot measure in absence of understanding of the context of the person. That means their culture, that means the political situation, that means their exposure to curriculum—all of that adds up to context. (Hilliard, 1998b, para. 19)

ASSERTING IMPARTIALITY

The widespread use of standardized intelligence tests, as well as standardized tests in general, implicitly suggests that there is a widespread acceptance of the belief that these tests are fair and impartial measures of general cognitive ability or knowledge that can be assessed by the same test administered to everyone. This *erroneously* implies that (a) standardized intelligence tests are culture-free; (b) there is an equal opportunity for everyone to learn and acquire common exposure to cultural experiences; (c) intelligence test questions mean the same thing to everyone given that the tests are culture-free and everyone has the same opportunities; (d) there are only predetermined answers that have been determined by experts that would be regarded as correct; and (e) IQ tests are universally applicable in a culturally diverse society (Gardner-Neblett, Iruka, & Humphries, 2023; Hilliard, 1975). Dr. Hilliard (1984b) argued:

> Every group of people develops ways of working with its environment. It develops a set of rules that are widely shared within the culture. . . . Makers of standardized IQ tests operate as if there is only one

THE IMPORTANCE OF CONSIDERING CONTEXT: A REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE

In reviewing the results of her 7-year-old son's IQ test, a Black mother closely examined the items that were considered "wrong." In one case, her son was asked to check the picture that matched a designated word. In response to the word "saucer," he bubbled-in the option "N/A" rather than the "correct" option: a picture of a small, round, shallow dish holding a cup—an arrow pointed to the small dish. When she asked her son, "What is a saucer?", he responded, "An alien spaceship." His response caused her to recall that her son most often saw his parents using mugs to drink tea or coffee rather than cups that sit on small dishes called saucers. Although her son had thoughtfully reasoned that none of the response options matched his understanding and experiences, his answer was scored as incorrect because—according to the scoring manual of this standardized IQ test—there was only one correct, acceptable answer. (C. Harper Browne, personal communication, March 28, 2017)

> set of rules for all cultural groups. Otherwise, it would be foolish to speak of something such as "general knowledge" when thinking of a general population that consists of diverse cultural groups (pp. 155–156). . . . In America, there are both strong tendencies toward a common culture and strong tendencies toward unique cultural forms. There is no universal American vocabulary, general information, or set of value(s). Some of these things are shared, but many cultural groups exhibit uniqueness as well. Intelligence is reflected in both common and unique cultural behavior. (p. 140)

It may seem that the solution to concerns about cultural bias would be to develop culture-specific intelligence tests. Dr. Hilliard maintained, however, that alternative intelligence tests are not needed for Black and other students of color; *valid* tests are needed (Hilliard, 1981b). He viewed cultural bias as only a symptom of the fundamental problem with intelligence tests, which is their lack of scientific validity (Hilliard, 1991b).

THE RACIST ROOTS OF INTELLIGENCE TESTING

Another context that must be considered is the overarching sociopolitical context of the United States. According to Dr. Hilliard (1996a, 1997b) and others (e.g., American Psychological Association [APA] 2021, 2022; Gould, 1981), the construct of intelligence, the history of intelligence testing, and the use of intelligence tests in the United States are rooted in the ideology of white supremacy, racism, classism, and pseudoscience. In 1975, Dr. Hilliard stated, "Many scholars with impeccable reputations have functioned in nationally chauvinistic or racist ways using IQ tests as instruments of oppression" (p. 17). Twenty-one years later, with the continued misuse of intelligence tests, he stated:

"**Many scholars with impeccable reputations have functioned in nationally chauvinistic or racist ways** using IQ tests as instruments of oppression."

> We have not yet overcome problems of white supremacy belief and behavior in the United States. . . . Can we feel comfortable with any (test) results when we have not made a systematic analysis of the effects of the well documented racial politics of psychology on mental measurement. (Hilliard, 1996a, p. 3)

Racism and white supremacy are defined in this paper as:

> A complex system of beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, practices, policies, and laws borne out of the ideology of white supremacy—that is, the internalized belief of White people's presumed superiority and entitled power over people of other races and ethnicities. Racism presumes a hierarchy of human value and regards "white norms" as the standard against which other races and ethnicities should be compared. (Harper Browne & O'Connor, 2021)

In the early 20th century, the idea that cognitive ability could be measured by a standardized intelligence test that yielded a single score provided new, fertile soil for the ideology of scientific racism. Scientific racism refers to the appropriation of the methods, concepts, and data—as well as the legitimacy and authority of science as objective knowledge—to create and justify ideas of a biologically based racial hierarchy—that is, the superiority of White people and the inferiority of Black, Native American, Latine, and Asian peoples (Harvard Library, n.d.; National Institutes of Health, National Human Genome Research Institute, n.d.).

Over the years, many psychologists have been agents of scientific racism by prominently promoting their erroneous, nonscientifically supported ideas, such as (a) the level of an individual's intelligence is determined primarily by their biology and race; (b) intelligence test scores represent an individual's inherited and permanent intellectual endowment; and (c) racial intellectual differences and hierarchies are biologically based and fixed (e.g., Brigham, 1923; Gottfredson, 1997; Herrnstein & Murray, 1994; Jensen, 1969; Lynn, 2015; Shuey, 1958; Terman, 1916). These early and contemporary hereditarians[6] argued that the difference in the IQs of White students and the IQs of Black, Native American, and Latine students provided "scientific evidence" of innate, hereditary differences among racial groups, with Whites being "naturally" more intelligent.

Dr. Hilliard argued that scientific racism is not science. Rather, it is "pseudoscience" (1991b) and "nonscience" (1996a) because proponents of scientific racism use opinion, poor methodology, faulty statistics, misrepresentation of data, questionable evidence, and illogical conclusions to "prove" their assertions. Almost 50 years after Dr. Hilliard began his challenges to the construct and practice of intelligence testing, the APA issued a resolution (2021) that included a long-overdue acknowledgement of the racist roots of intelligence testing and its professional association's complicity in both promoting and failing to challenge racism. For example, the resolution indicated that (a) many of the APA's founders and leaders promoted "the ideas of early 20th century eugenics . . . (that is) the idea that racial differences and hierarchies are biologically based and fixed" (p. 2, para. 2); (b) eugenicists' concepts "were adopted by the field of psychology and used systemically to create the ideology of white supremacy

[S]cientific racism is not science. Rather, it is "pseudoscience" and "nonscience" because proponents of scientific racism use opinion, poor methodology, faulty statistics, misrepresentation of data, questionable evidence, and illogical conclusions to "prove" their assertions.

[6] Hereditarians are individuals who ascribe to the school of thought that genetic inheritance is the major influence in determining behavior and human traits, such as intelligence and personality. Opposed to this view is the belief that environment and learning account for the major differences between people. *American Psychological Association (APA) Dictionary of Psychology*, https://dictionary.apa.org/hereditarianism.

and harm communities of color" (p. 2, para. 3); and (c) "psychologists established, participated in, and disseminated scientific models and approaches rooted in scientific racism" (p. 2, para. 10). The APA resolution vindicates Dr. Hilliard's positions.

Notwithstanding the APA's resolution, the definitional, validity, utility, and racist ideological problems with the construct of intelligence and practice of intelligence testing that Dr. Hilliard identified decades ago still remain today. For example, most likely he would agree with contemporary scholars who argue that those using intelligence tests to diagnose learning disabilities and developmental delays in young children should proceed with caution (e.g., Bailey, 2004; Bracken, 2004). They acknowledge that since young children learn and grow at unpredictable rates, their IQ scores are relatively unstable. Like Dr. Hilliard, some contemporary scholars assert that these measures lack predictive validity and have not been determined to be related to later academic achievement. Thus, as Dr. Hilliard argued, despite the plethora of research on educational evaluation, the pursuit of accurate, authentic, and unbiased assessments to gauge teaching, learning, and overall child outcomes remains an ongoing challenge.

ON THE EDUCATION AND SOCIALIZATION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN CHILDREN

The impact of white supremacy ideology and racism on the U.S. education system has not been limited to intelligence testing. Dr. Hilliard's critique of the U.S. education system and his views on the education of Black children are grounded in his belief in the need to recognize and vigilantly resist racism and white supremacy in their various manifestations (e.g., Hilliard, 1978, 1997a, 2001; Hilliard, Jenkins, & Scott, 1979). Although Dr. Hilliard first articulated these views over 40 years ago, his positions are quite relevant today, as seen in the current debate about the teaching of critical race theory (CRT). Ray and Gibbons (2021) of the Brookings Institution explained:

> CRT has become a new bogeyman for people unwilling to acknowledge our country's racist history and how it impacts the present. . . . Opponents fear that CRT admonishes all White people for being oppressors while classifying all Black people as hopelessly oppressed victims. . . . These narratives about CRT are gross exaggerations of the theoretical framework. CRT does not attribute racism to White people as individuals or even to entire groups of people. Simply put, critical race theory states that U.S. social institutions (e.g., the criminal justice system, education system, labor market, housing market, and healthcare system) are laced with racism embedded in laws, regulations, rules, and procedures that lead to differential outcomes by race. (para. 1–3)

Two broad themes reflective of Dr. Hilliard's perspectives will be discussed: (1) the pervasiveness of inequitable structures in American education and (2) culture, education, and socialization.

THE PERVASIVENESS OF INEQUITABLE STRUCTURES IN U.S. EDUCATION

Over the years, Dr. Hilliard critiqued what he viewed as inequitable structures in U.S. education that harm Black and other children of color and afford privilege to White children. Two examples of inequitable structures briefly discussed here are faulty paradigms and perspectives and the differential treatment of children.

FAULTY PARADIGMS AND PERSPECTIVES

Dr. Hilliard believed U.S. educators "have been historically committed to the same paradigm that we had when public school education began in the United States, ascribing genius to a select few" (Hilliard, 1991a, p. 34). He countered this limited perspective in his most frequently quoted statement:

> I have never encountered any children in any group who are not geniuses. There is no mystery on how to teach them. The first thing you do is treat them like human beings and the second thing you do is love them. (Hilliard, as cited in Williams-Johnson, 2016, p. 10)

Dr. Hilliard believed that, fundamentally, U.S. educational paradigms and perspectives underestimate or dismiss altogether the intellectual capacity and academic potential of Black and other children of color. He stated:

> Rarely do we hear of success in producing achievement for African American, Native American, and Hispanic students. When we do hear of such achievement, it is trumpeted as a miracle, as the exception that proves the rule, as the work that can only be done by teachers who have a special charisma, as outliers that have to be regarded as statistical errors or mere accidents. (Hilliard, 1995c, p. 102)

In Dr. Hilliard's view, one of the most long-standing and faulty educational perspectives was the so-called "Black-White achievement gap"—that is, the gap between the average performance of Black students and the average performance of White students. This notion was first introduced in 1966 in an influential education research report titled "Equality of Educational Opportunity," commonly called "The Coleman Report" after its lead researcher, sociologist James Coleman (Coleman et al., 1966). The report concluded that "family background, not schools, explained most of the gap in achievement between America's White and Black students" (Hill, 2016, para. 8), and that "'disadvantaged' Black children learn better in well-integrated classrooms. . . . (and) would have higher test scores if a *majority* of their classmates were White" (Kiviat, 2000, para. 1 & 6).

In Dr. Hilliard's view, one of the **most long-standing and faulty educational perspectives** was the so-called "Black-White achievement gap."

Although Dr. Hilliard rejected these conclusions, he acknowledged, "It cannot be denied that African American children are not achieving at optimal levels in the schools of the nation" (1997b, p. 91). However, he declared that Black students' poor academic performance should not be thought of as a gap between Black and White students, because that frames White students' average achievement as the universal norm. Instead, the notion of a gap should be conceived as one between the current academic performance of Black students and the high levels of achievement of which they are capable (Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2003).

Dr. Hilliard rebuffed the report's conclusion that Black children's achievement improved when they attended majority-White schools. Hilliard and colleagues (1984) stated:

> The racial composition of a school, when considered alone, does not necessarily have a substantial positive effect on [the] academic performance of African American children. Significant evidence does not exist to support any claim that racial mixing alone has contributed to the excellence in the academic growth of the masses of African American students. It is not simply the addition of African Americans to a previously all-White school that makes a positive difference; it is the elimination of many of the negative factors within the school and the teaching and learning process . . . that enhances growth and development. (p. 25)

Likewise, Dr. Hilliard rejected the report's conclusion that the "Black-White achievement gap" is caused by problems inherent to African American children, as well as the attendant belief that African American children require special instructional strategies in order to learn.

> We deplore the growing belief in some quarters that suggests that many low-performing African American children require special teaching methodologies. The belief that a strategy such as "behavior modification" is uniquely suited to low performing children, especially African American children, is without scientific merit and, under certain conditions, is harmful. To suggest that something is inherently wrong with the learning processes of children who are the *victims of inequitable education treatment* is to deal them a double blow. (Hilliard et al., 1984, p. 28)

Dr. Hilliard believed that educators and researchers asked the wrong question when they queried, "Why don't Black students perform as well academically as White students?" He believed that the correct question should be, "What is the quality of educational services that Black students are receiving versus those of their White peers?" (Hilliard, 2000b, 2003). He asserted that differential academic performance represented a "quality of services gap"—not an achievement gap—wherein, for Black and other students of color, there is an absence of an opportunity to learn due to the unequal distribution of educational resources (Hilliard, 2000b, 2001, 2003; Perry et al., 2003). Dr. Hilliard contended that even when Black and White students attend the same school and sit in the same classrooms, they receive different and unequal educational experiences (Hilliard, 1991a).

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Dr. Hilliard's analysis was supported by his observations and study of what makes schools, childcare programs, and teachers across the country effective in promoting Black children's healthy growth and development and high levels of academic achievement, including students whose families experienced poverty. He found that Black children demonstrate academic success when they have

the opportunity to experience high-quality, well-managed educational contexts; rigorous instruction in an educational environment that is culturally salient, is humane, and encourages discovery; and smart, highly skilled, and dedicated teachers who value Black students, appeal to their intellect, have high expectations for them, and experience joy in their role as teachers (Caldwell & Hilliard, 1984; Hilliard, 1991a; Perry et al., 2003). He called teachers who were able to help students transition from a low-performing status to a high-performing status "gap closers" (Hilliard, 2003) who "create powerful educational environments" (Hilliard, 2000a, p. 293).

In recent years, a growing number of scholars, researchers, educators, and organizations—including the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (2023)—have shifted to the idea of an "opportunity gap" in place of "achievement gap." This contemporary view is similar to Dr. Hilliard's in that it also looks beyond the individual child and family to understand disparate academic achievement outcomes. The current idea focuses on community and systemic conditions and circumstances that serve as barriers for many children throughout their educational careers—such as under-resourced communities, overcrowded schools, dilapidated facilities, racism, and classism—by not affording them the opportunities to succeed and thrive (Mooney, 2018).

DIFFERENTIAL TREATMENT OF CHILDREN

Dr. Hilliard noted that one of the most harmful ways that the ideology of white supremacy and racism permeate school practices is in the disparate treatment of students based on their race or ethnicity (Hilliard, 1988), both in the words and actions of educators. For example, Dr. Hilliard pointed out that disparaging labels for African American and other children of color were regularly created and used in educational programs, research, and everyday contexts, such as "culturally deprived," "disadvantaged," "children from broken homes," "at risk," and "minority." He admonished the use of such labels and stressed, "Not only are these euphemisms degrading, but they also submerge any positive ethnic or race identity of the children" (Hilliard, 1988, p. 37). Consistently, Dr. Hilliard targeted the school environment when critiquing research findings about racial differences in academic performance. He stated:

> One of the most common errors in educational research is to operate on the assumption that when children fail to perform, the problem is with the child, the family, the community—in short, the child or the child's non-school environment. . . . While these and other potent forces are important and may impact teaching and learning, it is also true that *the school's treatment of the child is potent, and under some circumstances more potent than almost anything else* [emphasis added]. Therefore, we must have detailed and valid information about how the child is treated in school. These are intervening variables. (Hilliard, 1999/2000, para. 56)

Following Dr. Hilliard's advice, contemporary teachers should be acutely aware of and sensitive to how children are treated or mistreated in school environments. For example, data show that—from preschool through high school—Black children and youth are more likely than White students to be referred for detention, suspension, or expulsion for the same school regulation infractions as White students, who receive more benevolent and shorter length consequences, and that Black students

disproportionality experience higher rates of suspension and expulsion (Hill, 2004; U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, Civil Rights Data Collection, 2021). The mistreatment of children and youth of color in educational settings is dehumanizing, and, in keeping with Dr. Hilliard's recommendation, it should be examined as a potential intervening variable in research on racial disparities in academic performance. He asserted, "The absence of sufficient studies on these (intervening) factors within school foster the belief that African children tend to fail in school primarily because of internal and non-school factors. This belief system is a part of the structure of domination" (Hilliard, 1999/2000, para. 57).

CULTURE, EDUCATION, AND SOCIALIZATION

Although Dr. Hilliard consistently emphasized that Black children require and deserve the same high-quality teaching and learning experiences typically afforded to their White peers, he recognized that the overarching ideological and structural paradigm guiding U.S. education was not conducive to perceiving Black children in positive, humane ways; respecting their collective and individual uniqueness; valuing and honoring their culture; strengthening their intellectual capacities; or promoting their academic excellence (Hilliard, 1995b). In 1984, Dr. Hilliard and Dr. Barbara Sizemore co-chaired the National Alliance of Black School Educators (NABSE) Task Force on Black Academic and Cultural Excellence (The Task Force). The Task Force produced a landmark report titled "Saving the African American Child" (1984), which was developed to articulate a vision of high-quality education for African American children. One of the many issues articulated in the report was The Task Force's concept of excellence, which was a consistent theme in Dr. Hilliard's writings.

> "Excellence" in education is much more than a matter of high test scores on standardized minimum or advanced competency examinations. We expect the schools to expand the scope of knowledge and to develop the rational reflective and critical capacities of our children. . . . But more than this, we want the content of education to be true, appropriate, and relevant. We want the educational processes to be democratic and humane. We want the aim of education to be the complete development of the person, and not merely preparation for . . . jobs. (Hilliard et al., 1984, p. 15)

The Task Force underscored the need to focus on high levels of academic achievement for African American students—that is, maximum competencies rather than minimal competencies. In reflecting on the work of The Task Force, Dr. Hilliard stated:

> The NABSE Task Force report was explicit and uncompromising about academic "standards." We spell out in criterion terms . . . what we expect from the schools *for the masses* of African American children in mathematics, language arts, and foreign language. . . . Our Task Force's report is unique. It is a message about academic quality at the *maximum competency* level. It points out that such excellence is already being achieved by a handful of African American educators. In other words, we call for the most rigorous standards of academic quality. (1995b, pp. 107–108)

One of the most powerful affirmations in the report was the declaration, "We must never leave the total education of our children in the hands of others!" (Hilliard et al., 1984, p. 21). The belief in the need to educate our own children was not a desire to return to segregated schooling. Likewise, "this does not mean that we cannot learn from others. However, we must be critical learners, rejecting anything that is anti-African" (Hilliard, 1998c, para. 17). Rather, the statement reflected Dr. Hilliard's emphasis on the need for a collective sense of agency.[7] He stated: "No one will do the important cultural work for us. We must do it for ourselves" (Hilliard, 2002, p. 115).

In addition, the affirmation reflected the belief that a dominant Eurocentric educational paradigm—that is, one which centers Western ideas, history, and culture as the standard and devalues, distorts, or ignores African and African American worldview, history, and culture—is counterproductive to promoting academic, personal, and cultural excellence in African American children. The Task Force stated, "African American culture is often relegated to an inferior symbolic universe by schools. . . . The African American student, then, may view herself or himself as inferior and behave accordingly" (Hilliard et al., 1984, p. 22). Thus, The Task Force emphasized:

> Quality and *excellence* in education for African Americans includes excellence in . . . ridding our people of all vestiges of miseducation. This means that we must know ourselves and our condition. This means that the reclamation and restoration of our history and recognition and respect for our rich culture are priorities that are equal in importance to all other priorities. . . . A culturally salient and sensitive education is a frontal attack on the cumulative effects which prolonged and persistent racism has had on American society. (Hilliard et al., 1984, pp. 14 & 23)

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Although the Task Force focused on African American children, it also emphasized that early education settings, experiences, and teachers must respect the racial, ethnic, economic, and linguistic diversity of children and families in the United States. Dr. Hilliard's legacy of emphasizing that teachers should address both the cultural contexts of their students as well as racism and white supremacy is reflected in the current attention to equity and antiracism in U.S. education, even though his work frequently is not cited or credited in any way. For example, in 2018, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine published *How People Learn II: Learners, Contexts, and Cultures*. The fundamental premise of this book is that how and what children learn

[7] In this context, *agency* refers to "having the power and capability to produce an effect or exert influence." *American Psychological Association (APA) Dictionary of Psychology*, https://dictionary.apa.org/agency.

are a product of their cultural context and experiences. Similarly, in recent years, the NAEYC has issued two position statements that reflect some of Dr. Hilliard's scholarship that he articulated decades ago. The NAEYC 2019 statement affirmed that early educators "have a professional obligation to advance equity" (p. 1). In acknowledging that teaching, learning, and promoting relationships with children, families, and colleagues occur "in a broader societal context of inequities in which implicit and explicit bias are pervasive" (p. 3), the statement explained:

> Advancing equity in early childhood education requires understanding this broader societal context, these biases, and the ways in which historical and current inequities have shaped the profession, as they have shaped our nation. . . . They are rooted in our nation's social, political, economic, and educational structures. Precisely because these biases are both individual and institutional, addressing structural inequities requires attention to both interpersonal dynamics—the day-to-day relationships and interactions at the core of early childhood education practice—and systemic influences—the uneven distribution of power and privilege inherent in public and private systems nationwide, including in early childhood education. (p. 4)

In 2020, the NAEYC published the fourth edition of *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8*, which reflects multiple ideas put forth by Dr. Hilliard, including the rejection of both deficit-based perspectives about children and the commonly used phrase "best practices." In class and in speeches, Dr. Hilliard consistently affirmed that a single set of educational practices could not be regarded as best for all children given their diverse racial, ethnic, language, gender, ability, experiences, and cultural backgrounds. "The 2020 position statement on developmentally appropriate practice rejects the notion that 'one best practice' exists and instead emphasizes gaining knowledge about and integrating practices that support child, family, and community context and individual needs" (NAEYC, 2020, p. 299).

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EDUCATION AND SOCIALIZATION

Dr. Hilliard asserted that "cultural terrorism" was inherent to racism and white supremacy, with the goal of stripping people of African descent of their cultural integrity. He stated, "the goal of European hegemony[8] has been to harness, label, degrade, and appropriate African power"

[8] *Hegemony* refers to the social, cultural, ideological, or economic authority and power exerted by a dominant group over other groups they view as subordinate.

(Hilliard, 2002, p. 26). Racism, white supremacy, and cultural terrorism have benefited from and been sustained by African American children receiving a substandard education that promotes Euro-American cultural superiority and African American cultural inferiority (Hilliard, 1995b, 2002).

Thus, a different type of education is needed to resist and counter this Eurocentric ideology and to affirm the cultural integrity and intellectual capacity of African people. Dr. Hilliard pronounced that "a core part of our mission today is to study and transfer the valuable information about our cultural traditions to our people" (Hilliard, 2002, p. 21). He maintained that while African American cultural traditions may be based on the past, they inform the present struggles to advance as a group (Hilliard, 1995b). In other words, Dr. Hilliard believed that a core part of African Americans' mission is socialization—that is, "the process of assuming responsibility for one's ethnic group based on its teachings of its shared culture and destiny" (Hilliard, 1995b, p. 11).

He declared that for African American adults, there was no greater responsibility than regaining primary control of the socialization and education of African American children (Hilliard, 1998a, 2002). Dr. Hilliard believed that this was especially true of educational leaders, particularly African American principals. He stressed that principal preparation programs must produce master leaders who (a) promote equity and justice in all aspects of their school; (b) create a "gap-closing" educational environment that enables students to move from a low-performing status to a high-performing status; and (c) ensure that their schools are caring, loving, respectful places (Hilliard, 2003). Dr. Hilliard challenged African American principals to be culturally responsive advocates for African American children and families and to facilitate the inclusion of multicultural instructional materials and the hiring of culturally sensitive master teachers who believe in the genius of Black children (Hilliard, 2003). His challenges to principals remain relevant for contemporary educational leaders.

ON EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION TEACHER PREPARATION

Dr. Hilliard was consistent in his message that high-quality teaching is the critical variable in promoting optimal developmental outcomes in children (e.g., Hilliard, 1995a, 2000b; Perry et al., 2003). As a teacher and a teacher of teachers, Dr. Hilliard left a profound legacy that informs ECE teacher preparation today, as reflected in his writings about pedagogy and African American children (e.g., Hilliard, 1984a, 1995a, 2000b), as well as in his leadership and service in professional organizations that support teacher preparation.

ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP: ONE EXAMPLE

In 1974, Dr. Hilliard was the leader of the Black Advisory Task Force within the Child Development Associate Consortium, a private nonprofit organization whose mission was to "create strategies to assess the competence of child care personnel and to grant credentials to those persons assessed as competent" (Washington, Hannon, & Roberson Jackson, 2016, p. 1). The Black Advisory Task Force was one of several racial/ethnic colloquies charged in 1973 with reviewing the Consortium's Child Development Associate (CDA) credentialing process. Dr. Hilliard and other members of the Black Advisory Task Force understood that their greater mission was to speak for Black children and their families because "these children have frequently been educated—or miseducated—under standards and methods appropriate to White middle-class children" (the Black Advisory Task Force to the CDA Consortium, 1974, p. 1).

In describing the value of the Black Advisory Task Force, Washington and colleagues (2016) reported:

> Through their research and evaluation, the Black Advisory Task Force provided the foundation for what the CDA® is today, which ultimately defined what hundreds of thousands of early educators were expected to know and be able to do. Rooted in a diversity framework, the contributions of the Black Advisory Task Force resulted in six powerful legacies for the field of early care and education. They taught us that early childhood teacher education should include: (a) multiple sources of evidence about teacher competence, (b) family engagement, (c) observation of a teacher's practice, (d) academic training, (e) work experience, and (f) career pathways. (p. 3)

Almost 50 years later, these principles still inform CDA credentialing. In addition, although the Black Advisory Task Force was not credited, the principles it identified are reflected in an influential report issued by the Health and Medicine Division of the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine titled *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation* (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2015).

PERSPECTIVES ON TEACHER PREPARATION

The views of many current early childhood education professors and scholars reflect Dr. Hilliard's perspectives about teacher preparation. His teacher preparation pedagogical legacy provides a foundation for improving current programs and producing educators who are better prepared to fully value and appreciate Black and other children of color (Hilliard, 1995a, 2000b). This legacy is found in four areas: (a) foundational knowledge—what teachers should know before they study pedagogical theory and methods; (b) cultural knowledge—what teachers should know regarding the culture and communities of children in their care; (c) a broad-based knowledge of child development; and (d) understanding the teacher's role in supporting the development of young children. It is also helpful for preservice ECE teachers to understand the perspectives of scholars who influenced the thinking of Dr. Hilliard and for whom he showed great respect.

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FOUNDATIONAL KNOWLEDGE

Dr. Hilliard described himself as "a teacher, a psychologist, and a historian" (1997a, p. xvii). Given these three identities, he insisted that accurate academic, historical, and cultural knowledge were essential and inseparable companions for teachers of African American students. He queried rhetorically to a gathering of conference participants: "How can new teachers, even new teachers who are African, but who have no respect . . . for African people, teach them successfully? How can teachers get the information when it does not appear in the teacher education curriculum?" (1995a, p. 24).

Dr. Hilliard acknowledged that teachers' lack of accurate knowledge about Africa, African culture, and African American history and culture was an outgrowth of their own Eurocentric-focused education that was devoid of meaningful information about people of African descent (Hilliard, 1997a, 2000b). Their early miseducation reified European civilization as the historical yardstick by which the peoples of the world should be measured and promoted a mindset that elevated all things European. Dr. Hilliard believed that this historiography was an effort "to take us out of the human historical and cultural process. . . . They wanted us to view the European as the only creator of culture and the African only as spectator" (Hilliard, 1995b, pp. 8–9).

For decades, Dr. Hilliard fought against the widespread, profound ignorance about African history and cultures. As such, he drew upon the works of Cheikh Anta Diop (1974, 1978), John Henrik Clarke (1996), and other African scholars—as well as some European historians (e.g., Bernal, 1987)—to expose students to and advocate for the inclusion of the truth about African history and culture in school curricula, starting with the recognition of KMT (ancient Egypt) as the birthplace of civilization and therefore the birthplace of human culture (e.g., Hilliard, 1985, 1992a). He maintained that teachers who had no accurate knowledge of the cultural and historical roots of African Americans could not fully value and appreciate Black children and their families (Hilliard, 1995a, 2000b). In addressing the need to infuse knowledge of Africa and its history into teacher education programs, Dr. Hilliard stated:

> The teacher education program for teachers to serve African American children, or other traditionally excluded or poorly served children, must require some level of proficiency in cultural knowledge about African people or other people. It is virtually impossible for teachers to develop a profound respect for their African students if they cannot even locate African people in time (chronology) and in space (geography). . . . Having no sense of chronology, no sense of where African people are in the world, and no sense of African culture, limits a teacher's ability to understand students with whom they may work today. Such teachers see students merely in episodic terms. Such teachers cannot place students in context. This results in varying degrees of alienation of students from school experiences, the impairment of communication, a reduction in motivation and effort, and ultimately in low achievement. (1995a, pp. 23–24)

CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE

Dr. Hilliard emphasized that "an African perspective on teacher education must take into account two primary realities: that of the African cultural tradition and that of the political/economic environment within which people of African descent have been situated" (Hilliard, 1995a, p. 5). He maintained that an accurate and critical awareness of the historical and contemporary sociopolitical realities of African Americans is essential for teachers of Black children, including understanding the various manifestations of racism, white supremacy, hegemony, and discrimination, as well as the active resistance to these forces (Hilliard, 2001, 2002). For example, he talked about the importance of understanding the evolution and purpose of the concept of race. He explained, "Race is an invention. . . . Obviously, people could observe physical differences among people. But never in human history did they believe they were looking at different species. . . . But that became necessary with the expansion of a colonial empire in Europe" (Hilliard, 1978, p. 12).

The implications of his perspective on race provide a critical message for contemporary preservice teachers; that is, that the social construction of race is fundamentally about power. Those with political,

The social construction of race **is fundamentally about power**.

economic, and social authority have created and continue to promote hierarchical categories of human differences based on superficial physical characteristics and assign meaning and value to those categories to validate and sustain their own dominance. Dr. Hilliard explained that "fundamentally, the question of 'race' is not a matter of skin color, anatomy, or phenotype, but a matter of the domination of one group of people by another" (Hilliard, 1999/2000, para. 7)—specifically, the positioning of White people as superior, entitled, and dominant over other races and ethnicities. He emphasized that it was essential to focus on these issues in order to be able to take actions against them (Hilliard, 1999/2000). Dr. Hilliard stated, "I'm not going through this simply to do name calling. I'm saying that if we intend to deal with the problems we have in 1978, we have to understand where they came from" (Hilliard, 1978, p. 12).

A BROAD-BASED KNOWLEDGE OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Child development courses are an integral part of ECE teacher preparation programs. Dr. Hilliard charged that the content of traditional texts and the typical subject matter covered in child development courses was limited in that they failed to include theories and research on the development of Black, Indigenous, Latine, and Asian children (Hilliard, 1995b). Thus, preservice teachers are most often left to learn about child development through a singular Eurocentric lens. "Normal" child development becomes what is revealed from studies of White children, while the developmental characteristics of children of color, both within and outside of the United States, are often ignored or seen as "atypical."

The content of traditional texts and the typical subject matter covered in child development courses was limited in that they **failed to include theories and research** on the development of Black, Indigenous, Latine, and Asian children.

In response to this failure, throughout his career Dr. Hilliard conscientiously elevated the work of African, African American, and other scholars whose research and practice focused on children of color and who demonstrated exceptional success in unveiling the genius of African American students, as well as those who studied the effect of discrimination on human development and viewed human potential beyond limited paradigms (e.g., Hilliard, 1991a, 1995a). Dr. Hilliard's concerns remain relevant today because, as Hinitz (2013) pointed out, many widely adopted child development textbooks—as well as teacher licensure examinations—still overlook, undervalue, or fail to include the theoretical, research, and pedagogical contributions of scholars of color. In addition, Dr. Hilliard queried:

> How can we explain why behavioral scientists who write books on teacher education also avoid issues of racism and group oppression? . . . For a few educators and behavioral scientists, it may well be conscious and intentional. There is continued failure to come to grips with the real world of inequality. This failure remains symptomatic of the inability of educators to deal with substantive and sensitive root problems associated with privilege and oppression in education. (1995b, pp. 152–153)

The current portfolio of research on the negative impact of racism on child development provides evidence for why ECE teacher preparation curricula should not avoid addressing issues of racism and group oppression. For example, the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University (2020) reported:

> Years of scientific study have shown us that, when children's stress response systems remain activated at high levels for long periods, it can have a significant wear-and-tear effect on their developing brains and other biological systems. This can have lifelong effects on learning, behavior, and both physical and mental health. A growing body of evidence from both the biological and social sciences connects this concept of chronic wear and tear to racism. This research suggests that constant coping with systemic racism and everyday discrimination is a potent activator of the stress response. . . . All of these reflect ways in which the legacy of structural racism in the U.S. has created conditions that disproportionately undermine the health and development of children and families of color. (para. 1–2, 4)

THE TEACHER'S ROLE

Dr. Hilliard was clear and unwavering about the type of teachers Black children need to reach their full potential:

> We need educators and leaders who are oriented toward our destiny because they are rooted in a deep understanding of our culture and traditions, educators who identify with and are a part of us, educators who see our children as their own. Those who love our children and who have the will to teach them (and) will make whatever sacrifices are necessary to raise our children up (to) where they belong. Now is the time for the real liberators to come forward. (Hilliard, 2000b, p. 14)

He acknowledged that becoming a successful teacher takes time and commitment. That is, becoming a successful teacher is a lifelong process that requires ongoing support for the professional development of both preservice and in-service teachers. He articulated seven essential characteristics of successful teachers at all grade levels. Specifically, teachers must (a) be people of good character and commitment; (b) take the initiative and be curious and creative; (c) learn habitually; (d) have strong communication skills; (e) have a holistic approach to teaching; (f) continue to deepen both their professional and academic content studies; and (g) understand that what matters most is the relationship between the teacher and the student (Checkley, 1999).

Dr. Hilliard asserted that the nature of teacher preparation programs in the United States is not conducive to cultivating a wholistic view of the teacher–student relationship, due to the prevailing view of the role of the teacher. He asserted, "Traditional teacher education in the United States has evolved a general orientation that seems to suggest that teaching is primarily a technological or technical practice. . . . [and] when learning does not occur, the overwhelming view is that students

have problems" (Hilliard, 1995a, para. 33). He rebuffed this view of the teacher. Dr. Hilliard's study of African culture and educational practices revealed that a teacher is regarded as "a parent, friend, guide, coach, healer, counselor, model, storyteller, entertainer, artist, architect, builder, minister, and advocate to and for students" (Hilliard, 1998c, para. 33). His research led him to value and advocate for the following attitudes about and ways of being a teacher. He explained that:

[A] teacher is regarded as "a parent, friend, guide, coach, healer, counselor, model, storyteller, entertainer, artist, architect, builder, minister, and advocate to and for students."

- In the African tradition, it is the role for the teacher to appeal to the intellect, to appeal to the humanity, to appeal to the physical, and to appeal to the spiritual in their students. Of course, in order to make such an appeal, one must be convinced of the inherent intellectual capability of students, the inherent humanity of students, the inherent physical capability of students, and the inherent spiritual character of students. (Hilliard, 1995a, para. 26)

- African teachers recognize the centrality of relationships between teachers and students, among students, and within the African community as a whole. For the African teacher, teaching is a calling, a constant journey towards mastery, a scientific activity, a matter of community membership, an aspect of a learning community, a process of "becoming a library," a matter of care and custody for our culture and traditions, a matter of a critical viewing of the wider world, and a response to the imperative of MAAT [i.e., the moral rules and behavior of ancient Kemetic society—truth, justice, righteousness, order, reciprocity, harmony, balance]. (Hilliard, 1998c, para. 23)

THOUGHT INFLUENCERS

Dr. Hilliard's perspectives and positions about the development, socialization, and education of young children were influenced by many individuals in diverse disciplines. Early educators should review the work of his thought influencers to expand their understanding of his points of view. While the list is broad, three of Dr. Hilliard's thought influencers who have relevance to ECE teacher preparation are Drs. Kimbwandènde Kia Bunseki Fu-Kiau, Maria Montessori, and Shinichi Suzuki. Dr. Hillard's high regard for Drs. Fu-Kiau, Montessori, and Suzuki is reflected in his belief that three key factors can promote or inhibit optimal learning in young children, specifically: (a) the kinds of physical and psychosocial environments to which they are exposed, (b) teachers' broad knowledge and skill, and (c) teachers' beliefs and expectations about and treatment of the children they interact with. These factors are addressed in various sections of this paper. A brief description of these scholars' influential ideas follows.

Kimbwandènde Kia Bunseki Fu-Kiau. Dr. Fu-Kiau espoused the idea of "Kindezi," a Bantu word that refers to how a community creates, cares for, and sustains a social and physical environment that values, nurtures, loves, and educates every child. Dr. Hilliard pointed out that practitioners of Kindezi are far more than "professional caregivers"; they must have a bond and an identification with the children in their care (Hilliard, 1997c).

Maria Montessori. Dr. Hilliard believed that the principles of Montessori education were grounded in the essence of who young children are and what they need (Hilliard, 1996b). That is, Montessori principles focus on (a) respecting the uniqueness of each child; (b) promoting young children's ability to understand their culture and environment; (c) establishing the foundations of their intelligence and personality; (d) providing a learning environment that nurtures all developmental domains, as well as the acquisition of practical skills, and empowers children to teach themselves; and (e) viewing learning as its own reward and valuing having a sense of accomplishment over extrinsic rewards (Montessori & George, 1964).

Shinichi Suzuki. Dr. Hilliard was greatly impressed with the Suzuki method of music education. This approach was based in the belief that, since young children's brains were adept at acquiring new skills and information, given the right environment and circumstances, they could learn to play music with the same ease at which they learn to speak their native language. Suzuki believed that being taught by well-trained, loving parents and teachers was a key component of children's success in music education (Suzuki & Murphy, 1974). These ideas were consistent with Dr. Hilliard's vision of the kinds of environments most likely to produce optimal child development outcomes (Hilliard, 1997c).

CONCLUSION

Dr. Hilliard often declared to his students, "It is the nature of the nurture that children are exposed to that makes the difference in their lives." The overarching message that binds his many timeless bodies of work is the need for adults to provide the kind of physical, social, emotional, intellectual, behavioral, ideological, warm, and loving environment that will nurture the inherent humanity and genius of Black and other children of color. He emphasized:

The overarching message . . . is the need for adults to provide the kind of physical, social, emotional, intellectual, behavioral, ideological, warm, and loving environment that will **nurture the inherent humanity and genius of Black and other children of color**.

> The risk for our children in school is not a risk associated with their intelligence. Our failures have nothing to do with IQ, nothing to do with poverty, nothing to do with race, nothing to do with language, nothing to do with style, nothing to do with the need to discover new pedagogy, nothing to do with the development of unique and differentiated special pedagogies, nothing to do with the children's families. All of these are red herrings. The study of them may ultimately lead to some greater insight into the instructional process; but at present they serve to distract attention from the fundamental problem facing us today. We have one and only one problem: *Do we truly (have the) will to see each and every child in this nation develop to the peak of his or her capacities?* (Hilliard, 1991a, p. 36)

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