



# EDUCATIONAL SCHOLARS

These Educational Scholars resources were inspired by an episode of Dr. Muna Abdi's podcast *Becoming An Antiracist*, in conversation with Liz Pemberton and Jamel C. Campbell. And by the conceptual paper *Black skin, White theorists: Remembering hidden Black early childhood scholars* by Anthony Broughton. You can listen to the podcast by [clicking here](#), and read the conceptual paper [here](#).

Traditionally, the voices of the educational theorists and scholars we know and are taught in training are predominantly white voices and more specifically, white male voices. Their research was carried out through the lens of a white person, and while they might not have explicitly excluded children who were not white, disabled, neurodivergent or who did not fit the idea of a typically developing child, they did not explicitly include them either. The need to engage with scholars who see through different lenses and explore and share their work for all children is vital.

Educators are trained in these theories and will make judgements on children's learning and development based on their theoretical knowledge. The perspectives we know and learn will likely be the perspectives we apply to our teaching and support. Therefore, to support the learning and development of all children in our educational settings and to deepen our understanding of their diverse lived experiences, we need to ensure our understanding of how children learn and develop is also diverse.

These resources are just snippets of the lives and works of some educational scholars, and we encourage you to delve deeper, challenge your thinking and be open to new ideas and new voices. This collection will continue to grow. We hope you will come back to this space to find out more about the multiple voices in education you might not have come across yet.

# JANICE E. HALE - BENSON



## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Janice E. Hale-Benson (1948 - 2017) was a researcher, early childhood educator, author, teacher and educational theorist.

She researched the educational experience of Black children.

## JANICE E. HALE - BENSON'S WORK

Hale-Benson wrote at a time when white educators in the U.S. began to bring Black children into predominantly white schools, with the claim that this would improve their education.

These white educators assumed that if a Black child were to sit next to a white child then the academic achievements of Black children would improve.

With language and development, for example, Black children who did not meet academic expectations for reading would be considered to have "inferior cognitive capacities" compared to white children, where the teacher would be more likely to assume a white child just needed more support.

"Black children grow up in a distinct culture that gives rise to a distinct language system in addition to distinct behavioural characteristics that are often ignored in the educative process." (Hale-Benson)

Hale-Benson also explored how Black children have to adapt themselves to fit into an environment with a pedagogy designed by white people. In education, this meant that Black children needed to change themselves to be accepted in an educational system created mainly for and by white people.

Hale-Benson stated that educators need to understand the culture of Black children before they can attempt to understand and appropriately support their learning and development. Alongside this, educators need to incorporate Black culture into their pedagogy to provide an education for Black children that understands them and meets their needs.

# REFLECTIONS ON JANICE E. HALE - BENSON'S WORK

We know it's important to get to know the children we are educating. In getting to know them, we better understand the support they need in their learning and development.

In order to build a positive learning environment, we need to create a space where all children are seen, heard and valued for who they are.



How can we learn more about the culture of the children in our settings and schools?  
What do we understand about their culture(s) and how do we incorporate this understanding into our practice and pedagogy?

How much do we understand how learning and development are influenced by culture? How does this impact our own expectations on, for example, behaviour?



## REFERENCES

- Broughton, A. (2020). Black skin, White theorists: Remembering hidden Black early childhood scholars. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, p.1-16.
- Hale, J.E. (1986). Black children: their roots, culture, and learning styles. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.