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How African Nova Scotians envision culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy as civic repair

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ABSTRACT

African Nova Scotians constitute the largest multigenerational Black Canadian community, with 400 years of presence in Atlantic Canada. Despite the end of *de jure* school segregation in 1954, African Nova Scotians' social and cultural capital were not incorporated in curricular and pedagogical practices. Using the theoretical framework of cultural trauma, this article draws from a qualitative study conducted using semi-structured interviews and focus groups with sixty participants. A cultural trauma process takes place after a traumatic event and involves a cycle of meaning-making and interpretation that can result in demands for reparation or civic repair. This study illustrates how through the cultural trauma process grounded in their collective memory, African Nova Scotians articulate an aspiration for culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy as a form of civic repair. This transformative pedagogy would facilitate a reconnection with their heritage and a fulfilment of the democratic goals of public education.

Introduction

Cultural trauma refers to a collective interpretive process of meaning-making that follows an horrendous event that has affected a social group and differs from the psychological concept of trauma that describes an individual's psycho-emotional state (Alexander 2012). The social theory of cultural trauma has shed light on how the collective memory of slavery shapes African Americans' identity formation through the interpretation of its meaning and significance for the present and the future (Eyerman 2004, 2019). The implications of cultural trauma processes experienced by other Black diasporas with their own unique historical trajectories have been less examined. This article proposes to focus on African Nova Scotians' collective memory and cultural trauma process, who with 400 years of presence in Atlantic Canada, constitute the largest multigenerational Black Canadian community (Mensah 2010).[1]

The official federal multiculturalism policy, which suggests acceptance of difference (Mullings et al. 2016), and the repeated story of the Underground Railroad – an anti-slavery movement that enabled African American fugitives to reach Canadian soil for freedom in

the 19th century (Mensah 2010) – cultivate the commonly held belief that anti-Black racism is less prevalent or severe in Canada, compared to the United States (Williams 2013). Yet a large proportion of Canadians are unfamiliar with the historical legacy of slavery, spatial, temporal, and school segregation, and ongoing structural barriers faced by African Nova Scotians, including in education (United Nations Human Rights Council 2017; Williams 2013). In this study, most participants expressed that it is essential to examine Black learners' overall schooling experience. More specifically, participants emphasized the transformative value and strength of culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy principles to connect students to their ancestral, historical, and cultural knowledges and heritage while fulfilling the democratic goals of school integration that remains unfinished, decades after the end of school segregation. Drawing on the theoretical framework of cultural trauma and findings from this project's qualitative data, this article will demonstrate how African Nova Scotians, within a cultural trauma process grounded in their collective memory, aspire to and envision culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy as a form of civic repair.

Context

In 2016, 1.2 million inhabitants self-identified as Black in Canada (3.5% of the national population), and over 90% resided in urban areas, notably Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa-Gatineau, Edmonton, and Calgary (Statistics Canada 2019, 4–14). In the census, Black Canadians reported more than 200 ethnic or cultural origins, and the vast majority were either first- or second-generation immigrants (91.4%) (Statistics Canada 2019, 10). In contrast, in Nova Scotia, a province on the eastern coast of Canada, the majority of the 22,000 Black residents were born in Canada, and less than 30% of the Black population identifies as first- or second-generation immigrants (Statistics Canada 2017, 2019, 15). This established Black community finds its roots in different waves of arrival of people of African ancestry in Nova Scotia.

A collective memory marked by slavery, imposed segregation, exploitation, and discrimination

Black people's presence can be traced to the 1600s, when English and French colonizers settled with Black slaves on unceded Mi'kmaq territories in Nova Scotia (Pachai and Bishop 2006). Between 1775 and 1783, Black loyalists who were promised grants of land in return for their loyalty to the British Crown in the American War of Independence arrived in Nova Scotia. However, few received land, and those who did settled on distant and barren land (Pachai and Bishop 2006; Saney 1998). At the end of the 18th century, Jamaican maroons arrived in Nova Scotia, followed by African American refugees of the War of 1812. In the early 20th century, Jamaican workers also migrated and expanded the community. To contextualize the community's collective memory and contemporary expectations in regards to education, it is paramount to understand how anti-Black racism has resulted in African Nova Scotians' forced segregation, socio-economic exclusion, and denial of access to health, social, and educational services. Anti-Black racism refers to the ways Black people have encountered racism since the colonial period; have been subjected to a range of racist laws and customs that targeted them specifically, such as enslavement or segregation; and continue to face ongoing racism which is rationalized and manifested in multiple and singular ways (Benjamin 2003; James et al. 2010; Lewis 1992).

African Nova Scotian lives have been and continue to be affected by anti-Black racism through spatial and temporal segregation, forcible relocation, the denial of public services, and environmental racism. Because historically White residents purposefully acted to enforce segregation, the forty-eight historical Black Nova Scotian communities are located at the periphery of towns and cities. Spatial segregation was accompanied by the denial of provisions of infrastructure like water or sewage (Saney 1998; Sehatzadeh 2008) and by temporal segregation through the racist custom of dusk-to-dawn curfews (Saney 1998, 81; Williams 2013, 429). In addition, African Nova Scotians have been forcibly displaced and relocated without their consultation or consent (Remes 2018; Spencer 2012). The most illustrative example is Africville, an historical Black community in Halifax, which between 1964 and 1970 was dismantled and bulldozed (Remes 2018; Spencer 2012). Along with the Mi'kmaq people, African Nova Scotian communities have had to reckon with environmental racism and its severe consequences (Waldron 2018). Several toxic hazards and waste sites have been installed without consultation or consent near Mi'kmaq and historical Black communities, which has resulted in detrimental health and environmental repercussions (Waldron 2018). The multiple dimensions of imposed segregation are illustrated in this historical account of a Black community called "The Avenue" located in Dartmouth:

> The community was still separated geographically from the White community by a dirt road – the pavement ended where the Black Community began – and lack of city services such as streetlights and indoor plumbing. The relocation of the town dump to The Avenue in the 1940s speaks volumes about the prevailing racism endemic within White society at that point. The dump was relocated with no consultation or involvement by community members (Sehatzadeh 2008, 409).

In the labour market, African Nova Scotians have limited access to opportunities, and have been exploited as cheap labour while having to work multiple positions with poor pay, with many resorting to emigration to secure employment (Bernard and Bonner 2013). Social class alone cannot explain these employability-related barriers and poor working conditions; racism plays a decisive role. For instance, African Nova Scotian women in the late 19th century were constrained to employment in the sector of domestic service, laundry, or sewing, while their White working-class female counterparts could access more opportunities (Morton 1993, 67). Like African American porters, African Canadian porters on the Canadian railways experienced discrimination by employers and unions alike (Calliste 1995). From 1917 until 1964, they were excluded from unions and came up against segregated job classification and locals, which led to organized mobilization on the part of Black Canadians (Calliste (Calliste, 1988), 1995). During the First World War, despite their commitment to serve their country, Black Canadian soldiers were segregated in the military unit No. 2 Construction Battalion (Pachai and Bishop 2006; Saney 1998, 87). Today, African Nova Scotians still face a higher unemployment rate compared to the rest of the province (African Nova Scotian Affairs 2020), and the various manifestations of racism continue to shape how African Nova Scotian women navigate professional settings (Beagan and Etowa 2009).

Historically, African Nova Scotians have been underserved with limited access to public services. For example, the Nova Scotia Home for Colored Children (1921–2014), a foster home for Black children and youth, was chronically underfunded, and former residents have reported that they experienced gaps in care, harm and abuse, and feelings of isolation

and disconnection (Restorative Inquiry Council of Parties 2019, 154–172). Today, the contemporary over-representation of Black children in care and a lack of access to culturally relevant social services still persist. In regards to health services, the community contends with disproportionately negative health outcomes (Etowa et al. 2007; Kisely, Terashima, and Langille 2008) and a lack of information about available health services, such as palliative care (Maddalena et al. 2013). In the criminal justice system, African Nova Scotians encountered differential treatment in the justice system; were excluded from jury duty between 1890 and 1943; and endured harsher punishments upon being convicted of a crime (Williams 2013, 429). Today, community advocates strive to end racial profiling, the over incarceration of Black people, and the use of excessive force by law enforcement (Bernard and Smith 2018; Bundy 2019; Wortley 2019).

African Nova Scotians continue to challenge injustices and engage in different forms of advocacy to obtain equal human rights and citizenship (Saney 1998; Pachai and Bishop 2006; Williams 2013). The community has relied on a range of individual and collective coping and social-political mobilization strategies such as, but not limited to: socialization to teach children and youth how to respond to racism (Bundy 2019; Beagan and Etowa 2009), the reliance on extended kinship (Bernard and Bonner 2013; Sehatzadeh 2008), collective initiatives such as community policing (Bundy 2019), activism, and advocacy (Black Learners Advisory Committee 1994; Pachai and Bishop 2006; Williams 2013), and spirituality (Beagan, Etowa, and Bernard 2012; Bernard et al. 2014; Este and Bernard 2006).

De facto and de jure school segregation in Nova Scotia, Canada

Anti-Black racism in Canada has been characterized by the denial of its existence and the invisibility or erasure of critical segments of African Canadian history, such as forced school segregation[2] (McLaren 2004; Williams 2013). In the 19th century for instance, Egerton Ryerson - the Chief Superintendent of Education for Canada West - did little to prevent school segregation despite the pleas of Black parents to secure access for their children to integrated common (public) schools (Cooper 2016). Indeed, he "was more inclined to tolerate discrimination than to exert any pressure to resolve the issue" (McLaren 2004, 40–41). Likewise in Eastern Canada, African Nova Scotians were subjected to separate and unequal education for 143 years, *de facto* and *de jure* (Saney 1998, 82). Between 1811 and 1865, the Legislative Assembly's Education Act rendered the cost of opening a school so onerous that most African Nova Scotian communities could not afford a school and *de facto* were denied an education (Saney1998). Nova Scotia public schools were officially racially segregated by law, *de jure*, between 1865 and 1954, and the last segregated school closed in 1983 in Guysborough County (Black Learners Advisory Committee 1994; Saney 1998; Henry 2019). While after 1954 several schools were physically integrated, they were not socially or culturally integrated. Authorities failed to incorporate Black teachers and community members and historically Black communities' knowledges in the design of the integrated schools. Despite physical integration, anti-Black racism continues to limit access to education through institutional barriers such as racial stereotyping, low-expectations, differential treatment, a lack of Black role models, and the absence of culturally relevant course content (Black Learners Advisory Committee 1994). To address the root cause of these barriers to education, Bernard (2012, 20) suggests that transformations that result in an "historical corrective", "cultural recovery", and "educational redress" are needed.

Community advocates contend that teachers should "incorporate anti-racism principles as a key element of the philosophy of education" (Black Learners Advisory Committee 1994, 93), including the ways in which they engage with Black families (Malinen and Roberts-Jeffers 2019). It is also against this backdrop that several reports' recommendations point to the importance of embracing an anti-racist approach while concomitantly incorporating African Canadian heritage and culture in the curriculum (Black Learners Advisory Committee 1994; Lee and Marshall 2009; United Nations Human Rights Council 2017). Such proposals to create a school environment that is conducive to Black students' learning overlap with the principles of culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy.

The strengths of culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy

Culturally relevant pedagogy was coined by Ladson-Billings (1995) as an effective approach to teach students with diverse languages, cultures, and literacies. Caring for students' overall development and well-being, combined with a commitment to promote academic success of all students, are the prerequisites and the pursuit of this pedagogy (Morrison, Robbins, and Rose 2008). Culturally relevant pedagogy is comprised of three central components: a) the responsibility to nurture academic success and intellectual growth; b) the commitment to promote fluency in students' respective cultural heritage while learning the dominant one; and c) the development of students' critical socio-political consciousness to enact citizenship (Ladson-Billings 1995, 150). Recently, Ladson-Billings (2014) observed that programs and models that use the term culturally relevant do not always substantively incorporate the three original components and often fail to foster critical consciousness among students. Building on the concept of culturally relevant pedagogy, Paris (2012) proposes that we cultivate multiculturalism and multilingualism, given that culture is fluid, changing, and constantly evolving. In fact, he posits that "culturally sustaining pedagogy seeks to perpetuate and foster – to sustain – linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling" (Paris 2012, 93). Such education should not essentialize a group or conflate race and ethnicity, but rather should acknowledge traditional linguistic and cultural practices while welcoming emerging and heterogenous practices and diversity within groups (Henry 2017; Paris and Alim 2014). In fact, students are invited to centre their own repertoire of practice in order to learn the dominant language, literacy, and culture based on their strengths and knowledges (Paris 2012). In that context, establishing connections between the school, the family, and the broader community through various initiatives can further support the students' learning based upon their prior knowledges (Morrison, Robbins, and Rose 2008). Critical consciousness is an integral part of culturally sustaining pedagogy, and students should be encouraged to challenge oppressive practices within society and their cultures to uphold equality and equity (Paris and Alim 2014). The exclusion of African Canadian heritage and culture in the curriculum has been characterized as a manifestation of racism and a barrier to the academic achievement of Black learners (Brathwaite 2010; Hamilton-Hinch, Harkins, and Seselja 2017). In fact, some Black Canadians have advocated for or participated in local Africentric educational programs that centre people of African descent as subjects of their history and build their teaching upon Black communities' agency, knowledges, and innovations (Dei 1996; Hamilton-Hinch et al. 2021; Howard and James 2019). In Atlantic Canada, the maintenance and transmission of Black histories, cultures, and contributions to society and the world in

the education system is a long-held aspiration among African Nova Scotians (Black Learners Advisory Committee 1994; Bernard 2012; Finlayson 2015). Despite the development of one African Canadian studies course in Nova Scotia's public school system, there is a concern that because this course is not offered at all grade levels or schools, the opportunity to take it is limited across the province (Lee and Marshall 2009, 57). Black parents and students' desire for cultural maintenance and transmission is combined with a need to foster critical consciousness about anti-Black racism and other forms of oppression (Brathwaite 2010). The calls to incorporate African Canadian history and culture in school content, and education about anti-Black racism, align with culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy.

Theoretical framework

Grounded in a social constructionist approach, this article mobilizes the theoretical framework of cultural trauma. This sociological concept of cultural trauma differs from a psychological notion of trauma as it describes a *collective interpretive process* rather than an *individual's psycho-emotional state*. While psychological trauma refers to a wound to the individual's psyche, cultural trauma refers to a wound to the collective, a tear in the social fabric, a crisis of collective identity and meaning (Alexander 2012; Eyerman 2004):

> Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways (Alexander 2012, 6).

Cultural trauma emerges when a traumatic event represents an injury to the collective and shifts the social group sense of identity. "The gap between event and representation can be conceived as the trauma process (Alexander 2012, 15)." The meaning-making process that follows the occurrence of a powerful and unforgettable traumatic event is often complex, contested, and initiated by carrier groups who impart a "master narrative", an interpretation of the significance and meaning of the event (Alexander 2004, 2012). Carrier groups can include intellectuals, artists, religious figures, and political representatives who bring forward symbolic representations of the event and a claim that a collective injury has taken place (Alexander 2004). Subsequently, this claim of collective injury can become an integral part of a group's collective memory and identity, and can be represented through artists, political representatives, or community advocates' narratives. Cultural trauma's interpretive processes contribute to the formation or transformation of a collective identity through memories, symbolic representation, and meaning associated with these memories (Brown 2016; Eyerman 2004).

Cultural trauma has been used to understand various experiences such as the aftermath of the Holocaust, postcommunist societies' transition or the partition of India and Pakistan (Alexander 2004, 2012). In the American context, Eyerman (2019) posits that slavery is a site of memory that is fundamental to African American identity formation, with several interpretive processes and means of representation over generations. Onwuachi-Willig (2016) argues that cultural trauma is not only a process that can be initiated following the occurrence of a singular traumatic event, but can also follow the routinization of harm. She demonstrates how, from the perspective of most African Americans, the killing of fourteen-year-old Emmett Till in the United States was part of a lengthy history of violent, racist

events which had become routine (Onwuachi-Willig 2016). Brown (2016) highlights the "hidden injuries" and cultural trauma experienced by the first cohorts of African American students who attended physically (but not culturally or socially) integrated schools post-school desegregation in 1954. As a result, a paradox exists in which school desegregation was a civil rights victory that provided access to well-resourced institutions, but also resulted in the loss of culturally affirming and caring environments with supportive Black teachers and a sense of belonging to the school community (Brown 2016).

The social process of cultural trauma is not synonymous with an individual's state of powerlessness, distress or lay understanding of "being traumatized" (Alexander 2012, 7) and is analytically distinct from notions of 'cultural deficit'. This social process can highlight the creative and agentic nature of a social group's representation and interpretation following a traumatic event, as members of the collective imagine a future with various forms of reparation (Alexander 2012, 16). In fact, cultural trauma processes can enter governmental bureaucracies to disseminate a group's representation of a collective injury, which can subsequently result in public inquiries or investigations (Alexander 2004). The interpretive process that follows such initiatives can contribute to "expanding and narrowing solidarity, creating or denying the factual and moral basis for reparations and civic repair" (Alexander 2004, 19). Legal entities or organizations, like corporations, may allot reparations to a collective group. In this case, *civic repairs* refer to symbolic or material reparations dispensed by a local, regional or national government to its citizens directly or through public institutions, so as to redress an injustice that caused injury. This article illustrates how African Nova Scotians envision culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy that includes their social and cultural capital as a form of civic repair.

Methodology

Across interviews and focus groups, I found it to be critical to allow participants to shape the direction of their narratives about Black learners' education in Nova Scotia. It was important to centre community members' voices and their own frames of reference across generations by including youth and adults. As such, this study utilized a cross-sectional qualitative design aligned with these goals and the theoretical framework of cultural trauma. A qualitative design is suitable to capture subjective meanings regarding events, situations, behaviours, motivations, and attitudes (Aspers and Corte 2019) in order to see the world through the eyes of a social group (Bryman and Bell 2019, 206). The findings in this article are drawn from semi-structured interviews and focus groups conducted face-to-face in Nova Scotia and remotely via Zoom or phone between 2018 and 2019.

The purposive sample was recruited through a snowball sampling/respondent-driven sampling recruitment strategy across urban and rural areas in the province in English and French. Snowball sampling/respondent-driven sampling is adequate to conduct research with hard-to-reach populations (Goodman 2011). Adult and youth participants were invited to volunteer through word of mouth, via email, and with posters in both official languages. Each participant read a letter of information and completed a consent form, and parental consent was secured where applicable. Although I cannot fully understand the African Nova Scotian experience, I felt that the participants were able to relate to me as a Black researcher who understands what it means to navigate school as a Black person in Canada. I conducted seventeen semi-structured interviews with an average duration of forty-five

minutes and nine focus groups of various sizes (3–7 participants) with an average duration of one hour. The total sample consisted of sixty participants[3], with thirty-nine self-identified African Nova Scotians, twenty Black immigrants, and one racialized professional who works closely with immigrants in the province (see Table 1). There were slightly more women (34) than men (26) and a total of twelve participants were interviewed in French.

The interviews and focus groups were recorded, transcribed, and coded with a qualitative software, MAXQDA (VERBI, Berlin, Germany). Thematic analysis facilitates the examination of participants' narratives with flexibility and the comparison of similarities and differences across participants (Nowell et al. 2017). A thematic analysis was conducted to identify, analyse, and organize salient patterns of responses within the dataset. The first step involved an initial reading of the data, followed by the creation of initial codes, and the subsequent search, review, and definition of themes (Nowell et al. 2017). Given that the participants come from relatively small communities, pseudonyms are used, and identifiable characteristics were removed to maintain participants' confidentiality. This study was approved by Ryerson University Research Ethics Board (REB 2018-187).

Results

Several participants' narratives illustrate a profound desire for curricular and pedagogical changes which reflect the three components of a culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy. Simultaneously, interviews with some participants reflected the social process of cultural trauma, whereby they connected and interpreted the past, present, and future by mobilizing their collective memory. For most participants, it is not possible to redress the legacy of exclusionary anti-Black racist laws, customs, and practices (such as school segregation) and address today's public schools' equity concerns without the integration of African Nova Scotian social and cultural capital. Therefore, the implementation of culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy amounts to a form of civic repair.

African Nova Scotians' collective memory and the cultural trauma process

As it is for African Americans, the enslavement of their ancestors is a pivotal traumatic event in the collective memory of African Nova Scotians (Eyerman 2004; 2019; Pachai and Bishop 2006). The enslavement of African ancestors and its consequences result in a sentiment of cultural loss and grief with multiple unfulfillments, such as the inability to speak and impart Indigenous African languages. For instance, Rain, an elder involved in the

Table 1. Participants' characteristics.

Characteristics	Participants
Origin	African Nova Scotians N = 39 Black immigrants N = 20 Other N = 1
Age group	12 < 18 N= 12 18> N= 48
Gender	Women N = 34 Men N = 26
First official language spoken	English N = 48 French N = 12

community, explained, "We don't speak any other native language that our people spoke, because when they were brought over here, their language was stripped from them, so my parents didn't teach me any native language because they didn't know any. It was lost." In addition, African Nova Scotian participants in this study adhere to a consensus view that African Nova Scotians' historical legacy influences the social dynamics between the family, the school, and the community today. For instance, during a focus group, participants referred to how this history impacts the collective "psyche" of African Nova Scotians, as they are conscious that, unlike immigrants, their ancestors were not encouraged to further their education or development. Ore, a parent, narrates that "We weren't brought here to be educated, and we didn't migrate here, we were brought here period. And we were brought here to make this country rich, and that has permeated in the psyche."

In addition to the enslavement of their ancestors, geographical segregation has left its mark and continues to impact contemporary access to services and resources. Brigid, a parent and grandparent who works with youth, shared that "Historically, most of the Black communities are situated outside of predominantly White communities … The Black communities are far removed from most of the service centres." Spatial segregation was compounded with limited employment opportunities, and African Nova Scotians had to rely on kinship support to circumvent the denial of access to health and social services (Bernard and Bonner 2013). During a focus group, Josephine, a parent and grandparent with years of experience working in human services, referred to this ethic of care and interdependence as crucial for survival, particularly in rural areas: "Especially those communities that were outside of the city where grandparents are raising grand-children, where families were together, where grandparents eventually went to live with their children."

The memory of *de facto* (1811–1865) and *de jure* (1865–1954) school segregation (Saney 1998) is conspicuous among participants' recollections. The last segregated school closed in 1983 in Guysborough County in Nova Scotia (Henry 2019), and some of the parents and elders in this study shared their memories of schooling before integration. Brigid remembered how under-resourced segregated schools were. "We had teachers that weren't licensed teachers when we were in the segregated school. It was a one-room small school and it was in our community at the time. But sometimes, we didn't have adequate reading materials or books. It was a one-room with a stovepipe." Despite the imperative of ending unequal and separate schools to provide education with better resources and amenities to Black students, the "hidden injuries" associated with school desegregation for African Americans (Brown 2016) can also be found among some participants' narratives. Rain noted that, following integration, Black children were "bused out" of the community to go to integrated schools while White children were not "bused in" to Black schools. Agape attended one of the last segregated schools, and shared with some nostalgia that, while her school was underfunded, it was an integral part of the community and provided her with a sense of belonging that was lost once she attended an integrated school.

> My experience has been one where I went to a geographically segregated school in the com-munity of […] . I kind of felt I belonged. I felt a sense of community in my school, that school, well, it was in a community and I felt like we were a close-knit family. There was lots of inter-action between school and community. And then when I went to the elementary school (*desegregated*) in […] , when we were integrated into it because the school closed down, I felt a bit of isolation. (Agape)

Like Agape, Cedar, an elder with years of experience working with youth and families in the community, elaborated on how despite the lack of resources, Black children were loved, cared for, and could develop pride in their cultural heritage when they attended segregated schools. In his narrative, he characterized these schools as "powerful" because of a specific form of cultural capital: their ability to nurture self-love in a society in which everyday racism can shatter Black youth self-esteem and inhibit the development of a positive racial identity.

> You have to understand that, historically, we in Nova Scotia, we come from segregated communities and segregated communities had a really powerful education system. So, to take us out of that was never a positive experience, that's where the love, the appreciation of our own, who we were in our own culture with our own people played a role. So, when we integrated into the education system, well who provided that opportunity? Who actually educated … people of European ancestry the transition of Black people coming into the system? (Cedar)

Agape and Cedar do not condone nor desire a return to coerced segregated schools; rather, they reminisce about how a school embedded within a supportive community provided the social capital to feel loved and the cultural capital to develop a positive racial identity. The well-resourced integrated schools did not incorporate Black communities' social and cultural capital, therefore, did not produce socially and culturally integrated schools. As implied by Cedar, schools were integrated but with limited or no interaction with Black historical communities, and they did not provide a culturally relevant learning environment to promote self-love and pride (Black Learners Advisory Council 1994). These narratives reveal that cultural trauma as a collective process involves making sense of the impact of slavery, various forms of exclusion, and school segregation and integration on African Nova Scotians' identity formation. While the public-school system is no longer segregated, there is a longing to see holistic, culturally relevant, and sustaining pedagogy implemented from early childhood to high school (K-12) in order to integrate Black histories, knowledges, and cultures. This aspiration reflects the three components of culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy, is connected to the community's social process of cultural trauma of meaning-making of their collective memory, and constitutes a form of civic repair.

Caring and supportive teachers who promote academic excellence

In contrast with Agape and Cedar's experiences of having felt cared for and loved by the teachers in community-embedded segregated schools, several participants perceive that in contemporary integrated schools, Black learners are often afforded less care and attention in the classroom. Teachers who care for and support all students are able to implement the fundamental principles of culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy, in particular its first component: high expectations and the determination to foster academic success (Ladson-Billings 1995, 2014). Winter, an active community member who remembered his school years, stated, "But they don't care … So, what I'm saying, is that they have no love". Dionysia, a high school student, shared that this perceived lack of interest also translated into opportunities in the classroom that differed along racial lines: "I feel like they give the White kids more opportunities, and they'll be like, show more affection toward them, if that makes sense." Yet, supportive connections can bolster academic engagement.

Several participants suggested that hiring more Black teachers and school professionals should be a priority, echoing previous reports' recommendations (Black Learners Advisory Committee1994; Lee and Marshall 2009). For instance, Laura, who attended a high school where there was no Black teacher at the time of the study, said, "They need to hire some more Black people in our school". Automne, a parent and a human services professional, recounted how at an elementary school, a Black male teacher had built relationships with students and had become a role model not only for Black boys, but for all students in his classroom. He had a tremendous transformative impact and played a "father figure" role for many students because they felt loved and cared for:

> Because they felt loved … He could connect with them; he could talk with them about their behaviour. "No, that's not how you carry yourself, here's what you should be doing." So, some of those young boys didn't have a father figure in their lives, so he became that in just his manner of teaching, like, and it wasn't just the young Black ones. (Automne)

Having a school with diverse role models can reinforce a commitment to multiculturalism and multilingualism, with professionals from various backgrounds who can tap into students' diverse linguistic and cultural strengths. Nevertheless, in order to embrace a culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogical framework, all teachers are expected to care for and provide attention to all students, including learners from historically excluded and under-served communities.

Several participants value and prioritize academic success and consider that schools should innovate or provide more effective supports to address academic needs. This is reflected in the range of promising pedagogical approaches that were proposed by participants, and the explicit observation that more supports are needed in the school for students who struggle academically. During a focus group, Talida, a parent, shared that a private tutoring program that utilizes phonics, a literacy teaching method with sounds, had strengthened the literacy skills of her own child. Talida described the program: "Well they just do, like that same old phonetics that they used to teach way back in the day." However, she underscored that the program's cost could be prohibitive for many families. She further suggested that public schools should adopt this previously used alternative pedagogy to promote strong reading and writing skills. Another participant in the same focus group, Angel, also disclosed that he had benefited from a similar literacy phonics program. Members of the community, like Flora, a retired teacher, mentioned that schools should also incorporate pedagogical methods that centre collaboration to promote "learning from one another and working cooperatively". Dionysia, a high school student, suggested that academic support plays a role in the disengagement of some of her peers and their choice to drop out. Some even choose to attend an adult learning program in which more academic support seems readily available.

> Yeah, she says it's so much better than what public high school had ever been … Teachers are hands on, actually explain things to you really well, and they make sure you understand it. That's just something that never happened in my high school. They kind of just brush you off to the side: "figure it out yourself, look up the answers". (Dionysia)

For many participants, upholding high academic expectations for all learners, including Black students, is not a self-evident disposition among teachers in the school system. They believe that teachers should reflect upon their assumptions and motivations for not

challenging Black students academically. Moreover, to provide a well-rounded education to Black learners, Edith, a parent, suggested that school administrators should promote their intellectual development along with their engagement in all non-academic and extra-curricular school activities. She explains that in some instances, Black students' parents may have never been exposed to certain learning opportunities and may not be aware of their existence or significance. Edith draws from her community's collective memory as she mentions that historically, Black parents may not have had access to these extracurricular activities that sustain child and youth development.

> It's giving our students more options and opportunities. It's giving them pathways that may not have been historically available for their parents. They're less likely to be accessed by them … We need to look at every little aspect. Are our Black students on the student government, why not? Are they going on the field trips, why not? Are they on sports teams, why or why not? Yes, it's not just about grading. It's about are they active in participating within the school system, in all the different activities they say they have, the We to Me, the ski trips, like, are they participating and if they're not, why? If they are, why? (Edith)

These narratives illustrate how African Nova Scotians value a school environment that prioritizes developmental opportunities and academic success. Furthermore, several participants believe that fostering academic excellence should be achieved in conjunction with developing fluency in one's cultural heritage.

Committed teachers who value and foster fluency in students' cultural heritage

The second component of culturally relevant pedagogy is the commitment to encouraging students to mobilize the strengths of their own culture to learn the dominant culture (Henry 2017; Ladson-Billings 1995). During a focus group, it became apparent that the aspiration for a comprehensive integration of Black history and culture in the public school system is connected to the cultural trauma process.

> Sofia: I want to know my history here in Nova Scotia. I want to know my Canadian history. I helped to build this country; you know. So, I want to be recognized as making a contribution in this country and on this continent, that understanding is not always clear.

> Birch: When the [a community group] describes the problem that African Nova Scotians are facing, they trace it back to the disruption of being uprooted from the motherland.

> Josephine: Yes, that's right.

> Birch: And that uprooting created a vacuum and a loss of identity which in turn, when you lose your identity, you inevitably are going to face, a sense of isolation, and not belonging. And now there is an attempt to recreate and the recreation efforts wants to go all the way back to the continent of Africa. To start there and so in this case for example the motto is: "Know thy Roots, Know thy Africa."

Historically Black communities' history and culture were not incorporated within integrated schools, and today there is a clear yearning to learn more about Black Canadians' history. Phoenix lamented that when he was in high school, Black peoples' history was reduced to slavery and the Civil Rights movement, with no reference to what preceded and followed the transatlantic slave trade: "All we learned about was how Black people started with slavery, and we ended with Martin Luther King." Irene participated in a college

programme in which African Nova Scotian history and culture were included throughout the curriculum, and she enjoyed her learning experience and the ability to recognize herself in the course content: "learning about African Nova Scotian history and, like, certain individuals and it was like, 'Oh,' I recognized some of those people and I see myself in them." Gabby, a high school student, mentioned how engaging such course content could be: "If my teacher was, like, 'Today, we're going to learn about African Nova Scotians,' I would be happy because like, you never hear that."

For Imelda, a mother and human services professional, academic success and fluency in one's cultural heritage work hand-in-hand. She suggested that an early intervention that introduces Black learners to STEAM (sciences, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics) content could provide a solid foundation for long-term success. Imelda posited that "if you actually had a STEAM Program for children that is pre-primary through the early elementary years. Because I believe research says most of our boys and girls at Grade 3 kind of check out of mathematics and science." She also highlighted the success of an exceptional Afrocentric mathematics program at a particular school:

> The thing I think is working is what [name of individual] is doing out at [name of school], doing an Afrocentric math program specifically for Black learners. I think the preliminary data is indicating that the young Black women and men that are actually participating in that mathematics program are excelling, because it makes sense to them culturally [...]. (Imelda)

Imelda's insights illustrate how culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy and academic competencies in mathematics or sciences are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, it is possible to combine academic excellence with fluency in one's cultural heritage, and not only in the humanities and social sciences. Other participants highlighted that they want the school curriculum to be less Eurocentric, not only to integrate Black histories and cultures, but also to become more reflective of knowledges from other parts of the world. Tarsilla, a parent, suggested, "I think we learn even things like our math classes and our English literature classes and our science classes, are all taught in a very Eurocentric way. So, I think being able to bring knowledge and learning from across the world in a way that teaches the basic fundamentals that students need from primary to Grade 12." This aligns with culturally sustaining pedagogy's assumption that a multicultural curriculum in a globalized world and democratic plural society is preferable in order to prepare future citizens (Paris 2012; Paris and Alim 2014).

Teachers who nurture critical consciousness among students

The third component of culturally relevant pedagogy involves the development of students' critical sociocultural consciousness, which is valued by several participants. Cognizant of African Nova Scotians' history of social-political mobilization to uphold their human rights (Black Learners Advisory Committee 1994; Pachai and Bishop 2006; Williams 2013), many participants expressed a strong commitment to social justice and advocacy. Black youth in a focus group displayed an awareness of this historical legacy of advocacy, along with a desire for in-school learning about past and present struggles, in the hope that they can build on this to enact social change in the future.

Wisdom: That's it. It would be more fun to learn about…

Sage: Learn the struggles that Black people had to deal with.

River: Yeah.

Timber: Back then before. Some of the struggles that we deal with, you don't know nothing about.

Sage: Some of the struggles that we deal with now, so we are young, so we can change that in the future.

Unison: Yeah. (applause).

Thus, the advocacy of Black elders and ancestors is interpreted as a positive source of knowledge and inspiration to inform today's Black youth agency for social change. Some parents, like Agape, explicitly teach their children the value of advocacy across contexts: "And I try to tell them that you have to be an advocate, and sometimes you have to be an advocate for someone else. And that's something that I teach my kids. You have to be the voice for the voiceless. And that's something I consider a really good skill set to have in this world." Others, like Claudia, a young adult and human services professional, reflected that as we strive collectively to challenge anti-Black racism, it is important to impart the complexity of different forms of "othering" that Black people experience based on disability, gender identity, or socio-economic status, for example:

> Well first of all, we do need to accept that otherness is okay. We need to embrace that disabilities are okay. It's a valid part of our community. And then we can begin to talk about people around disability and who have lived experience, a person who is trans or a person who needs communication access support, a person who needs funding. (Claudia)

The emphasis of Claudia on the importance of acknowledging the intersectionality of different forms of oppression and the heterogeneity of Black populations reflects the development of an expansive critical consciousness. Her insights align with culturally sustaining pedagogy, which underscores the relevance of interrogating inequality and actions for change in society, but also within minoritized communities to further advance equity (Paris 2012; Paris and Alim 2014).

Discussion

There is a broadly shared view among this study's participants that school authorities cannot support Black learners' holistically unless they integrate their social and cultural capital and embrace a culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy. Several Black Canadian scholars have highlighted the value of culturally relevant programs (Henry 2017) or alternatively of Africentric educational initiatives (Dei 1996; Howard and James 2019). Culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy is a valuable democratic goal in and of itself to support students from various backgrounds (Morrison, Robbins, and Rose 2008; Paris 2012). In addition to its potential in diverse school settings, this article demonstrates that through the cultural trauma process of meaning-making, culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy is also understood as a form of civic repair. African Nova Scotians are striving to replace discontinuity with their ancestral, historical and cultural heritage with a reconnection to their own cultural capital (Bernard 2012). They aspire to see the realization of the promises of school integration in a democratic society, and to ultimately achieve civic repair.

African Nova Scotians share a distinctive collective memory and culture spanning 400 years of life in Nova Scotia. They also constitute the majority Black population in one province, and provide a unique perspective from which to study how Canada's history of anti-Black racism has affected Black learners across generations. This study's analysis demonstrates that African Nova Scotians connect today's equity concerns in education to past traumatic experiences of enslavement, segregation and exploitation while at the same time drawing inspiration and hope from their history of advocacy. Although Black Canadians in other provinces have reported similar challenges regarding education (James et al. 2010; United Nations Human Rights Council 2017), they are not necessarily the product of the same social-historical trajectory, collective memory or cultural trauma processes. In fact, most African Canadian communities in the rest of the country have a relatively more recent history of migration and are ethnically, nationally, linguistically, and culturally diverse. Hence, because race cannot be conflated with culture, any effort to implement culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy in other jurisdictions would require local community members' input, as well as an understanding of Black Canadian communities' heterogeneity.

This qualitative inquiry was conducted with an intergenerational sample that did not primarily rely on youth voices, an encouraged educational research practice to centre youth's insights. Yet this broad intergenerational community consultation yielded rich insights into collective memory, which would have not been possible otherwise. Finally, this study reflects the interpretations and hopes of the participants at one point in time. Since cultural trauma processes are constantly in motion, these aspirations are not fixed, but fluid, and may very well evolve and change over time.

Conclusion

Notably, several scholars study cultural trauma processes because it is impossible to deny that the history of slavery and the denial of human and civil rights continue to impact Black populations' collective memories, collective identity formation, collective representation and collective interpretive processes (Brown 2016; Onwuachi-Willig 2016). The social process of cultural trauma is mobilized to decipher these emotionally charged collective meaning-making processes, which helps to understand how Black diasporas recollect the past, connect it to the present, and project themselves into the future. This study illustrates how the social process of cultural trauma that follows past traumatic events - such as school segregation - underlies African Nova Scotians' aspirations for a future where educational institutions apply culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy in the classroom. The implementation of culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy requires the integration of African Nova Scotians' social and cultural capital, which serves as a form of civic repair. Hence, the social process of cultural trauma deepens our examination of historically excluded populations' advocacy, priority-setting, and political action for civic repair in education. Future research projects could explore how collective groups' cultural trauma processes and aspirations for repair vary in education and across various public institutions.

This study illustrates the value and relevance of historically excluded and underserved communities' observations, insights, and narratives for envisioning holistic and sustainable solutions to immediate social issues. Implementing culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy across Nova Scotia may foster equitable learning environments for Black learners by

providing fluency in their cultural heritage, fulfilling the long-awaited democratic promise of integrated public schools, and representing a form of civic repair where we redress the legacy of anti-Black racism in education.

Notes

1. African Nova Scotians designate specifically individuals who trace their origins to one or several of the 48 historical multigenerational Black communities in the province of Nova Scotia. African Canadians or Black Canadians refer to individuals who reside in Canada and self-identify as Black and includes African Nova Scotians.
2. In Canada, there is no national public school system. Each jurisdiction (province or territory) plans and implements their own public school system.
3. The total sample size excludes a youth group that was reluctant to participate in a focus group and an adult who withdrew from the study.

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