"We could have been two up, but we're one down": A call to recruit, train, and hire more Black teachers

KelleyAnne Malinen and Tina Roberts-Jeffers

2019 Draft

Abstract: Drawing on qualitative interviews with Nova Scotian teachers of African and of European descent, this article reports that teachers belonging to both categories emphasized the importance of Black teacher representation. Received literature is found to compliment teacher narratives, suggesting that Black teacher representation makes a difference to students of African descent in terms of several themes: recognition, academics, content, and trust. We draw on Bell's principal of interest convergence to consider why culturally responsive pedagogy and not equity hiring is being emphasized in our region. We draw on Ladson-Billings to argue that equity hiring would help address educational debt to Black communities.

Literature demonstrates that teachers of African descent benefit learners of African descent, yet teachers of African Descent are underrepresented in Canada and Nova Scotia. Drawing upon interviews with teachers of African and of European Descent in Nova Scotia and upon received literature, we make a case for recruiting, training, and hiring more teachers of African Descent in this province.

This case is made against the backdrop of provincial and regional approaches to educational equity that have instead emphasized teacher training. Specifically, to address the needs of all learners, and particularly to benefit students of African descent as well as other historically marginalized students, our provincial Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is currently providing trainings in Culturally Responsive Pedagogy. Similar strategies have been implemented by Nova Scotia school boards (which have recently been renamed centres for education), including The Halifax Regional Schoolboard (HRSB). While the phrase "Culturally Responsive Pedagogy" reflects the language of Geneva Gay, HRSB has followed Gloria Ladson-Billings in promoting "Culturally Relevant Teaching." Differences beyond the scope of this article exist between the approaches, however both are intended to prepare teachers for educating students with different social, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds. These approaches henceforth will be referred to interchangeably as Culturally Responsive Pedagogy.

We agree that teachers of all heritages and backgrounds must be encouraged and supported in becoming alert, open, and responsive to students. Simultaneously, however, teacher employment equity strategies should receive renewed focus to create teaching compliments

that represent our students of African Descent. Putting political will and financial resources behind a concerted effort at equitable hiring would be one way to begin repaying the education debt to Black communities (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Black Learners Advisory Committee, 1994) that exists in our province. In what follows, we will draw on Bell's (1980) convergence principal to suggest reasons why Culturally Response Pedagogy trainings may be favoured by government over equity hiring practices, and upon Ladson-Billings to argue that equity hiring would help to address a critical educational debt existing in Nova Scotia.

Methodology

This report represents one thematic area that has emerged from the authors' Racial Identity, Culture and Pedagogy Project (RICP) – a qualitative study about Nova Scotian teachers' perspectives on the situations of students of African descent. We conducted semi-structured interviews to answer the questions "How do Nova Scotian teachers view Black students, families, and communities?" and "How do teachers think about the 'racial achievement gap'?" We recruited eight self-identified teachers of African Descent and nine self-identified teachers of European descent by placing posters on social media, contacting people who work in the school system, and using a snowball strategy. Teachers of other racial identities were invited but did not volunteer for the study.

Seven Black teachers were interviewed by Author 1, who is Nova Scotian and of African Descent. One Black teacher and nine white teachers were interviewed by Author 2, who is Nova Scotian and of European descent. Where possible, we interviewed teachers who shared our racial identities to maximize trust and fluidity of conversation. Interviews were semi-structured and lasted forty-five minutes to two hours.

We employed a grounded theory method of analysis (Charmaz, 2014). MAX-QDA was used to code the data. The authors met regularly to reflect on emerging results. Five research assistants supported recruitment, transcription, and/or analysis tasks.[1]

We use pseudonymous initials in referring to participants to protect participant gender, because gender could be identifying in combination with African Nova Scotian identity. Initials are followed by –AD when participants are of African descent and by -ED when participants are of European descent.

We have identified differences and similarities in how interviewees of African versus of European descent perceived the situations of Black students. A second article will report our finding that, whereas Black teacher interviewees valued Black family support of students negotiating a white-dominated school system, many white teacher interviewees blamed Black families for what are in fact systemic barriers experienced by students.

---

[1] Our thanks to Research assistant 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5

This article reflects the finding that six of seven teachers of African descent and all eight teachers of European descent argued that Black students would benefit from more Black teachers. This is striking given that our interview guide did not directly ask about Black teacher representation. The topic was often raised in response to the question "If you could change anything to improve the experiences of students of African Descent, what would you change?"

Theory and Context

As Villegas and Irvine (2010) put it, "students of color accrue academic benefits when taught by a same-race teacher or when exposed to a teaching force (at the school or district level) that is racially/ethnically representative of the student population" (p. 180). Irvine (1989) has connected Black student alienation to declining numbers of Black teachers who may advocate for Black students, act as role models, support Black students as they negotiate the school's Eurocentric culture, and whose pedagogy may resonate with Black home cultures. Researchers in Florida and North Carolina have found that when Black students are taught by Black teachers, their scores in reading and math improve and their risk of dropping out is reduced (Partelow et al., 2017). Studies have correlated Black teacher representation with reduced rates of Black student suspension and expulsion (Linsay & Hart, 2017), greater likelihood of Black student placement in programs for high achievers, and higher graduation rates (Meier, Steward, & England, 1989). Having Black teachers has been found *not* associated with increased suspension or expulsion for white students (Lindsay & Hart, 2017). Black teachers more than white teachers view academic abilities and the behaviour of Black students positively (Partelow et al., 2017). Thus, it stands to reason that Black students and youth who have dropped out of school express concern about lack of Black teachers as well as "differential treatment" (Dei 1996, p. 172; See also Toronto District School Board, 2010).

While teachers across racial categories may introduce material, conversation, and teaching styles that resonate with students of various racial, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds, Gay (2010) reports teachers of colour more than other teachers understand the importance of these elements. This is among ways that educators of African descent "bridge the gap" between Black communities and predominantly white schools (Escayg, 2010, p. 5., see also Henry 1992, Villegas & Irvine, 2010). Acosta (2018) argues that Black educators care for students with "urgency" and with "love born out of a deep understanding of social inequality and the power of education to dismantle racism and injustice" (p. 986). On the opposite side of the spectrum, researchers have identified what Gay (2004) refers to as "benign neglect" by white-stream educators who expect and demand less of racialized students.

As Egbo (2016) states, "it is telling that, despite increasing diversity among student populations, the teaching force in Canada remains predominantly homogeneous – white, middle-class, and monolingual" (99). Like other students of African Descent, those in education programs experience cultural isolation, deficit beliefs, and stereotypes (Brown, 2013; Gay, 2004). Upon graduation, research shows that teachers of colour in Canada continue to face labour market discrimination (Ryan, Pollock, & Antonelli 2009; Ontario College of Teachers, 2017).

A touchstone for researchers and activists working on barriers facing Black learners in Nova Scotia, The BLAC Report (Black Learner's Advisory Committee, 1994) affirmed among its findings "an urgent need to increase the number of Black administrators, teachers, social workers and guidance counsellors at all levels of administration and support" (p. 18). It estimated Black teachers and administrators were underrepresented by 50% in relation to Nova Scotia's Black student population. In the words of one teacher of African Descent,

> The demographics of teaching hasn't really changed. You've got overwhelmingly white people teaching, period. (JT-AD)

The Minister of Education and Culture responded to the BLAC Report by recognizing "systemic racism" and "the historic failure of the educational system to address the needs of the Black community" (Nova Scotia Department of Education and Culture, 1995). Fourteen years later, *Reality Check* followed up on the BLAC, reporting, "the concept of institutional racism appears to have slipped out of focus" (Lee & Marshal, 2009, p. 10).

Absence of positions reserved for Black teachers, even in predominantly Black schools, is an example of this neglect. As one interviewee explained:

> Some school boards have recruitment processes, but those processes don't necessarily put more teachers of African descent in the classroom. Some school boards provide you the opportunity to get an interview, but there's nothing that says you have to hire that person. They'll say, we interviewed that person and we check that box off. SE-AD

Crucially, contrary to the common assumption that equity hiring "interfere[s] with the merit principal" (Carr and Klassen, 1997, p. 76), Partelow and colleagues (2017) have shown that, appropriately managed, increasing academic rigor of teacher education selection processes helps to increase diversity.

Nova Scotia's Educational Debt

Our white dominant school system has long been accumulating an "educational debt" to Black students. Ladson-Billings (2006) unpacks this term into four interrelated elements, all present in Nova Scotia: 1) a historical debt, 2) an economic debt, 3) a sociopolitical debt, and 4) a moral debt.

1) The historical educational debt is a "legacy of educational inequities" (Ladson-Billings, 2006), such as that left by segregated schools. The last segregated school in Canada closed its doors in Lincolnville Nova Scotia in 1983. The BLAC Report enumerates instances of Black community activism around education as early as 1820. Black parents filed "countless petitions […] to have their children attend common schools, and when access was denied, for funds to build their own schools" (Hamilton, 2012). Hamilton's (2007) film *The Little Black Schoolhouse* relates student transitions from Black schools into previously white-only schools. The latter environment was characterized by direct experiences with racism. Nova Scotia's historical debt to Black students is accumulating with disproportionate suspensions (Woodbury, 2016) and an

escalation in racist bullying (Colley, 2018). In 2016, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development revealed that students of African Descent were more likely to have an individual program plan than their white peers. As well, upon review, many of the individual program plans for students of African Descent were found not to be the most appropriate programming for the students in question (Nova Scotia, 2016).

2) The economics of our education debt (Ladson-Billings, 2006, p. 6) are also evident. Unsurprisingly, segregated Black schools were severely underfunded (Winks, 1969). Eventual desegregation was usually accomplished by closing Black schools and bussing students to locations that were convenient for white families (Maynard 2017). This legacy continues. Until its closure in 2011, Saint Patrick's Alexandra taught Black community "history and values" and served "the mostly African-Canadian population of Uniacke Square" (Beaumont, 2009, para 3). A developer purchased the property in 2016 after the municipality won a court battle with community groups on appeal.

Barriers in education have long term economic effects. In 1969, Black students graduated at a rate of 3% and entered university at a rate of 1% (Black Learners Advisory Council, 1994). It will take many years to erase the difference these figures make to the economic wellbeing of families and communities. In 2011, average incomes for African Nova Scotians were $29,837 for males and $24,929 for females. In comparison, average overall incomes for Nova Scotians by gender were $42,525 and $29,460 respectively" (African Nova Scotian Affairs, 2014, p. 3).

Furthermore, income makes a difference to education. Volunteer fundraising for predominantly white Sir Charles Tupper Elementary averaged $70,000, or $360 per student, over the 2016 and 2017 fiscal years. Over the same period, volunteer fundraising for Joseph Howe Elementary, which draws from the North End's racialized community, raised an average of just over $15, 000 per year, or $82 per student. Statistics Canada data shows "the average household income in the school catchment area for Sir Charles Tupper is more than $130,000 a year, compared to about $55,000 in the Joseph Howe area" (Corfu, 2018, n.p.).

3) Sociopolitical debt "reflects the degree to which communities of color are excluded from civic processes" (Ladson-Billings, 2006, p.7), thus from decision making about education. One recent manifestation was the 2012 elimination of the special electoral riding of Preston along with special Acadian ridings established in 1992 to increase the chance of electing community members. This decision, which diluted the voting power of Black Nova Scotians, was declared unconstitutional by the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal in 2017. The Commission on Effective Electoral Representation of Acadian and African Nova Scotians (2018) has recommended reinstatement of these ridings.

More recently, in March of 2018 the provincial government eliminated its seven elected English Language school boards, which included seats for African Nova Scotian and Mi'kmaq representatives. According to former HRSB African Nova Scotian representative Archy Beals, "we are going to continue to be lost in a system that has not been, and continues not to be,

friendly to us as a community, as a marginalized, disenfranchised and disengaged community. It's going to be even worse" (Smith, 2018).

4) Moral debt "reflects the disparity between what we know is right and what we actually do" (Ladson-Billings, 2006, p. 8). It is the gap between the fact of white economic enrichment through enslavement of racialized people in pre-confederation Canada (Cooper, 2006; Maynard, 2017) and the failure to make reparations. It is default on promises of land to Black Loyalists who settled in Nova Scotia (Walker, 1992). It is issuing an apology, asking forgiveness (Halifax Regional Municipality, 2016), then going to court to fight a class action lawsuit filed by displaced Africville residents and descendants (Devet, 2018). It is the gap between recognition of the "systemic racism" identified in the BLAC Report (Nova Scotia Department of Education and Culture, 1995) and the neglect of institutional remedies noted by *Reality Check* (Innis & Marshal, 2009, p. 10). The notion of an education debt compels us to think in terms of what we know is right, and to think in terms of repayment, which could be realized in small part through effective employment equity procedures in teacher recruitment, training, and hiring.

CR Teaching vs equity hiring legislation

Some articulations of CR pedagogy in our region challenge the racial status quo. For example, a 2017 HRSB report responding to the achievement gap effecting African Nova Scotian learners emphasized CR Pedagogy as an approach mindful of social, economic, and political contexts, and named racism and deficit beliefs as "systemic causes for underachievement for students of African ancestry" (p. 1). At other times, however, challenges to the racial status quo are downplayed or repudiated. For example, a video entitled *Introducing HRSB's Culturally Relevant Pedagogy Specialists* neglects race-related issues until the closing words of one specialist:

> There might be a misconception that we are coming into schools and working with students and teachers who are part of one particular group, or students who have self-identified as being African Nova Scotian or Mi'kmaq or aboriginal. That is not the case. Although we are here for them, we are here for all students, and helping them learn the way they learn best. (HRSB Communications, 2016)

This closing reassures white families that racialized children will not, through CR methods, receive any educational goods that white children will not also receive. Bell's (1980) interest convergence principal may explain this discourse. Namely, "The interest of blacks in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when it converges with the interests of whites [and not where] the remedy sought threatens the superior societal status of middle and upper class whites" (p. 523). While some white people support racial equality because it is right, argues Bell, white recalcitrance suffices to preserve white supremacy. Or, in the language of Apple (2000), the school system manifests how "dominant groups try to create situations where the compromises that are formed favor them" (pp. 56-7).

Interest convergence also helps us to understand the implementation of CR trainings to the exclusion of equity hiring. Ladson-Billings (2009) has written:

> Extremely important to me as a researcher is the impact of race—explicitly and implicitly manifested—on learning. Does the race of the teacher and other classmates matter for learners? Does the race of the students, their parents, and administrator matter to teachers? And if so, HOW does it matter? […] While culturally relevant pedagogy has been the site of most of my empirical work, it is my theoretical foray into critical race theory that has drawn the most skepticism and ire from colleagues and others (p. 118).

It makes sense that Ladson-Billings pursues both areas. Notably, six of eight successful teachers of African American Children featured in Ladson-Billings' (2009) foundational CR text *The Dreamkeepers* identified as Black, and one as biracial. Why would inquiry regarding the impact of classroom racial composition insight anger, but not CR Pedagogy? CR trainings enhance the qualifications of the disproportionately white teaching force, legitimizing it to address the urgent issues persistently raised by Black communities. On the other hand, pursing the role of classroom racial composition –including teacher racial identity –inevitably problematizes white dominance in schools, thus supporting calls for increased Black teacher representation.

Results

Representation

Fundamental to equity must be an "understanding of the connection between physical bodies (representation) and how people know and come to know things (i.e., the connection between self/group identity and knowledge production)" (Dei, 1996, p. 177). In keeping with this view, participant narratives emphasized importance of Black representation in the school system. In some cases, participants suggested that lack of representation results from decisions about hiring, policy, programming, and allocation of funding. The title, "We could have been two up but we're one down," originates with commentary of one interviewee of African Descent concerned about applications of CR Teaching that maintain whiteness among staff and within curriculum:

> They're talking about change, they're saying they're doing something about it, but they're not. [The schoolboard] hired two culturally relevant pedagogy specialist positions, with the focus on closing the achievement gap for African Nova Scotian and Aboriginal students. They hired a white woman to do the job, who has no connection to either of those communities, which I kind of find is a slap in the face. There's so many people that could have really done a bang up job; why did they choose to hire someone who knows nothing about either of those communities, or is not connected? Plus, we don't have a lot of people working at the board level that are of visible minorities. So that was a really great opportunity to hire someone. That insincerity is really throwing me off. There was one Black woman that worked for the board as a supervisor when they first started talking about this culturally relevant pedagogy specialist. Here she was, she had obviously climbed that employment ladder; she's supervising principals. She's a

> principal herself, now she's supervising principals. And this job comes up as a term position for this cultural pedagogy specialist. I think it was maybe for a school year, and so they hired her. Alright - and this is me not really knowing the ins and outs of HR -- wouldn't this make more sense: leave her where she is, in a position of authority, supervising principals, and here's your opportunity to hire another Black person? So they hired her and then put a white person in the position she had before. So now we could have been two up, but we're one down. And then they took her out of that job which ended, and they hired two other people. The professional development they're doing is more about relevancy and cultures of boys, or skateboarders, or kids who eat fast food - nothing to do with race or ethnicity. YF-AD

Remembering a time when Black-centered programming existed, one interviewee of European descent identified the tenacity of whiteness among teachers and the positive power of Black student community:

> I always found it beneficial back then, they had these events where they would bring *all* the Black youth together. It was really nice for me as a white teacher to be in a situation where I was the minority. I did appreciate the risk of being a minority in that situation, and seeing, this is the way a certain cultural group is if you give them the chance. We don't have those groups anymore. It kind of made you acknowledge, "Whoa! These kids feel marginalized all the time, and this is one of their few days where they get to be like, this is us!" I think a bunch of white teachers getting together and learning about multiculturalism in a classroom – you're not going to get over your own culture. ZN-ED

Challenging stereotypes

Disproportionately white teaching and administration supports racial stereotypes. When adults of color do not appear as education professionals while appearing disproportionately in non-professional roles, the message communicated is that "white people are better suited than people of color to hold positions of authority in society" (Villegas & Irvine, 2010, p. 177). Thus, many Black teachers in predominantly white schools view part of their work as dismantling anti-Black views held by students and parents (Kelly 2007). In the words of one interviewee of African descent:

> It's important for kids other than Black also to see my Black face up there, and to see my confidence and to see I know what I'm talking about and I can laugh at you and I can joke with you. JT-AD

Another stated:

> Every time they saw me was the very first time they saw me. They had never had the experience of being in the presence of a black person. They got to know me and I got to know them. That's an experience that they had that I guarantee you most of their parents have not had. YF-AD

When asked "If you could change one thing to improve education for Black students, what would it be?" a teacher of European descent answered:

> I would make their teacher Black. And the white kids should too... really like, *I* should have had a Black teacher. Never, never had a Black teacher. They don't have a role model that is showing a different culture, or a different idea, or just that it's becoming normal to have somebody in the room that is not like them that's in charge. GN-ED

Recognition

Recognition can be defined as "that response from the other which makes meaningful the feelings, intentions, and actions of the self. It allows the self to realize its agency and authorship in a tangible way" (Benjamin, 1988, p. 12). Recognition-based politics aim to address forms of misrecognition, including "cultural domination (being required to assimilate), nonrecognition (being rendered invisible), and disrespect (being routinely maligned)" (Bingham, 2006, p. 327, see also Fraser 2003). CR teaching can be implemented in ways that aim to address such injustices. Critics of recognition politics, however, worry recognition politics displace the objective of economic redistribution. Furthermore, recognition politics arguably leave intact the dominance of recognition-granting subjects. Increasing Black teacher representation, however, is one method of improving Black student recognition that is less susceptible to these critiques. Equity hiring advances economic redistribution while positioning Black professionals to recognize students. Consistent with the literature cited in our opening sections, interviewees viewed teachers of African descent overall as more able than their white colleagues to recognize Black student concerns and intellect:

> It's hard not to notice them - to see yourself as a little girl in every little Black girl that comes into your classroom. And I'm trying to take all of their concerns seriously because mine weren't. SE-AD

Knowledge of "home language" was also seen as an element of shared culture that facilitates recognition:

> I know what my kids are saying based on their home language and I know that they know what the book is about. Somebody else might not have the same kind of understanding that, yes, the kids really do get this, because the way that they've shown their comprehension doesn't match what the person who is giving the assessment would say. VM-AD

A third interviewee of African Descent suggests misrecognition leads to disparities in distribution of Individual Program Plans:

> We talk systemically, but it's people that actually do that stuff. It's teachers that put our kids on it. And I say "put on" because there's procedure. There's a procedure, and I *know* how it goes: Someone could just make some observation about someone's behavior, that quickly gets translated into some sort of intellectual deficit, and next thing you know kids are in there forever. JT-AD

A teacher of European descent remembered being troubled by how, in the 90s, white teachers misrecognized Black students:

> There was "us" and then there was "them." And you don't have to say that to a student for them to feel that, because when you feel that way in yourself, and you speak to somebody, they pick up on it without you saying the words. I was very aware of that, because they would say that in the staff room, but in the classroom everything's okay. And they would walk down the hall and they would, you know, look down at people or judge people. QJ-ED

Academics

Holding high expectations for students of African Descent is consistently prescribed by literature on CR approaches. Acosta (2018) suggests African American culture and context produces "insistent" and "urgent" teaching which functions "as a demonstration of care, a declaration of opposition to cultural hegemony, and a strategy for liberation" (p. 1004). Interviewees of African Descent spoke in similar terms:

> Black students' whole survival is dependent on who are you? What are you? What's the relationship we're going to develop? Do you care about me enough to push me and challenge me? Our people care about them. Part of our job is, along with the academic push, continuing to build that positive racial identity, to say "Yeah, that's coming, and that's here, and you're going to face that. I wish I could turn it off but that's just not the reality. But as long as you know you're bright, that you can navigate through the system, and you don't have to sell out either." JT-AD

In the words of another interviewee:

> I have known students who have had the ability to do excellent work, but they want to go into the resource room with their friends so they can socialize, rather than reading the tough text and doing the analysis. This is fairly common so under-challenged. And I think that the problem is that white teachers may feel like they have to give in when these students request easier work, instead of talking to the student and insisting, "You stay in the classroom, you are not a resource student. Just buckle down and try your best. You're better than what you are doing." JN-AD

The above narratives contrast starkly with observations of one interviewee of European descent, who recalled substitute teaching:

> It was a group of mostly Black youth, and they were *not* doing anyth- it was already like, "I'm in for a sub of a sub." That original teacher gave them work like 3 months ago. The kids don't even know what quite is being assigned to them anymore, they couldn't care less about it. It's like, "who am I doing this work for?" For some kids, it's like, "This is the teacher and *they want* my work. And they care." Here, it was, "Is there really a

> curriculum that we're following? This just seems like some random assignment." What are we teaching these kids that school is? ZN-ED

Given the above recollections, it is notable that American data suggests teachers of colour are more likely than white teachers to remain teaching in schools with higher numbers of racialized students (Villegas & Irvine, 2010), providing academic consistency and forming meaningful relationships. Turnover and absence among teachers can limit expertise in classrooms. For example, many Nova Scotian substitute teachers do not receive CR or other professional development.

Content

As noted by Skerrett (2008), the degree to which teaching resonates with students of different backgrounds and cultures is not simply a matter of curriculum, but often more a matter of curriculum-in-use. Furthermore, Skerrett suggests that the way curriculum is used is deeply related to biographical experience. Our interviewees of African descent presented the centering of Black history and culture in the classrooms as flowing from their own identities and experiences. Interviewees of European descent reported striving to create classrooms that include representation of Black students, whether by introducing works of Black authors, or including Black history in lessons, or attending to the images that appear on classroom walls, but logically did not purport to hold the depth and breadth of relationship to Black culture that their Black colleagues expressed.

Black teacher narratives included the following:

> Every month is Black History Month in my room because that's how I see the world. I'm going to point out which explorer is of African descent, or First Nations descent, or I'm going to focus on those. It's a big part of who I am so it's a big part of how I deliver my curriculum. SE-AD

White teacher narratives more often suggested "sporadic … cues or signals" of "culture and ethnicity" (Gay, 2004, 268):

> When I read this in articles ten or fifteen years ago I kind of rolled my eyes, but when you're giving examples of things, just using people and names that come from all sorts of backgrounds, so you know. All sorts of different names from different cultures, including Black American names. NR-ED

Trust

Many interviewees believed that teachers of African descent would more easily establish trust with Black families. Whereas for Black teachers this observation was accompanied by recognition of legitimate reasons for lack of trust, for some white teachers distrust amounted to misunderstanding on the part of Black families. In the words of one interviewee of African Descent:

> For a lot of African Nova Scotian people, it didn't work. Why would you trust a system that in a lot of ways was an abusive system to you? It made you feel belittled. It didn't give you any confidence. You were kind of pushed aside, you were marginalized, so why would you trust that system? It's different when I approach them because I can say "Oh yeah, I'm an African Nova Scotian teacher." So they kinda ease in a little bit, but I still have to build trust. I may not have to build as much and as long as some of the other teachers, but I still do. VM-AD

In contrast, a teacher of European descent stated:

> When your school has 14 classrooms and 12 of them are white female teachers, [Black parents] probably think that there's racial tensions. And I mean there isn't! It's not like there's this huge racial, "Oh we only like the white kids." All those teachers support every single kid no matter who they are, equally. VO-ED

More than Black and white

Given that the BLAC Report included 29 recommendations, many of which were delivered in several parts, it is unsurprising that interviewees saw increased Black teacher representation as a necessary but insufficient condition for producing equitable education. Just as there are problems with emphasizing CR Pedagogy over or even to the exclusion of equity hiring, there would be problems with focusing exclusively on Black teacher representation as a mechanism to address barriers faced by Black learners in Nova Scotia. Whereas CR pedagogy should not be used as cover for overrepresentation of white teachers in our school system, neither should hiring of racialized teachers allow white-centrism to prevail in white teachers' classrooms (Brown 2013). Furthermore, Brown (2013) has cautioned that we should not position racialized teachers as responsible for "closing the opportunity gap" (p. 338). She problematizes the tendency to position teachers of colour as role models and activists for social justice without seeing them as committed and effective teachers of academic disciplines. We believe teachers of African Descent should be hired to teach as many disciplines as possible, and that approaches like CR training must continue, applied in ways that critique racist structures and institutions.

In the words of one teacher of African Descent:

> There's not a one bullet solution to this issue. You know, you have Black school board members, you get a Black principal, you get a Black teacher. Is that solving it all? No, it's not, but it's contributing to helping moving in the right direction. DS-AD

Some teachers of African descent cautioned that connecting with students is about more than shared racial identity:

> There's been some white teachers – even myself growing up, who I've connected with way more. I have colleagues who do a great job engaging and connecting with the kids, white or Black or whatever. VM-AD

As another teacher put it:

> When you're teaching in the classroom, you're the teacher for everybody. It doesn't matter where they're from, and more and more we have international students from all around the world. Somehow you have to find a way to cross the boundaries and relate to students no matter where they come from. It's really important to be able to do that. JN-AD

One interviewee of European descent argued:

> I know a couple Black teachers who, even though they are qualified, did not want to teach African Canadian studies. And I can see all the reasons why Black people can be hesitant to talk about race in public generally, you know? It's exhausting. It may not be what you want to talk about. You might have other interests. You don't want to have to be the person who is seen as responsible for the Black students, which of course is another phenomenon that exists in our schools. I know of one school where there are two guidance counsellors, one is Black. They separate their students by ends of alphabet. However, the Black guidance counsellor, of course, gets called upon to deal with any problems with Black students, no matter who they are.

Conclusion

In this article, we have drawn on the ideas of Nova Scotian teachers of African and of European descent in arguing for increased representation of Black teachers in Nova Scotia schools. Such a strategy is essential to addressing educational debt to students of African descent in our province. The importance of Black teacher representation has been emphasized in American and in Canadian literature, notably including Nova Scotia's own BLAC Report. The presence of Black teachers in the school system has been shown to have positive effects on Black learners. While interviewees in our study did not reduce effective teaching for Black learners to a black and white issue, they saw Black teachers overall as best situated to make important contributions in the areas of representation, recognition, academics, content, and trust.

We have deployed the convergence principal to help understand why CR Teaching may receive more political and economic support than equity training and employment in our province. It may appear inconsistent with this principal that the nine white teachers we interviewed emphasized the importance of Black teacher representation. Some participants may have been among those Bell (1980) has identified as working against white domination because it is the right thing to do. On the other hand, we did not ask about how Black teacher representation should be increased. Some interviewees may have responded to such a question by placing responsibility on Black community members rather than advocating for an equity hiring approach. This line of reasoning would be particularly consistent with the interests of white domination: Blame of Black communities for barriers faced by students of African descent could be maintained, while nothing would have to change. While further research would be required

to deepen our understanding in this area, it seems likely our participants would have held a variety of views on how Black teacher underrepresentation should be addressed.

It is our view that training and hiring more Black teachers is key to providing equitable education to students of African Descent in Nova Scotia, and a concrete way of beginning to address the education debt. In contrast, institutional responses to racial inequities in education that do not make a place for Black professionals strike us as deeply disingenuous. We therefore call on the province to recruit, train, and hire more Black teachers.

References

Apple, M.W. (2000). *Official Knowledge: Democratic Education in a Conservative Age* (2nd Ed.). New York: Routledge.

Acosta, M.M. (2018). "No time for messin' around!" Understanding Black educator urgency: Implications for the preparation of urban educators. *Urban Education*, 53(8), 981-1012.

African Nova Scotian Affairs. (2014). African Nova Scotians Today. Retrieved from: https://ansa.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/inline/documents/ansa-stats-research-2014-11.pdf.

Bell, D.A. (1980). Brown v. Board of Education and the interest-convergence dilemma. *Harvard Law Review*, 93(3), 518-533.

Benjamin, J. (1988). *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and the Problem of Domination.* New York: Pantheon Books.

Bingham, C. (2006). Before recognition, and after: The educational critique. *Educational Theory*, 56(3), 325-344.

Black Learners Advisory Committee. (1994). *BLAC Report on Education: Redressing Inequity – Empowering Black Learners*. Retrieved from: https://www.ednet.ns.ca/acs/files-acs/docs/blacreportoneducationvol1-3.pdf.

Beaumont, H. (2009, July 30). Goodbye, St Pat's-Alexandra: Replacing North-End Halifax's Africentric school with condos. *The Dominion: News from the Grassroots.* Retrieved from: http://www.dominionpaper.ca/articles/2797.

Carr, P.R., & Klassen, T.R. (1997). Different perceptions of race in education: Racial minority and white teachers. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 22(1), 67-81.

Charmaz (2014). *Constructing Grounded Theory (2nd. Ed).* Los Angeles: Sage.

Colley, S.B. (2018, January 10). Racist, discriminatory incidents on the rise in Halifax-area schools. CBC News. Retrieved from: https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/racism-discrimination-report-school-board-students-behaviour-1.4481087

Commission on the Effective Electoral Representation of Acadian and African Nova Scotians. (2018). Representation: Toward more effective representation for Acadian and African Nova Scotians. Province of Nova Scotia. Retrieved from: https://novascotia.ca/representation/Representation-Toward-More-Effective-Representation-For-Acadian-and-African-Nova-Scotians-Report-and-Recommendation.pdf

Cooper, A. (2006). *The Hanging of Angelique.* Toronto: Harper Collins.

Corfu, N. (2018, May 16). What it means when one school can fundraise $70K – and another just $15K. CBC News. Retrieved from: https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/what-it-means-when-one-school-can-fundraise-70k-and-another-just-15k-1.4655120.

Dei, G.J.S. (1996). The role of Afrocentricity in the Inclusive Curriculum in Canadian Schools. *Canadian Journal of Education,* 21(2), 170-186.

Devet, R. (2018, September 5). City of Halifax should not be fighting former Africville residents in court. *The Nova Scotia Advocate.* Retrieved from: https://nsadvocate.org/2018/09/05/city-should-not-be-fighting-former-africville-residents-in-court/

Egbo, B. (2016). Making education count: Critical educational practice and the life chances of African Canadian children. In A. Ibrahim & A.A. Abdi (Eds.), *The Education of African Canadian Children: Critical Perspectives.* Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press.

Fraser, N. (2003). "From redistribution to recognition? Dilemmas of justice in a 'post-socialist' age" in Fraser, N., & Honneth, A. (Eds.), *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange* (pp. 68-93). London: Verso.

Gay, G. (2004). Navigating marginality on route to the professoriate: graduate students of color learning and living in academia. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education,* 17(2), 265-288.

Gay, G. (2014). "Culturally Responsive Teaching Principles, Practices, and Effects" in H. Richard Milner IV and Kofi Lomotey (Eds), *Handbook of Urban Education* (pp. 353-373)*.* New York: Routledge.

Gosine, K. (2002). Essentialism versus complexity: Conceptions of racial identity construction in educational scholarship. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 27(1), 81-100.

Halifax Regional Municipality. (2016). Apology: An Apology for Africville. Retrieved from: https://www.halifax.ca/about-halifax/diversity-inclusion/african-nova-scotian-affairs/africville/apology.

Halifax Regional School Board Communications [Producer]. (2016, September 28). *Introducing HRSB's*
Culturally Relevant Pedagogy Specialists [Video file]. Retrieved from:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oE954T-Z5Ag.

Hamilton, S. (2011). Stories from the little black schoolhouse. In A. Mathur, J. Dewar & M. Degagne
(Eds.), *Cultivating Canada: Reconciliation through the lens of cultural diversity*. Ottawa: Aboriginal
Healing Foundation.

Henry, R. (1992). African Canadian women teachers' activism: Recreating communities of caring and resistance. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 61(3), 392-404.

Irvine, J. J. (1989). Beyond role models: An examination of cultural influences on the pedagogical perspectives of Black teachers. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 66(4), 51-63.

Kelly, H. (2007). "Racial Tokenism in the School Workplace: An Exploratory Study of Black Teachers in overwhelmingly White Schools." *Educational Studies,* 41(3), 230-254.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2009). *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children* (2nd ed.). California: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1998). Just what is critical race theory and what's it doing in a nice field like education? *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education,* 11(1), 7-24.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2009). Through a glass darkly: The persistence of race in education research & scholarship. *Educational Researcher*, 41(4), 115-120.

Lee, E., & Marshall, C. (2009). *Reality Check.* Retrieved from:
https://www.ednet.ns.ca/docs/realitycheckfinalreportforweb.pdf

Lindsay, C.A., & Hart, C.M.D. (2017). Exposure to same-race teachers and student disciplinary outcomes for Black students in North Carolina. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis,* 39(3), 485-510.

Maynard, R. (2017). *Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada from Slavery to the Present*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.

Meier, K.J., Stewart, J., & England, R.E. (1989) *Race, class, and education: the politics of second-generation discrimination.* Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.

Nova Scotia (2016, February). Individual Program Plan (IPP) Review: Themes and Recommendations. Retrieved from:
https://www.ednet.ns.ca/docs/individualprogramplanreview.pdf.

Ontario College of Teachers. (2017). Transition to teaching, 2017. Retrieved from: https://www.oct.ca/-/media/PDF/2017%20Transition%20to%20Teaching/2017%20T2T%20Main%20Report%20EN_Final.pdf.

Partelow, L., Spong, A., Brown, C., & Johnson, S. (2017). *America needs more teachers of color and a more selective teaching profession*. Retrieved from Center for American Progress: https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education-k-12/reports/2017/09/14/437667/america-needs-teachers-color-selective-teaching-profession/.

Ryan, J., Pollock, K., & Antonelli, F. (2009). Teacher diversity in Canada: Leaky pipelines, bottlenecks, and glass ceilings. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 32(3), 591-617.

Skerrett, A. (2008). "going the race way": Biographical influences on multicultural and antiracist English curriculum practices. *Teaching and Teacher Education,* 24, 1813-1826.

Smith, E. (2018, February 25). Schoolboard reps worry diverse voices will be silenced with education changes. CBC News. Retrieved from: https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/mi-kmaq-african-nova-scotian-school-board-education-1.4551087.

Toronto District School Board. (2010, May 17). Achievement Gap Task Force Draft Report. Retrieved from: https://www.tdsb.on.ca/Portals/0/Community/Community%20Advisory%20committees/ICAC/Subcommittees/AchievementGapReptDraftMay172010.pdf.

Villegas, A.M., & Irvine, J.J. (2010). Diversifying the teaching force: An examination of major arguments. *Urban Review: Issues and Ideas in Public Education*, 42(3), 175-192.

Walker, J.W. (1992). *The Black Loyalists: The Search for a Promised Land in Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone, 1783-1870*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Winks, R.W. (1969). Negro school segregation in Ontario and Nova Scotia. *The Canadian Historical Review*, 50(2), pp. 164-191.

Woodbury, R. (2016, December 12). African-Nova Scotian students being suspended at disproportionately higher rates. CBC News. Retrieved from: https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/african-nova-scotian-students-suspension-numbers-1.3885721