

'Stark Remnants of Blackpast' *: Thinking on Gender, Ethnicity and Class in 1780s Nova Scotia

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In the context of the first large-scale Black migration to Nova Scotia (the 1780s or Loyalist period), this paper explores the experience and structure of subordination in the Black community and between the Black community and the wider society. Situating Black experience within a hegemonic order dominated by a British male elite, the argument is that a more complete understanding of the dynamics and practices of Black subordination can be achieved through investigation of the relations of dominance and subordination characteristic of the period: class, ethnic, and gender. Specifically, the paper considers how racist and sexist ideologies organized land granting and punishment practices concerning the Black population and the visible manifestations of racism and sexism in the phenomena of Black labour and segregated community life.

Dans le contexte du premier grand mouvement des noirs à la Nouvelle Ecosse (les années 1780 où également le période des Loyalistes), cette étude trace l'expérience et la structure de la subordination dans la communauté noir et entre ce-dernière et la société en générale. Comprenant l'expérience des noirs dans un milieu dominé de l'hégémonie d'un élite mâle et anglais, on peut s'arriver à une compréhension plus complète des pratiques et méthodes de la subordination des noirs en étudiant le rapport entre la dominance et la subordination, les deux étant caractéristiques de ce période-là: la classe, l'ethnicité, et la sexe. En spécifique, cette étude se concerne de la manière dont des idéologies racistes et sexistes ont gouverné les concessions de terre, les pratiques par lesquelles les noirs étaient punis, et les manifestations ouvertes du racisme et du sexisme quant aux ouvriers noirs et la ségrégation des communautés.

Introduction

This paper represents a report on work in progress; namely, investigation of the impact of gender, ethnicity and class in the lives of Black people in Nova Scotia.¹ The historically subordinate position of Blacks within the social formation of Nova Scotia presents an ongoing social and sociological problem. Situating Black experience in the context of cultural reproduction within a hegemonic order dominated historically by a British male elite, I argue that a more complete understanding (oriented to change) of the dynamics and practices of Black subordination can be achieved through investigation of the intersection of ethnic, gender, and class relations in the Black community, and between the Black community and the wider society. My argument can be situated broadly within the framework of Marxist culturalist analysis which seeks to account for, and move beyond, the complexities and contradictions of the totality of social life in terms of the lived reality of subordinate peoples.

In my emphasis on the need for gender analysis, I am following the lead of Fox-Genovese (1982:6-7) who argues that analysis of gender relations must emerge as a fundamental feature of social analysis. She characterizes gender relations as historically, not biologically, determined and structured in dominance which, while varying in terms of historical specificity, is reflected in all social relations.² Fox-Genovese points out that social theory's response to gender analysis has been an impoverished inclusion as "other" which renders women, as historical subjects, invisible. Further, she explicitly acknowledges the deficit in "women's history" of theorising about and analyses of Black women (24). I concur with Fox-Genovese. These problems of analysis are reflections of the difficulties of working within a dominant discourse which is ethnic and sex blind.³

My interest in the lives of Black people in Nova Scotia developed while I was teaching (1979-1981) high school students from the Black community of North Preston, Nova Scotia. This sparked examination of the Nova Scotia archival sources (1981-1982), a potentially rich, though untapped, source of material concerning the contributions of Black women and men to the process of class, ethnic, and gender formation in Nova Scotia historically. Clearly, Blacks were not passive in the face of their subordination. As well, their subordination reflected both class and ethnic dimensions. Further, the activities of Black women in their communities emerged as crucial factors in coping with, and struggling against, class and ethnic oppression. This combination of community experience and archival research forced me to challenge, and go beyond, what I found to be limited theoretical constructs concerning ethnicity, class, and gender in capitalist societies. What follows is my construction, in theoretical terms, of the lived experiences of Nova Scotian Black people.

In an attempt to capture the dynamics of class, ethnic, and gender subordination in the lives of Black Nova Scotians, I argue the following: first, the reductionism of orthodox Marxist analysis limits its ability to deal with questions of ethnicity and gender; second, we must go beyond a critique of orthodox Marxism and develop a complex analysis which can capture a broader expression of class relations, is sensitive to the demands of feminist critique and seeks to overcome ethnocentric bias; third, in order to break this conceptual ground, I propose examination of the gender and ethnic relations of Canadian society as they are expressed in the labour participation of Nova Scotian Blacks. I argue that the relations of ethnic and gender dominance and subordination are socially constructed and given expression through ideology.⁴

Ethnicity, Gender, Class: The Conceptual Conundrum

The historic centrality of the economic in the lives of Nova Scotian Black women and men led to examination (and subsequent rejection) of orthodox Marxist treatments of the factors of ethnicity and gender in class analysis.⁵ The very discourse asserts that ethnicity and gender can best be situated within the (determinant) context of class relations. I reject the explicit reductionism of this position.

Orthodox Marxist analyses of ethnicity also involve debate over the subsumption of the term 'race' under the rubric 'ethnicity.' The point is often made that the more visible (e.g. bio-genetic) differences among people have led to the construction of greater divisions within humanity than have such factors as language, dress, customs, etc. This seems to suggest that these latter are somehow less visible. Little attention has been paid, however, to the role which ideas about difference have played in these relations (Cohen, 1976), and how these ideas organize action (Clarke et al, 1976). What is clear is that ethnic (and gender) relations are sometimes divisive, sometimes cohesive, and have come to be framed in relations of dominance and subordination.

There are certain similarities in the way in which ethnicity and gender have developed as problematics for Marxists. It has been argued that both ethnicity and gender cut across class lines and therefore confound class analysis (Gabriel, 1978, Armstrong and Armstrong, 1983). The tendency here is often retreat to the haven of analysis 'at the point of production,' which, given the private/public distinction, often 'solves' the gender problem, if not the dilemma of ethnicity. Elsewhere (Wright, 1978, Guettel, 1974, Reich, 1977), ethnicity and gender have been treated as epi-phenomena and thus secondary to the real problem of class conflict. This is often

referred to as the "withering away" approach to ethnicity and gender subordination. A variant of this thesis is that since ethnicism and sexism are ideologies, they emerge out of a particular set of productive relations. This argument continues with the idea that ethnicism and sexism will disappear when capitalist relations are overturned by a new social order. As Gabriel (1978) indicates, however, such an assessment of ethnicism is both ahistorical and reductionist. He stops short of calling it ridiculous. Armstrong and Armstrong (1983) suggest that such an understanding of the origins of sexism has become confused with the forms which it assumes historically. Yet another line of thought (Szymanski, 1976, Bonacich, 1976, Connelly, 1978) suggests that ethnicity and gender have become useful to dominant class interests, and, in the form of ideological constructs, ethnicism and sexism are used to drive wedges in working class unity. Conversely, ethnicism and sexism are also considered to be avidly supported by workers (white men) in recognition of jeopardy to their own interests. What is not theorised is that the two apparently contradictory processes may be component parts of the operation of ethnic, class, and gender relations in capitalist society (Mannette, 1983, Saunders, 1983).

My argument is that we must go beyond a critique of orthodox Marxist treatments of ethnic and gender questions. We must turn to the task of theoretical construction and reconstruction, to charting what a complex analysis of these social relations of difference and inequality might look like. Orthodox Marxist analysis reflects a kind of reductionism which seeks to explain the organization of all social phenomena in terms of a narrow economic definition of class relations. Complex analysis, on the other hand, concedes that, while class relations form a fundamental social division in society, there are other social divisions, which cannot be seen simply as

reflections of class relations no matter how broadly understood. These social divisions (such as ethnicity and gender which are under investigation here) intersect with class relations, but are not merely an effect of them. The question of determination rests on the expression of various social constructs within a social formation at a particular social moment.

An attempt to outline a theory of ethnic relations informed by feminist critique and class analysis can benefit from examination of, and selective borrowing from, the culturalist Marxist perspective. Within cultural studies, the emergence of culture as a problematic has resulted in an understanding of plural cultures which provide maps of meaning in the lived experiences of groups. These lived experiences intersect with, but are not determined by, class relations.⁶ Such an understanding of culture yields fertile ground for the examination of an ethnic culture (that of Blacks in Nova Scotia) and gender culture (gender relations within the segregated Black communities of Nova Scotia). It further points to the relational nature of ethnic and gender cultures to other cultural forms (e.g. class, age) within a given social formation.⁷

Accordingly, my emphasis is on the essentially active processes of the social construction of differences and inequality known as ethnicity and gender. This construction of difference and inequality is a product of social relations within a given social formation, and is carried forward in time through ideological processes of production and reproduction, which operate through people's insertion as gendered, ethniced, classed subjects into social relations. It is in the social relations of society that subordinate groups live their subordination and respond to it. Such a characterization of difference and inequality does deny the objective nature of social relations but, rather, seeks to go beyond the subjective/objective

dichotomy to frame analysis in terms of the complexity and dialectics of the social relations of ethnicity and gender in capitalist society.

This kind of complex analysis can reveal the social construction of difference and inequality which is then accounted for by a normative concept of label, such as Black and woman. Further, this social construction has material and ideational reality which interact in producing social experience. Ethnicity and gender, as social constructs, lie partly in the groups to whom they are attributed, and partly in the maps of meaning of those who have come to view them as different and unequal. Thus, we see that the forms of ethnic and gender relations are historically specific and the products of organizational practices of thought and action situated in a social formation and its hegemonic order. Ethnicity and gender are embedded in power relations: the power to define, delineate, coerce, and convince, in directing social action.

The lived reality of Nova Scotian Blacks is situated in a hegemonic order which is also expressed in ethnicity and gender. It is inadequate to refer only to hegemony centred around class relations. We must also investigate ethnic and gender hegemony and their intersections with class hegemony. Further, historical analysis of Black subordination in Nova Scotia is essential if we are to capture the processual, contradictory and period-specific nature of the relations of dominance and subordination which characterize Black life. Negotiation, struggle, resistance, the active processes through which Black men, women and children coped with and resisted their subordination, emerge through a new and different reading of the historical accounts of the period under investigation, the 1780s.⁸ It is a difficult task to make women of subordinate groups visible, especially Black women, inferior and unimportant as they were and are seen to be in the wider

society. Also, in their own communities, the activities of Black women, though recognized by Black leaders (usually preacher men) as important to community survival, are infrequently recorded in the detail which has been the preserve of church men's activities. Of importance is the work of Light and Prentice (1980) who have grappled with, and partially resolved, this problem of historical research: the most obvious difficulty in constructing a history of what women did is the bias of historians, professional and other, as to what facts or documents are worthy of preservation for posterity, and how they are to be interpreted.⁹

To untangle the 'mystery' of ethnic, gender and class relations in 1780s Nova Scotia requires (at least) two lines of analysis: first, we must outline how ethnicity and gender, as normative constructs, are socially produced and reproduced; secondly, we need to document the concrete and usually institutionalised practices involved in the production and reproduction of ethnic and gender relations. It is through examination of the lived experience of Blacks that we arrive at theoretical constructions which can further the articulated interests of the Black community.¹⁰ My premise is that gender, ethnicity, and class are interconnected and determination is a question of the combination of social relations and their effects on the totality of the historical moment. In terms of ideology, I shall examine the social construction of difference which we know as ethnicity and gender. Since emphasis is placed here on the production and role of ideas in expressing and maintaining ethnic and gender inequality, I shall examine the role of ideas about ethnicity and gender as determinants in organizing practices of land granting, and crime and punishment. In order to reveal the 'factual' nature of the lived reality of ethnic and gender difference and inequality, I turn to two manifest forms of unequal ethnic and gender relations: Black community life and Black labour.

Ethnic and Gender Subordination: Ideology and Practice

Kealey (1981) has asserted that it is critical to examine the social formation extant in the society in which immigration of ethnic groups occurred in order to better understand the positions they came to occupy in that society. Schermerhorn (1970) maintains that the way in which a minority ethnic group enters into a society determines the kind of domination they experience. It becomes essential, then, to examine: first, the period in which immigration took place, why the group left, why they came (to Nova Scotia), what were their experiences there; and secondly, how they were organized into the social formation.

In this article, I examine only one period of Black migration to Nova Scotia, the 1780s or Loyalist period.

1780s Black Loyalists From the United States

Approximately three thousand Black Loyalists came to Nova Scotia, as slaves and 'free men,' under the auspices of the British military following the American Revolution. Slaves came with their white Loyalist owners, 'Free men' came, seeking freedom of person and free land. The free Blacks were part of a larger white migration from the victorious states to Britain's last remaining seaboard colony, Nova Scotia. A sizeable number of Black men were skilled workers (e.g., carpenters, wheelwrights, pilots). For Black women, the employment options appear to have been domestic work or taking in washing or sewing. Men were often organized by white authorities into construction battalions for the white population. Black men and women also engaged in a mixture of subsistence farming and, where available, fishing. By the mid 1780s, Black men were forced out of the wage labour market in Shelburne (the largest Loyalist settlement) by an influx of white labourers, most of them

former soldiers. Since Black families had enormous difficulty subsisting on their small, usually barren, plots of land, they frequently either indentured themselves to, or sharecropped for, white landowners. Black Loyalists petitioned for removal from the province and nearly two-thirds of them left Nova Scotia for Sierra Leone in January of 1792. This exodus was financed by the British government and had the blessing of the London-based administration, if not that of the colony.

Ethnic and Gender Subordination

Examination of the operation of ideology in the Nova Scotian social formation in the 1780s, and its impact on Black lives, reveals expressions and practices of gender and ethnic subordination in a class society.

The specific status of Blacks in 1780s Nova Scotia remained a problem as the term, 'servant,' was frequently used in connection with Blacks. This term was often used interchangeably with 'slave,' 'servant for life,' or 'free negro.' Only a small minority of the Blacks who came to Nova Scotia between 1783 and 1785 were actually slaves. Nevertheless, slavery was in operation in Nova Scotia and widely supported until around 1800.¹¹ The free Blacks who came to Nova Scotia may have indeed been legally free. However, in the minds of most white Nova Scotians of all classes they were associated with, and treated like, their enslaved brethren.¹² Blacks were economic units; they were workers. Thus, free Blacks came to share the status of slaves. Two examples of the way in which this mind-set of difference and inferiority organized social practices can be seen in land granting and in crime and punishment.

Land Grants

The bureaucratic machinery in Nova Scotia in the 1780s was ill-equipped to deal with the great influx of Loyalists which doubled the population, and brought both Black and white settlers to the province following the end of the Revolutionary War in 1782. The land granting system was inefficient, inadequate and class-biased. This also meant that it was colour-biased and sex-biased. In a system which had as its aim the first and largest recompense to those who had lost the most, in terms of property, the formerly propertyless Blacks were low on the list of priorities. Apart from the large Loyalist landholders who quickly grabbed up the best available land, the average grant was 100 acres for each family head (male), and an additional 50 acres for each family member -- wife, son, daughter, and slave (Walker, 1976:19, Gilroy, 1980). The gender relations of Nova Scotian society dictated differential and unequal treatment for women and children as they were organized into the social formation. As well, immigrants could increase their chances for property on the basis of presently held property in the form of slaves. Ethnic discrimination in colonial Nova Scotia also operated in other ways. Blacks rarely received clear title to any land and, when they did, they were allocated less acreage than white Loyalists (Gilroy, 1980:106-115, 43-54). Their farm lots were often located so far from the town lots they were given that it was difficult to get to them, let alone develop them (Walker, 1973:28). Also, by the time Blacks were allocated land, most of the arable acreage was occupied, and they received only what was left over. The class, ethnic and gender features of the land allocation process had particularly onerous effects on Black men and women, located as they were 'at the bottom' of the class, ethnic and gender hegemony of colonial Nova Scotia. Examination of Loyalist land grants demonstrates that the subordinate classes were allocated less land than the 'gentry'; only

rarely were women allocated land if they were not attached to a (male) family head; attached women received less acreage than did their men and when title was given, it was in the family head's name. Blacks, both men and women, were allocated less land than were white men and women of the subordinate classes.

As well as the institutional discrimination manifested by British officials, Blacks constantly suffered from fear of a return to slavery. This might arise out of their desperate need to survive, or could emerge in the following way:

A last desperate move on the part of Shelburne merchants to sustain their economy by making their city a free port for trade with the United States, brought the blacks' fear to a climax in that they expected their former American masters would then be able to reclaim them as slaves (Walker, 1976:55).

Also, as Grant (1980:19) indicates, if a Black man were claimed as a slave by a white man, his wife and children were claimed as well. The fate of Black women in colonial Nova Scotia appears to have been tied to that of their men, in slavery and in freedom. Thus, we see that Blacks were considered to be relatively unimportant in the allocation of land, given the long list of deserving white previous landowners, businessmen, and disbanded soldiers. Since Blacks were seen primarily as a source of labour for whites, their need for land was questionable. If they could subsist on their own land, they might not be available to work for whites. In this way we can understand the lack of clear title to land for Blacks, the relatively smaller size of the lots they received and the location of Black settlements situated conveniently close to white towns such as Shelburne.

Crime and Punishment

Investigation of punishment for criminal offences in colonial Nova Scotia demonstrates that corporal punishments were commonplace for members of the subordinate classes. However, the data suggest two other factors: the punishments meted out to Blacks were frequently more severe than those for similar crimes committed by whites and there was sex-typing of crime. For example:

In Guysborough County (Lower Sydney County) between 11 October 1785 and 8 February 1791, no white suffered corporal punishment. Theft, slander, assault, 'keeping a house of ill fame', even riot was punished by fines. But when a Black Loyalist woman, Sarah Ringwood, stole some butter, she was 'ordered for punishment to receive thirty nine stripes on her naked back, at the Public Whipping Post in Manchester'... (Walker, 1973:101).

Walker (1973:101-104) further reports that both Black men and women were convicted of theft and received harsher penalties than whites. However, whereas Black men in Halifax were hanged for crimes of rape, only Black women were charged with, and punished for, 'lewd and indecent behaviour'.

Quite apart from the class nature of criminal definition (i.e. crimes against property) and the prevailing climate of doing violence to the body in order to regulate society and preserve class order, these examples of crime and punishment speak about ethnic and gender relations in colonial Nova Scotia. The ideology of inferior difference, which marked Black/white relations, is given expression in the different and unequal punishments inflicted upon Black men and women convicted of criminal acts. The law of the lash, which ordered slave/master relations, was extended to Black/white punishment. Just as certain work became known as Black work, so certain crimes and their punishments were levelled at Blacks. The court records do not tell us whether the rape victims of the Black men hanged in Halifax were white or Black. Given possible legal redress open to Black women, I suspect that the rape victims were white.¹³ It is important to note the sharp

divergence from the "cult of white femininity" which the whipping (and the ability to withstand such punishment) of Black women represents. Also, the stereotyped licentiousness of Black female sexuality is reflected in charges against Black women of "lewd and indecent behaviour." As well, the crimes of sexuality which are attributed to Blacks demonstrate dominant gender relations: the women's crimes of lewdness are essentially passive and the men's crimes of rape are essentially active. The delineation of certain behaviours as criminal and the determination of appropriate punishments reflect dominant class, ethnic and gender relations of colonial Nova Scotia.

This brief examination of how ideologies of difference and inequality organized land granting and punishment practices indicates how ideas about dominant and subordinate group relations express and help to maintain unequal ethnic and gender relations. In terms of gender relations, I have outlined some of the aspects of the dominant gender system in colonial Nova Scotia and its ability to delineate appropriate gender behaviour (e.g. the dependence of women on men for subsistence through land, and the kind of sex-specific behaviour which was defined as criminal). I have also indicated the triple burden borne by Black women: as members of the subordinate classes, as members of a reviled ethnic group, and as women. What I have attempted to determine are the ways in which class, ethnicity, and gender cultures produce and reproduce practices of difference and subordination within a social formation. The "maps of meaning" which structure classed, ethnicized, and gendered activities are important determinants of the fact and forms of subordination. They are, however, only part of the manifestation of the processes of dominance and subordination within a social formation. It has been argued (Cassin and Griffith, 1980 and Saunders, 1983) that investigation of the facts and forms of various relations of dominance and subordination

(class, ethnic, gender) should not be centred on only ideologies and how they organize practices. Attention must also be turned to the "manifest forms" of subordination.¹⁴ To investigate the manifest forms of ethnic, class and gender subordination in colonial Nova Scotia, I turn to examination of Black community life and Black labour.

Black community life and Black Labour

The processes involved in the production of difference and inequality, which we know as ethnicity, have been outlined in the contemporary period by Cassin and Griffith (1980). It is their contention that ethnicity, as a social construction, has been one of the fundamental organizing processes of Canadian capitalist society. In the lived realities of the ethnically segregated labour force and the ethnically segregated community, ethnic difference is organized in terms of class relations. Cassin and Griffith also argue that the other fundamental division of capitalist society, gender, is accomplished within the structure of ethnic difference in communities and in the labour force.

Saunders (1983), rightly, has called for research into the "material and ideological forms" of gender dominance in capitalist societies, directing our attention to the important question of how women are organized into conditions of paid labour. Following the lead of Cassin, Griffith and Saunders, my discussion of the manifest forms of ethnicity and gender will be centred on the organization of the Black community and of Black labour, and gender relations within each.

Birchtown, the largest Black Loyalist community¹⁵ in Nova Scotia gives us the most complete picture of Black settlement in the province in the 1780s. As Walker (1976:22) tells us, when they arrived in Birchtown in 1783,

Black Loyalist men were organized into construction battalions under the command of Black Pioneer, Colonel Stephen Blucke, and put to work building houses, public buildings, roads and wharves for the White Loyalist town of Port Roseway (later renamed Shelburne). Birchtown Loyalists were listed as representing a variety of occupations, however, it was not only a lack of operating capital which prevented the rise of Birchtown as "a nearly self-sufficient village" (Wilson, 1976:87). The Birchtowners employed their skills as labourers in nearby Port Roseway; they did not serve a Black clientele. For Port Roseway/Shelburne, the Blacks functioned, for a time, as a "reservoir of cheap labour" (Wilson, 1976:89).

Land grants were slow to materialise for the Birchtown group and their "...promised farms ... lay unsurveyed beneath the district's 'deep swamps' and impenetrable woods" (Walker, 1976:23). As well, Benjamin Marston, deputy-mayor for the Shelburne district, reported "a piece of villainy," whereby white Loyalists attempted to obtain Birchtown land for themselves (in Walker, 1976:23). Many Birchtown residents applied the wages they earned in Shelburne to the purchase of land: "Blucke reported that 300 were in possession of farms, which would mean that over 100 must have bought them" (Walker, 1976:23-24). The promise of free land and provisions by the Crown to Loyalist immigrants was not widely upheld for the Birchtowners.¹⁶

The business of constructing a settlement in Shelburne meant that large landowners and urban employers, who were numerous in the town, often found it difficult to find workers:

The existence of a large body of free Blacks forced into the labour market through their lack of land or other means of support, appeared to offer a solution to the labour shortage. They had no choice but to offer their skills and muscles to the nearest employer, as prevailing opinion considered them an exploitable labour pool, in desperate supply from any other source, they were in a poor position to bargain for the bounties and privileges freely accorded to white Loyalists ... Well knowing that people of their own colour would never engage with them without being paid an

equitable price for their labour, white employers came to depend on the cheap services of the Black Loyalists... (Walker, 1973:70).

Black women were hired by white employers as domestic servants (often live-in), laundresses, and seamstresses (Walker, 1976, Clairmont et al, 1965, Wilson, 1976, Fergusson (ed.), 1971).¹⁷ However, as Wilson (1976:88-90) points out, many Black women and men received no return in the form of wages or provisions for their labours. For example:

Phillis Kizzell, eighteen-year-old wife of John worked for George Patten in return for clothes, but the muster list says "(never gave her any)"

John Primus, was hired by Dr. Kendrick at 4 a month: "never paid him, lived with him a year". His wife, engaged by the doctor at 2 a month, also never received any wages.

In the minds of most white colonials, Blacks were merely labour which could be exploited, and discarded when it had served its purpose. Once again, given the long list of those entitled to and requiring provisions, the location of Blacks on the list, and the limited resources of the colonial administration, it is hardly surprising that Blacks received few provisions. When they did, they often had to work to get them. This was a good way of ensuring that needed improvements, such as road-work, would be carried out. Blacks had little choice but to agree to this arrangement; they could find few other ways to subsist:

In London the press touted the marvels of Shelburne and 'Birchtown' peopled by negroes from New York ... whose labours have been found extremely useful ... in reducing the price of work.

It is a common custom in this Country to promise a Black so much per day in the evening when his work is almost finished the White man quarrels with him and takes him to a Justice of the Peace who gives an order to mlct [sic] of his wages (in Wilson, 1976:95).

Certain work came to be defined as "Black work" (e.g. road work, laundressing, domestic service, farm labour, day labour). Generally, Black work also came to be known as inferior work, work in which whites should not engage. Partly for this reason but also because Blacks were widely felt to

be of less value than whites, they received less pay than white labourers. Unable to secure an existence through agricultural production, Blacks were "free" to sell their labour (to whites). Their dependence on wage labour for their subsistence made them vulnerable to exploitation at the hands of their employers and the merchants from whom they were required to buy the foodstuffs they could not raise. Also, some of the Blacks who worked for whites "lived in." As such, they would receive room and board "for free," it was reasoned. This explains why Blacks frequently did not receive the wages promised to them at the commencement of employment, or received less than what they had been promised. Further, as we have seen, Black people had little recourse in trying to extract promised wages from employers. In one instance, they received no aid from a justice of the peace; rather, the employer's position was supported. Black labour was clearly exploitable to a degree that white labour was not. The taken-for-granted notion of Blackness served to reproduce this situation. In this way, we see the attraction of Black labourers for would-be immigrants to Shelburne.

The labour shortages in Shelburne, however, were short-lived. Again Blacks suffered. Disbanded soldiers swelled the ranks of the labouring population of the town:

On July 26, 1784, Marston wrote in his diary: "Great Riot today. The disbanded soldiers have risen against the Free negroes to drive them out of town because they labour cheaper than they -- the soldiers." (in Wilson, 1976:92).

As well, by 1789, the fortunes of Shelburne were on the wane; famine was widespread throughout Nova Scotia and the community was decimated by a smallpox epidemic. Consistent with the cycle of Nova Scotian dependency, the wartime boom gave way to economic depression as peace resumed:

Unemployment wiped out the black companies of Birchtown. Many were forced to indenture their families and some even sold themselves as slaves. Blacks died of starvation and exposure after parting with all their belongings in exchange for temporary nourishment ... Only

those with farms or with jobs in the fisheries, and of course the indentured servants and sharecroppers, were able to make a meagre living in Shelburne County (Walker, 1976:52-53).

The conditions of living in Birchtown in 1788 are vividly detailed in this traveller's account:

The place is beyond description wretched, situated on the coast in the middle of barren rocks, and partly surrounded by a thick impenetrable wood. Their huts so miserable to guard against the inclemency of a Nova Scotia winter, and their existence almost depending on what they could lay up in summer. I think I never saw such wretchedness and poverty so perceptible in the garb and countenance of the human species as in these miserable outcasts (Dyott in Wilson, 1976:96).

The solace of the Birchtown Blacks was their church. Birchtown became a centre of Baptist activity in the province, and the home base for Baptist preacher, David George (Boyd, 1976:1-8). Despite the inroads which David George's Baptist chapels made on Church of England activity in the community, Anglican hegemony was in evidence in both Birchtown and in the Black community in Shelburne through the Society for the Propagation (SPG), or Bray Associates, schools.¹⁸

Some understanding of the religious and educational relations between Blacks and whites in Nova Scotia may be gleaned from Walker's (1976:67) account of Black affiliation with the Anglican Church in Halifax:

Though blacks were welcomed in the church and could attend services, and even take communion, they were not permitted to mingle with whites in the congregation. A special gallery was fitted in St. Paul's Church in 1784, to which the blacks were confined "during divine worship". But the huge number of Loyalist Anglicans made too great a demand on the limited space available, and it became impossible to admit all those wishing to attend of a Sunday. The blacks, therefore, were excluded, and as an alternative the rector advised them to gather in private homes and he commissioned "several capable Negroes who read the Instructions to the Negroes and other pious Books to as many of them as assemble for that purpose."

A separate school for Black children was set up in Halifax by the Anglican affiliate, the SPG. Instruction, which was carried out by "capable" Black men and women, seems to have been geared towards Christianizing the Blacks

and giving them a proper sense of their station in life (Pratt, 1973, Fleming, 1980). At Digby, a Black school was run by a Baptist teacher and to counteract this influence in the Black community, in 1785, the Bray Associates placed Joseph Leonard in charge of the Black school in Brindley Town (Walker, 1976:81-82):

In accordance with the Associates' wishes, "manual industry" was encouraged and Leonard's daughter instructed the girls in sewing.

And in Preston, Blacks were considered to be part of the Anglican parish:

Blacks constituted 25 per cent of the parish at Preston, but as a Church building was not even begun until 1788 and only consecrated in 1791, there was little opportunity for them to attend services. Eventually they too established the practice of holding separate services in the home of Catherine Abernathy (Walker, 1976:70).

This same Mrs. Abernathy was put in charge of the Bray school which was established for the Black children of the community. It appears, however, that Mrs. Abernathy held her own views on religious instruction and was in conflict for a time with her Bray masters. She was coerced into adopting and propagating the more rigid Anglican doctrine by the withholding of her wages (Walker, 1976:84).

Although it was desirable to be able to count the Blacks as part of the Anglican flock (given that the Church of England was the state religion), they were barred from full participation and directed to hold separate worship. Increasingly, Black Loyalists turned to the Baptist chapels of David George. George preached to Blacks and whites alike although it is clear that his adherents were predominantly Black. There is some evidence, as well, that other whites tried to prevent whites attending George's services.

Despite the bleak production possibilities in the communities, Black society in Nova Scotia during the period was hardly joyless and sterile. The passage of a law in Shelburne "forbidding negro dances and frolics in this

town," besides demonstrating the mindset of the white authorities, gives the lie to assumptions about joyless Black life (Walker, 1973:101). The ties of love and friendship in the communities were strong (Walker, 1976, Fergusson, 1971). The Black Loyalist family was an extended kin network¹⁹ embracing many who could claim no blood or marriage ties:

John Clarkson also noticed the strength of family ties among the Black Loyalists, and pointed out that 'family' went beyond the normal British definition to include Godchildren or simply people from the same community. He found it curious that Black parents would bring up the children of others as if they were their own, without distinction between natural children and ones thus 'adopted' (in Walker, 1976:85).

It is fair to point out that Clarkson's observations reveal his lack of acquaintance, not only with Black life, but also with white British working class family relations.

The fact that marriages performed by Black ministers were illegal has led Walker (1976:85) to refer to Black marital relations as "casual." This assessment is at variance with the information Walker presents on the unwillingness of Black men to flee themselves and leave their wives and children at the mercy of American slave owners. As well, in Clarkson's account of the 1792 Sierra Leone exodus, we have many cases presented in which men, women and children struggled to stay together as family units, a situation which sometimes resulted in their staying in Nova Scotia in spite of a desire to emigrate.

The concern of Black parents for their children is amply demonstrated by their support for the Bray schools in their communities. Note Stephen Blucke's 1787 appeal to the SPG for clothing for the children at his school:

...my intrusion takes its springs from the anxiety I am under, for these poor little ones (in Wilson, 1976:91).

We see Black women and men responsible for the education of their children in the Bray schools. Further, it was largely through the efforts of Black preachers' female kin that separate and ill-financed educational instruction was carried forward in the Black communities. Further, Black women and men laboured for the white population and were denied their rightful recompense for labour.

In addition to the family, the other institution which cemented community relations and gave a sense of collective identity to Black life was the church:

In a white society, from which the Black Loyalists were alienated by circumstances of colour and the practices of religion, only the church was black ... Their chapels, therefore, took on an importance in their lives beyond a simple location for religious services. Community meetings were held in the chapels and, in many ways, the community itself was defined by the chapel to which it belonged. And the leaders of those communities were the preachers (Walker, 1976:79-80).

The church, the organizational centre of Black community life, was male-dominated. The preachers were all men. The sex-segregation in the Black communities, which was imposed externally through the organization of white society, can be shown to operate internally in the communities' religious life. The role of Black women in the communities seems to have been crucial, however, in terms of the day-to-day operation of education and religious-based activities. In 19th century accounts, we get a sense that the production and reproduction of Black cultural life, centred as it was around religious expression, was carried forward chiefly by the women of the community, under the direction of the male ministers.

It is interesting to note the position of contemporary Black religious scholars on the role of the church in Black communities. Contrary to widely-held thought on the conservative influence of religion, the position

here is that the function of religion is empowering; that is, religious expression allows for the fulfillment of the human condition not solely because such transcendence is denied Blacks in white society. Rather, I read this argument as laying claims to the primacy of, and need for, spiritual transcendence as the first step in humanness. The potential for worldly liberation in conjunction with spiritual transcendence in the 18th century Black community in Nova Scotia could be seen to be realized in the community exodus to Sierra Leone in 1792.

Black People in 1780s Nova Scotia: Some Conclusions

The subordinate position of Black people in Nova Scotia in the 1780s was produced through the process of social formation along class/ethnic lines which was a feature of the hegemonic order in the province. However, the subordinate position of Blacks was a segregated one in the social formation. Their segregation was economic and social. In economic terms, Blacks existed largely outside of the major productive activities of the province (e.g. fishing, farming, trade, personal labour relations). Rather, most Black women and men were subsistence farmers, day labourers, sharecroppers, indentured servants, occasional craft producers, and slaves. The social segregation of Blacks was achieved through segregated religious practice and separate and inferior education. As well, the activities of Blacks, and whites of both the dominant and subordinate classes, ensured the reproduction of Black segregated subordination within the hegemonic order of colonial Nova Scotia. Unable to secure an economic niche in the major productive activities of the area, Black people were forced to reproduce their segregated situation economically. Socially, denied full participation in bourgeois institutions (church and school), Black people created and

maintained their own, especially in terms of religious activity. The education of Black children was sporadically organized by a Christian missionary society, the Bray Associates, thus earmarking them as in need of Christianizing. This further served to segregate them from the wider society.

As an ethnic group, Blacks were defined by their collective identification as slaves. Slaves were economic units; by definition, they were both exploitable and inferior. The practices which produced such economic status were held in place through racist ideology. Some of the practices which accomplished the subordinate segregation of Blacks were crime and punishment, the system of land grants, provisioning, labour relations and religious activity. These practices reflect the ethnically segregated character of work and the ethnically segregated character of settlement.

In terms of gender relations, Blacks were administered on the basis of the gender relations of the dominant British order. It is unclear, as Lerner (1979) points out in the American context, how much of the gender relations in Black communities are the residue of African tribal practices, slave experiences or the effects of the social formation into which they were organized. When they arrived in Nova Scotia, Black men, as heads of families, were allocated land (when it was granted at all). Only infrequently were Black women granted land. The work they were hired to perform for white employers was sex-typed: laundry, sewing and inside work for women, construction battalions and outside labour for men. There is also some evidence that Black women were promised lower wages for domestic service than were Black men. If a man was claimed as a slave, so were his wife and children. Thus, the reproduction of the dominant gender system was carried out in the Black communities through the sex segregation and dependence of

women which were features of the administration of Blacks. We can argue that gender relations in colonial Nova Scotia were fully patriarchal, in that they specified the form of relations not only between men and women, but also between men. Gender relations were also reproduced through the sex-typing of, and unequal pay for, work which Black women and men were hired to do. Within the Black communities, the pattern of sex segregation and sex subordination is most clearly reflected in the organization of religious expression, the "key" to understanding community life.

In conclusion, what I have attempted to demonstrate here is the expression of class, ethnic and gender subordination in the lives of Black Nova Scotians in the 1780s and how we might conceptualize such subordination. Moving beyond orthodox Marxist treatments of ethnicity, gender and class, I have sought to construct a more complex analysis of ethnic, gender and class relations through examination of accounts of the lives of Black Nova Scotians during the period of Loyalist settlement. I have directed my research in two interconnected areas: ideology as organizing practices in ethnic and gender differences; and the concrete manifestation of ethnic and gender difference. Through examination of the land grant system and of crime and punishment practices, I have suggested how ideas about ethnic and gender difference and inequality serve to accomplish practices of ethnic and gender difference and inequality. Focus on the segregated ethnic community and segregated ethnic labour has suggested the interconnections between class and ethnicity in colonial Nova Scotia. Within the context of the ideological and manifest forms of ethnic difference, I have found the social construction and reproduction of sex-segregation and sex inequality reflected in the dependence of women on men in land granting, sex-typing of crime and of work, and sex segregation and subordination in community-organized religious expression.

In the relative absence of a Black Loyalist voice I have sought to articulate one, hampered as the work is by reliance on dominant accounts of the period. Nevertheless, it is these accounts, laden with prejudice, which forced a re-examination of the utility and responsibility of existing constructs of these relations of subordination. Since I have taken the position that this is a work in progress, it is my plan to continue to refine my explanations of the subordination of Black women and men in Nova Scotia.

NOTES

- * The title is taken from the poem, "Crazy Luce", by Black Nova Scotian poet, Maxine Tynes.
- 1. This article reflects part of the research undertaken for Mannette's (1983) *Setting the Record Straight: The Experience of Black People in Nova Scotia 1780-1900*.
- 2. Social relations are processes into which we enter, the purpose of which may, or may not, be clear to us. Through our activities we produce them and carry them forward in time.
- 3. I am using Vallee's (1982:128) definition of ethnicity:
...ethnicity refers to descent from ancestors who shared a common culture or subculture manifested in distinctive ways of speaking and/or acting. This common culture may have been carried by many different kinds of groupings, such as religious, political, geographical, but in all cases the kinship networks are the crucial bearers of culture.
I would add to this my understanding of ethnic groups as minorities, following Himelfarb and Richardson (1983:325) who say:
We may define a minority as a group of people who, because of their physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from the others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment, and who therefore regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination.
Thus, we arrive at an understanding of ethnic groups as deriving from common ancestry, having consciousness of, and expressing group affiliation. This group affiliation renders ethnics the subject and object of differential and unequal treatment in society and serves as the focal point in coping with and resisting this inequality of condition and of experience.
With some reservations, then, on the basis of the social construction of difference and inequality based on the above criteria, I would use ethnicity as a generic term which would include race. This is not to deny the differences between race and ethnic inequality, but rather to stress their similarities as social phenomena.

4. The way in which I see ideology operating here is as maps of meaning through which people make sense of their lives and organize their activities. These maps of meaning are constructed in and express various power relations (e.g. class, ethnicity, gender). Further, the social construction of ideology gives it an unproblematic or taken-for-granted character. Thus, we have a sense that ideology inserts the oppressed into relations of subordination and is not merely an external mode of thought imposed on them. In the taken-for-granted social construction of ethnic and gender difference and inequality, both the oppressed and the oppressors carry these relations forward in time through their social actions.
5. I do not mean to suggest that the differential and unequal treatment of ethnic groups and of women is the same. There are obviously crucial differences. The point here is to demonstrate that the way in which the analysis of ethnic groups and of women has been taken up by orthodox Marxists has marked similarities.
6. Following Clarke et al (1976), I see culture as lived experience through which individuals make sense of their social world. Thus, culture is the acting out of certain distinctive ways of thinking about the social world and it organizes social action in such a way that the culture of one group reflects the circumstances of that group and can be distinguished from the culture of another group located differentially.
7. On the development of tools of analysis to investigate race cultures, see Hall (1980). To determine the role of gender relations within a race culture, refer to Carby's (1982) 'agenda' for Black feminism.
8. I have chosen to explore the 1780s for the following reasons: first, this decade marks the period of the first large Black migration to Nova Scotia; secondly, during the bicentennial celebrations of the coming of the Loyalists to Nova Scotia, very little attention was paid to the Black Loyalists; thirdly, this period is one of transition in ethnic relations in Nova Scotia since slave relations were on the demise for a variety of reasons; as well, the influx of such numbers of Blacks forced the colonial administration to deal with the ensuing problems rooted in racism.
9. Since the often illiterate subordinate women have not been able to 'speak for themselves', they are revealed through historical documents such as indentures, court records, institutional records, travellers' descriptions, newspaper stories and official state records. In the case of Black women in Nova Scotia, literate white women wrote about them. They are also made visible through arts and crafts (e.g. basket making) which have survived. It is assumed that these accounts are laden with biases (class, race, gender) of their authors. However, through them there emerges a portrait of how these women were perceived by others to have lived, thought and felt. The difficulties of making these women visible are similar to those problems of uncovering the experiences of the subordinate and often reviled ethnic group to which they belonged.

10. What is involved in this process is as follows. I have a responsibility to not merely add Blacks to history but, rather, to rethink history in terms of the inclusion of accounts of Black experience. Further, I need to construct these accounts in a spirit of cultural relativity not one of ethnocentrism. Thus, I am motivated to produce non-perjorative assessments of Black culture. Finally, my responsibility as a researcher is to the community and not only to the research process. This presents an interesting dilemma as various factions within the Black community vie for the role of articulator of Black life and Black interests. For the researcher, often the choice of to whom or what within the community to be responsible is difficult to determine.
11. The Act of Emancipation of 1834 brought a final end to legalized slavery in the British Empire.
12. In a slave society they took their status not from the body of Loyalists to which they belonged, but from the mass of slaves whose African race they shared (Walker, 1973:104).
It was a question of mindset in the dominant society which enforced this taken-for-granted sense of Blacks as economic units which could be exploited and for whom there was no sense of responsibility. Unlike the paternalism of much of the organization of early capitalism in Nova Scotia, Black/white labour relations reflected little "social conscience."
13. John Clarkson's account of the rape and abuse of Lydia Jackson at the hands of a prominent Lunenburg doctor indicates the lack of redress (legal) which Black women had and the peculiar way in which the oppression of Black women was carried out against their sexuality.
14. By manifest forms of ethnic subordination, Cassin and Griffith mean the highly visible character of the organization of ethnic inequality: the ethnic "ghetto," ethnic businesses, streaming of ethnic students in the school system, etc.
15. Walker (1976:34) gives the following estimate of free Black settlement in Nova Scotia: Birchtown (1784) 1,521 individuals; Brindley Town (1784) 211 individuals; Chedabucto (1785) 118 families or about 350 individuals; Little Tracadie (1787) 172 individuals, (1788) 16 families or about 50 individuals; Preston (1780s) 100 families or about 300 individuals; Halifax (1780s) 400 individuals; Shelburne (1787) 70 families or about 200 individuals; McNutt's Island (1787) 4 families or about 12 individuals; Liverpool (1787) 50 individuals; Annapolis (1780s) 100 individuals; small centres (1780s) unknown.
16. The Blacks of Preston were also expected to "work a Proportion of Time on the Road," and it may have been in exchange for rations inferior to those granted to whites, as was certainly the case in Halifax. Codfish, molasses and hard biscuit were the principal items in the Halifax Loyalist diet, with occasional additions from "a very limited supply of meat." But this was for whites only: "Meal and molasses sustained the negroes" (in Walker, 1976:44-45).

17. Newman (1976:276-289) demonstrates that most Black women, both slave and free, in Pennsylvania in the 18th century were working as domestics in such occupations as laundresses, seamstresses, and general "housewifery." She also shows that:
Neither the Revolution nor the Gradual Abolition Law caused a significant change in occupations. By mid-nineteenth century there was still no meaningful change; women were effectively lodged in the same types of occupations (Newman, 1976:284).
18. The Black schoolmasters in each community were Isaac Limerick and Stephen Blucke, respectively (Walker, 1976:80-83).
19. It seems essential that extended kin networks operated in such a way to at least facilitate the care of children and those unable to work. This is in the context of precarious conditions in family life (e.g. the return to slavery, death by disease and starvation, and the labour of women).

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