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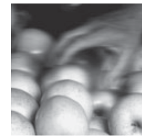

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High culture, black culture: Strategic assimilation and cultural steering in museum philanthropy

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Abstract

This article provides a case study of race and big-gift cultural patronage, a theoretically and empirically understudied phenomenon, by investigating million-dollar donations to the Smithsonian Institution by black patrons. I find that large donations by black supporters are concentrated at one Smithsonian museum – the National Museum of African American History and Culture. To explain this distinctive pattern of cultural consumption, I draw on ethnographic data and archival texts related to patronage at African American museums. Gifts to the National Museum of African American History and Culture can be partly explained by strategic acculturation, or an impulse to articulate and nurture black identity through consuming black culture. However, cultural steering also played a key role. Black donors were identified and cultivated via a robust fundraising infrastructure where market research cast them as key constituents of the National Museum of African American History and Culture and taste-making strategies that constructed the museum as worthy reinforced their attraction to the museum. By conceptually and empirically elaborating cultural steering, this analysis offers a more complete model of black middle- and upper-class consumption of black culture.

Keywords

Cultural consumption, black middle-class, cultural capital, strategic assimilation, elites

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Introduction

In September 2015, entrepreneur Robert F. Smith graced the cover of *Forbes* annual issue on the 400 richest Americans. A feature on the magazine's online site introduced Smith with the headline ''Meet the African-American Billionaire Businessman Who's Richer Than Michael Jordan'' (Fisher, 2015). The following year, Smith and Jordan would use their wealth to support the newly founded Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) in Washington, D.C. Smith's $20,000,000 gift and Jordan's $5,000,000 gift were part of the over $400,000,000 raised from the private sector. Although research on the arts participation of middle- and upper-class blacks is growing (Banks, 2010a; Banks, 2010b; Fleming and Roses, 2007; Grams, 2010; Halle, 1993), high-dollar cultural philanthropy like that of Smith and Jordan remains theoretically and empirically under-examined.

This article uses the case of big-gift cultural patronage at the Smithsonian Institution to develop a more layered model of black middle- and upper-class consumption of black culture. Drawing on a unique database of million-dollar gifts to Smithsonian museums, I find that the rate of donation by black middle-class individuals and organizations to one museum – the NMAAHC – is substantially higher than others. I use ethnographic data and archival texts related to patronage at African American museums to uncover the mechanisms involved in producing this outcome. The explanation that I theoretically and conceptually elaborate brings together developments in the scholarship on the black middle- and upper-class (Lacy, 2007; Lareau, 2003; Neckerman et al., 1999; Pattillo-McCoy, 1999b) with those in the literature on cultural markets (Bourdieu, 1993; Childress, 2017; Khaire, 2017; Maguire and Matthews, 2014).

Consistent with strategic assimilation theory (Lacy, 2004) which posits that middle-class blacks seek to stay connected to the black community, I find that some black donors' gifts to the NMAAHC can be partly explained by *strategic acculturation*, or an impulse to articulate and nurture black identity through consuming black culture. However, this distinct pattern of patronage was also influenced by market intermediaries' *cultural steering*. Black donors were identified and cultivated via a robust fundraising infrastructure where market research cast them as key constituents of the NMAAHC and taste-making strategies that constructed the museum as worthy reinforced their attraction to the museum.

By conceptually and empirically elaborating cultural steering, this analysis offers a more complete model of black middle- and upper-class consumption of black culture. In particular, it highlights how various elements of cultural steering including intermediaries' identification of and outreach to black middle- and upper-class consumers, as well as their construction of the value of black cultural goods, shapes the consumption of this group. This article also offers insight on segregated inclusion in the cultural sector (Accominotti, Khan and Storer, 2018). By elaborating how a racialized pattern of segregated inclusion prevails in cultural patronage, this analysis supports the view that cultural consumption contributes to elite

ethclass formation (Banks, 2017).[1] To gain a richer understanding of the demand side of patronage, it is useful to review the scholarship on culture and black middle- and upper-class identity.

Strategic assimilation and the black middle- and upper-class

An enduring question surrounding the black middle- and upper-class is "To what degree is race significant in their lives?" (Lacy, 2007; Neckerman et al., 1999; Pattillo-McCoy, 1999a, 1999b; Pattillo, 2007; Willie, 1989, 2003; Wilson, 1980). Like segmented assimilation theory which posits that one path of incorporation for immigrants is to become socioeconomically successful and maintain ethnic ties and culture (Portes and Zhou, 1993), strategic assimilation theory posits that for blacks, a move up the class hierarchy does not mean the abandonment of racial distinction. As Karyn Lacy (2004) asserts, middle-class blacks self-consciously nurture black identities for themselves and their children. She writes,

> Like immigrants associated with the third path of segmented assimilation, many middle-class blacks with access to majority white colleges, workplaces, and neighbourhoods continue to consciously retain their connections to the black world as well; through their interactions in these black spaces, middle-class blacks construct and maintain black racial identities. (p. 909)

Specifically, with respect to culture, there is growing evidence that some middle- and upper-class blacks engage in what I call *strategic acculturation*. Or, they seek out black culture to articulate and nurture their racial identity. Their wealth and other forms of capital are thus marshaled to support a form of cultural engagement that expresses and deepens black membership. For example, in their research comparing the arts participation of blacks and whites, Paul DiMaggio and Francie Ostrower (1990) find that participation in "historically Afro-American art forms" is greatest among blacks. They interpret blacks' higher engagement with black art forms, such as jazz, as a strategy for upwardly mobile blacks to symbolically maintain their racial membership. Research on art collecting also finds that middle-class blacks use engagement with black culture to construct their racial identity (Banks, 2010a; Banks, 2018; Grams, 2010; Halle, 1993).[2] Although E. Franklin Frazier ([1957] 1997) argued that middle-class blacks in earlier eras shunned black folk culture, there is evidence that stewardship of black art among upwardly mobile blacks is not a new phenomenon. In their research on art patronage in early 20th century Boston, Crystal M. Fleming and Lorraine E. Roses (2007) show how middle-class black women in the League of Women for Community Service labored to legitimate the work of black artists.

This body of scholarship explains black middle- and upper-class consumption of black culture through consumer demand. Or, strategic acculturation posits that middle- and upper-class blacks choose to consume black culture as part of their broader personal and collective projects to nurture black identity. However,

I suggest that another force is also at work – cultural steering by intermediaries. Below, I elaborate a model of black middle- and upper-class cultural consumption that considers the role of intermediaries in shaping markets.

Cultural steering and strategic acculturation in cultural markets

A more robust model of black middle- and upper-class consumption of black culture should consider a fuller range of actors in the markets. Markets are not only composed of consumers but also producers and intermediaries (Childress, 2017; Khaire, 2017; Maguire and Matthews, 2014). Though consumers acquire cultural goods and producers make them, intermediaries are the third party that stands in between them. Intermediaries not only physically bring together producers and consumers but they also play the role of matchmaker by producing the symbolic value of cultural goods. Since the symbolic value of cultural goods is greater than their material value, an especially important role of intermediaries in the creative economy is legitimating goods or framing them as objects worthy of consumption (Childress, 2017; Currid, 2007; Khaire, 2017; Maguire and Matthews, 2014; Mears, 2011). As Pierre Bourdieu (1993) describes, intermediaries in cultural fields are charged with the "production of belief." Here, I emphasize the role of intermediaries in bridging the spheres of cultural production and consumption via *cultural steering*.

I define *cultural steering* as the identification and recruitment of a specific segment of consumers to acquire a particular category of a product or service. In this approach, intermediaries such as marketers, fundraisers, and publicists work on behalf of cultural producers to find and convince consumers to "purchase" their products. This includes in-house teams who are directly employed by producers as well as independent contractors and firms who hire their services out on the market. In the for-profit marketplace, intermediaries typically find and urge consumers to exchange money in return for a cultural service or good. In the non-profit cultural marketplace, the exchanges that intermediaries are brokering between producers and consumers are those where the cultural good or service on offer is often more diffuse. Cultural consumers give a gift to the producer – usually money and also in-kind goods or services – in exchange for specific benefits. Browse the support section of any large cultural institution and you will likely find a menu of donation levels and their associated returns such as private previews, curated tours, recognition in annual reports, and subscriptions to print publications. In the case of cultural philanthropy, fundraisers are a key intermediary between donors and institutions. They identify and cultivate individuals who give money in exchange for these types of benefits. With big-gift cultural philanthropy, the benefits are commensurate with the large size of the donations and include perks such as naming rights on buildings and recognition on donor walls.

Although cultural steering is a practice that occurs by intermediaries across all sectors of cultural markets, in some cases, it is racialized. Or, intermediaries recruit consumers from a particular racial or ethnic group to purchase a specific subset of

cultural products or services. For example, there are Hispanic marketing agencies that specialize in cultivating Hispanic consumers and black agencies that specialize in the African American market (Dávila, 2001; Lamont and Molnár, 2001).[3] Michèle Lamont and Virág Molnár (2001) elaborate how black marketing agencies define African Americans as consumers who seek to establish their worth via high-status consumption and consumption that emphasizes their cultural distinction. I argue that in the case of the black middle- and upper-class, intermediaries steer them toward cultural products and services that are symbolically linked to the African Diaspora. Furthermore, even though it is certainly the case that intermediaries labor to convince members of the black middle- and upper-class that the ''black'' cultural products that they are advocating for are worthy, they also target this consumer group based on beliefs that they have a taste for black culture. These beliefs can be based on racial stereotypes. However, they can also be rooted in more formal knowledge. As part of their work, intermediaries engage in market research where they conduct surveys, focus groups, and interviews with individuals who could become consumers for the cultural products that they represent. This research provides them with a profile of the types of people for whom the cultural product or service is most likely to have the greatest appeal. It also provides them with a blue-print for how to best frame cultural products so that they find them attractive. Thus, intermediaries become aware of the preference that middle- and upper-middle class blacks have for consuming black culture through market research. Based on this knowledge, they reach out to recruit them to consume black cultural products.[4]

To summarize, I argue that black middle- and upper-class consumption of black culture cannot be accounted for by strategic acculturation alone. Instead, cultural steering involving intermediaries' identification of middle- and upper-class blacks as a potentially fruitful market segment, intermediaries' outreach to them, and intermediaries' construction of black cultural goods as worthy, also shapes black middle- and upper-class consumption. Below, I describe how the processes of strategic acculturation and cultural steering can help to shed light on million-dollar gifts to the NMAAHC by wealthy blacks.

Methods

To understand big-gift cultural philanthropy at the Smithsonian Institution by blacks, I rely on a database of million-dollar gifts at the cultural complex, as well as archival and ethnographic data on philanthropy at African American museums. I analyze gifts by black individuals, black families, and black middle-class social organizations such as the Links, Incorporated and Greek-Letter organizations.[5] To estimate the black rate of giving to the NMAAHC and the other Smithsonian museums, I use reports of Leadership Gifts in Smithsonian annual reports. Leadership Gifts are listed in a separate section of each report and document the source of the gift, its amount, and its purpose. All gifts in this section are

for $1 million or more. As the first Leadership Gift for the NMAAHC is listed in 2005 and the museum opened in 2016, I analyze annual reports that cover these years.

Using information listed in the annual reports, I created a database of donors who have given major gifts.[6] The database also includes information about demographic characteristics of donors such as their race and profession. Biographies and photos of donors were obtained from various databases, websites, and guides such as Who's Who in America and The Foundation Center; media sources, such as *The New York Times* and *New York Social Diary*; professional and personal sources, such as profiles on company and family foundation websites; and museum sources, such as annual reports and press releases. To racially and ethnically classify donors, I follow the approach used in other research on elite philanthropy (Abzug and Simonoff, 2004; Banks, 2017). Donors are classified as black based on self-identification or identification by others in any of the sources listed above, membership in black organizations (such as social and professional organizations), physical appearance, and/or information garnered in the course of my ethnographic research on African American museum philanthropy.[7]

To understand the meanings and motivations underlying donors' gifts and cultural steering, I rely on archival and ethnographic research on philanthropy at African American museums. This project draws on in-depth interviews collected by the author with over 80 supporters of African American museums in 11 cities, participant observation at museum events, interviews with museum staff and other stakeholders, archival museum documents and other texts, and photographs of museums, to cast light on why patrons give to African American museums. This ethnographic and archival database includes a confidential portion where patrons and museums are given pseudonyms and a public portion where real individual and institutional identities are used. In the case of the latter, data were gathered from publicly available sources such as the Smithsonian Institution Archives in Washington, D.C. Though the full set of data offers general insight, analysis in this article relies on information from the non-confidential portion of this trove of data.[8]

To gain insight on the meanings and motivations underlying Smithsonian gifts, I draw on personal statements from donors in sources such as Smithsonian annual reports, Smithsonian campaign documents, and media articles and videos. These texts were content analyzed using inductively identified codes.[9] To understand cultural steering, I draw on documents from the Smithsonian Archives in Washington, D.C. (such as fundraising reports), documents from the Smithsonian web archive (such as Advancement Committee minutes notes), fieldwork at public fundraising events (such as a panel with the NMAAHC fundraising team at the 2017 Association of African American Museums meeting), media texts on Smithsonian fundraising, as well as books, articles, and webinars on diversity and fundraising more broadly.

Giving to the Smithsonian

The Smithsonian Institution is the largest museum complex in the nation. Most Smithsonian museums are not racially and ethnically specific but some, such as the

NMAAHC, center on the culture of particular groups. The NMAAHC is not the first Smithsonian museum to center on the history and culture of people from the African Diaspora. When it was founded in 1967, the Anacostia Community Museum (ACM; then the Anacostia Neighborhood Museum) was designed to be a Smithsonian outpost that would serve the predominantly African American residents of the Anacostia community. As it evolved, ACM became distinguished for its focus on engaging local residents and documenting and interpreting the history of Anacostia. Over the ensuing decades, its focus evolved to center more on African American history at large. Its name was changed to the Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture in 1995. After the legislation for the NMAAHC was signed in 2003, it returned to a more local focus. The museum was given a new name in 2006, the Anacostia Community Museum, to reflect this less national focus (Smithsonian Institution Archives, 2019).

The other Smithsonian museum with a focus on the African Diaspora is the National Museum of African Art (NMAfA). It was founded in 1964 in the former home of Frederick Douglas. The NMAfA became a part of the Smithsonian complex in 1981 and it moved to a new building on the National mall in 1987 (National Museum of African Art, 2017). Traditional, modern, and contemporary African art are featured at the NMAfA. Although the ACM and the NMAfA share with the NMAAHC associations with the African Diaspora, the NMAAHC is distinguished by not only its national focus on African Americans but also its large size. For example, although the NMAAHC has about 163 full-time employees and around 37,000 artifacts, the NMAfA and the ACM, respectively, have about 34 and 18 full-time staff and around 10,000 and 2978 artifacts (Smithsonian Institution, 2015, 2016, 2017).

Although the capital campaign for the NMAAHC began a couple of years after the legislation to establish it was signed in 2003, the Smithsonian launched the quiet-phase of an institution-wide capital campaign in 2010 (Smithsonian Institution, 2014). With a goal of raising $1.5 billion dollars, it was the most ambitious and first campus-wide fundraising effort in the institution's history. The campaign continued through January 2018. The specific fundraising targets for each museum vary. At $270,000,000, the goal for the NMAAHC (which it surpassed) was the largest. Like the NMAAHC, fundraising aims for the National Museum of American History, the National Museum of Natural History, and the National Air and Space Museum were in the hundreds of millions. In contrast, museums such as the NMAfA and the ACM had more modest objectives to raise $15,000,000 and $1,700,000, respectively (Smithsonian Campaign, 2014).

During the period of study, black donors to the Smithsonian gave generously to the NMAAHC (Table 1). All of the three dozen black individuals, families, and black middle-class social organizations listed in the annual reports as giving Leadership Gifts gave to the museum. Most gifts to the NMAAHC were at the million-dollar level for which patrons received recognition on a donor wall made of glass on the museum's main floor. Larger gifts, like those of entertainment mogul

Table 1. Rates of giving to Smithsonian museums among black million-dollar donors (N = 36).[a]

National Museum of African American History and Culture	36	100.00%
National Museum of African Art	1	2.78%
Other museums and centers	0	0.00%

[a]Author's analysis of Leadership Gifts gifts listed in the Smithsonian Institution annual reports from 2005 to 2016.

Figure 1. Oprah Winfrey Theater, NMAAHC (author photo).

Oprah Winfrey and basketball star Michael Jordan, were acknowledged with naming rights in special sections of the museum. For example, Winfrey who gave $21,000,000 is acknowledged on the museum's first below ground floor. There, her name is emblazoned in gold at the entrance to the "Oprah Winfrey Theater" (Figure 1). With his $5,000,000 gift Jordan is recognized in a section of the museum focused on sports – "The Michael Jordan Hall" (Figure 2). In addition to giving to the NMAAHC, one family also gave a seven-figure donation to the NMAfA. Black Leadership Gift donors are not listed as giving to any other Smithsonian museums or centers during this period.[10] Why was the NMAAHC

Figure 2. The Michael Jordan Hall, NMAAHC (author photo).

so favored by these donors? Below, I will suggest that both strategic acculturation and cultural steering played a role.

Constructing identity

Actor and producer Samuel L. Jackson, along with his daughter and wife LaTanya and Zoe, gave a million-dollar donation to the NMAAHC. For Jackson, part of the museum's appeal is that it highlights the role of African Americans in the broader development of the United States. "It's wonderful to see it come to fruition," he says. In his eyes, the museum makes visible "... what my people's contribution has been to the development and growth of this country – where we came from, how we got here, and what we did once we got here, and how we overcame. And, it's a wonderful and moving and amazing, amazing story" (LIVEKellyandRyan, 2016).

The million-dollar gift from the foundation of The Links, Incorporated, a black middle- and upper-class women's social organization, was also motivated by an interest to preserve the historical narratives of blacks. "This museum will allow our rich African-American story to be told and displayed for all to see," said Margot James Copeland, the organization's national president. "The contributions

of our people, from the past and present, will be showcased, and will provide hope and inspiration to continue building on our great legacy'' (The Links, Incorporated, 2014).

Jackson's and Copeland's comments articulate not only a concern with African American identity at large but also specific aspects of racial identity. Research on black upper middle-class identity construction via art collecting demonstrates how varying facets of racial identity are constructed through cultural consumption (Banks, 2010a). Among these facets are history and worth. Or, cultural consumption is a vehicle through which middle- and upper-class blacks connect with and preserve narratives of the past that define the black experience in the United States. It is also a practice through which they nurture racial pride and establish collective worth. For these donors, the NMAAHC functions as a cultural institution that taps into both of these dimensions of black identity. By publicly presenting narratives of black history, the NMAAHC makes visible the distinct role that African Americans have played in building the nation. In this way, these donors see its role in preserving black history and nurturing the honor of African Americans as inextricably linked.

Entrepreneur Earl Stafford and his wife Amanda are also among the major black donors to the NMAAHC. Concern with racial pride and history also motivated their $2,000,000 gift to support a center for media arts at the museum (Figure 3). Earl Stafford recalls how he didn't learn about the Tuskegee Airmen, a group of black military pilots, until he was out of school and serving in the military himself. ''It took this white sergeant from Georgia to tell me about the Tuskegee Airmen,'' he remembers. ''I swore I would never let that happen again. We should know about our history'' (Gilgore, 2016).

A desire for their grandchildren to not experience this void in historical knowledge also motivated their gift. Stafford comments that he and his wife want their progeny to ''know about their history, be proud of their legacy and then know their responsibility to contribute to this American story'' (Gilgore, 2016). In this way, their patronage also demonstrates a concern with nurturing black identity intergenerationally. It is hoped that the NMAAHC will be a vehicle through which they are able to nurture pride in the accomplishments of African Americans across each generation of their family. Another facet of black identity that underlies the Stafford's gift is racial solidarity. ''Being a part of it is an inherent responsibility that we have particularly as African Americans,'' Earl Stafford says about the donation:

> This museum isn't only for African Americans. It's for all people to recognize the contributions that African Americans have made. As an African American, I just felt that I have a responsibility, and so do others, to further tell this story – to be a part of this story, and to be a part of the telling of this story. (Washington Business Journal, 2016)

Stafford's comments are reminiscent of upper-middle class black art collectors who purchase works by African American artists to help address racial inequities in the art market (Banks, 2010c; Grams, 2010).[11] They are also consistent with a broader

Figure 3. Sign for the Earl W. and Amanda Stafford Center for African American Media Arts, NMAAHC (author photo).

ethos of black uplift. Among the black middle- and upper-class, the ethos of black uplift is a racialized version of noblesse oblige. The latter ideology dictates that those who are privileged have a responsibility to help those with fewer resources and the former asserts that privileged blacks have a specific responsibility to spur the advancement of the race (Du Bois, [1903] 1996).

Tech entrepreneur Robert L. Smith's multimillion dollar donation to the NMAAHC was also motivated by a concern for black uplift. Talking with Lonnie Bunch, the NMAAHC's director, Smith describes what compels him to "give back":

> ... I always think about the Niagara Movement and how that ultimately led to what W.E.B. Du Bois was writing about. Those are the stories that impacted me and resonated in my life about... "What is my duty as I move forward in life to make sure that there are more on-ramps and opportunities for African Americans in this country?" So, not only am I a student of history, I realize the importance... that you constantly give back and lift all that you can along the way. (NMAAHC, 2016)

Also consistent with donors like the Staffords, history and pride are also undercurrents motivating Smith's gift. His millions support The Robert Frederick Smith Explore Your Family History Center in the museum (Figure 4). Aligned with

Figure 4. The Robert Frederick Smith Explore Your Family History Center, NMAAHC (author photo).

Smith's background in technology, the center features electronic resources, such as digitized records from the Freedmen's Bureau Project, that allow African Americans to discover their ancestral roots. Describing his interest in the initiative, Smith says,

> ... [W]e had stories in my family that we passed down from generation to generation and gave me great pride in who we were and what we stood for, and how we moved forward and how we advanced in our country... I think part of what this will do is start to really bring forward the values of who we were as African Americans and there are beautiful values. I think sometimes they get lost in the noise of what I call the media flood today. But what I think part of what this will do... is remind us who we are – what noble people we are and what it is we have accomplished and can accomplish in this country and in the world... I think that's one of the things that is going to be an outgrowth of this that is going to be spectacular. I think this younger generation is going to say, "Wow, I didn't realize that we did all of these things and my family has done all of these things," because they get flooded with the day-to-day of it. (NMAAHC, 2016)

For Smith, the NMAAHC is not only significant as an institution that will narrate the collective experiences of African Americans but also one that will allow individuals to discover and develop pride in their personal family histories. Smith hopes that the family center will help to unearth the ancestral legacies of African American families across the United States. He also envisions that the pride which is engendered through learning about the past will spur African Americans to more fully develop their potentialities and talents. Or, by learning about past contributions, African Americans will be set on a path of future achievement. Winfrey and Jordan share similar sentiments when they describe the role of the museum for African American self-actualization. Winfrey says (Davis, 2016),

> Everybody will get to hear how there's a shared story we, as African Americans, all have. And we'll get to see ourselves rooted in that story in such a way that it can do nothing but lift us to be better and to do better. That is my hope for the museum.

Commenting on his gift, Jordan predicts that ''[i]t's [the NMAAHC] going to be a special place, one where African Americans can take pride in our heritage, kids can learn about our history, and where we can find hope and inspiration'' (Smithsonian Campaign, 2016).

To summarize, these comments suggest that one reason that the NMAAHC was attractive to black donors is that they viewed it as closely tied to their racial identity.[12] By giving to this museum, they were actualizing values of black uplift and nurturing black history and pride. For donors with a concern with black identity, there was no other museum at the Smithsonian that tapped into this aspect of the self in such a monumental and exhaustive fashion. However, as I will elaborate below, the popularity of the NMAAHC among this group should not only be understood as arising from its appeal as a vehicle of black identity construction but also from cultural steering by fundraisers.

Cultural steering

Efforts to establish a national museum focused on African American culture reach back to the early 20th century, yet significant headway was made when the 107th Congress passed the National Museum of African American History and Culture Plan for Action Presidential Commission Act of 2001. This legislation required the formation of a special commission that would develop an action plan to establish the NMAAHC. Developing a fundraising plan was part of their charge (Smithsonian Institution Archives, 2003). To work on this task, the commission hired two fundraising consultants – J. Richard Taft of the Taft Organization and Alice Green Burnett of Advancement Solutions. Taft and Burnett led a team given the task of conducting prospect research (the term for market research in the fundraising sector) to learn more about potential donors for the museum. Using a mixed-methods strategy, the team used in-depth interviews, focus groups, and a questionnaire to learn about the tastes and preferences of prospects. One consistent

finding was that black prospects were especially enthusiastic about the idea of a national African American museum. Although the fundraisers found that the "case for support – as currently constituted – evokes a powerful response from African Americans," they noted that the "enthusiasm from the non-African American community appears to be more restrained..." (Smithsonian Institution Archives, 2003: 7). One part of the fundraisers' plan was a direct mail campaign. Based on their findings, they predicted that the "African American market segment may prove to be unusually responsive to the NMAAHC" (Smithsonian Institution Archives, 2003: 37). Their prospect research suggested that not only would a large swath of African American prospects give to the effort but that they would give big: "Many of the more affluent African Americans involved in our study indicated that they would be prepared to give 'sacrificially' in order to see the dream of such a museum finally achieved" (Smithsonian Institution Archives, 2003: 23).

After the legislation to establish the NMAAHC was signed in 2003, the fundraising plan was enacted. As noted in the fundraising plan, it would be necessary for fundraisers to "[r]aise awareness, stimulate interest, and establish the credibility of the Museum" (Smithsonian Institution Archives, 2003: 7). It would also take millions to build a fundraising infrastructure capable of recruiting and cultivating donors to give millions. The fundraising plan projected over $12,000,000 in campaign costs in the first 5 years of the campaign (Smithsonian Institution Archives, 2003: 71).

The core of the fundraising infrastructure was an internal team of staff (assisted by board members) at the NMAAHC. Staff at the Smithsonian Office of Advancement and consultants also worked on the effort. One distinction of the NMAAHC fundraising team was their expertise in raising money from the African American community. For example, Adrienne Brooks, the NMAAHC's Director of Advancement, was formerly Vice President for Institutional Advancement at Xavier University, a Historically Black College and University (HBCU). Margaret Turner, a senior major gifts officer at the NMAAHC also previously worked in advancement at an HBCU (Meharry Medical College). "So much of what Margaret does is in the African-American community," another fundraiser commented about Turner's expertise. "The wealth of that community is often overlooked" (Hall, 2014). Implementing and further developing the fundraising plan, Brooks, Turner, and other staff identified and cultivated black prospects. This level of black recruitment was unprecedented for a fundraising team at the Smithsonian. One target was black organizations.

When Bunch attended the January 2013 Smithsonian Advancement Committee meeting, he gave an update on the museum's fundraising efforts. Minutes from the meeting reveal the staff's strategy of reaching out to black organizations:

> ... [T]he museum is also focusing in 2013 on African American fraternities and sororities, Mr. Bunch noted, adding that the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority has already raised $500,000 for the museum with a goal of raising $1 million. (Smithsonian Institution, 2013)

The cultivation of these prospects was a timely process that involved already existing networks. Turner, a member of the Links, Incorporated, stewarded their gift to the NMAAHC. She nurtured a relationship between the two organizations for several years before asking for a gift. Copeland notes that ''[i]t was three years before we ever got the official request'' (Hall, 2014). Along with black organizations, fundraisers also zeroed in on HBCU graduates as well as prosperous blacks appearing on lists like *Black Enterprise's* ''Most Powerful Blacks on Wall Street'' and the *Forbes*' lists of the wealthy (Dingle, 2012; McGlone, 2016). Smith was one of these prospects. As the fundraising team was identifying potential donors, his name kept coming up. ''We wanted to meet him. And soon,'' Bunch recalls (Alexander, 2016). Smith's donation, among one of the museum's largest, was facilitated by their cultivation efforts. Jackson and the Staffords were also cultivated by the fundraising team. Jackson attended an exclusive fundraising reception at the home of Hollywood icons Denzel and Pauletta Washington that was coordinated with Anna Barber, then Senior Major Gifts Officer at the museum (Sandoval, 2017).

The Staffords were recruited by Turner. Her cultivation of their gift illustrates how fundraisers nurtured the belief that giving to the museum was a worthy undertaking. Turner was sensitive to the deep emotional resonance of the NMAAHC for black prospects. ''I've worked in a lot of places,'' she remarks. ''This is the first project I've worked on that is so personal to individuals, and that's one of the reasons I enjoy working in that area. It's their history, they want to leave a legacy for their children...'' (The Chronicle of Philanthropy, 2014). Through her partnership with Jackie Serwer, the museum's Chief curator, Turner was able to further enhance the perceived value that black prospects like the Staffords attached to the NMAAHC. Turner and Serwer describe their outreach to Earl Stafford:

> Margaret Turner: When she [Jackie] introduced me, we became a team and we started working with him on a gift as well as on artifacts, and it just worked. He was very interested in the art collection, he was a new art collector himself, so Jackie was great in helping him in that area, keeping him updated on what we were doing on the artifacts. I was keeping him updated on how we were doing on our fundraising.
>
> Jackie Serwer: One afternoon we had made an appointment to go out to his offices... We talked a little bit about some of the details of the museum, and how the building was going and so on, and we had a great conversation. I was so pleased the he and Margaret had gotten along so well, and then he said ''I'm going to write a check for you for $10,000.'' The two of us looked at each other and our faces fell. We looked back at him and he kind of chuckled and said, ''Just kidding, I going to give you a million dollars.'' (The Chronicle of Philanthropy, 2014)

Other donors were also encouraged to give after becoming more intimate with the collection. One practice of cultivation fundraisers used was to give prospects personal tours of the museum's temporary gallery (Davis, 2016). Prospects also had opportunities to meet with Bunch who outlined the significance of the museum.

Amanda Stafford describes how one such meeting influenced her family's gift. "When Lonnie came to speak to us he was inspiring... This museum is so significant we wanted to fund it all but we gave what we could" (Dingle, 2012). Practices such as holding cultivation events where prospects were presented with the story of the museum and giving prospects access to staff and collections helped position the NMAAHC as an important cultural institution worthy of large donations. These activities were enabled by a large and costly fundraising infrastructure.

To summarize, cultural steering contributed to the high rate of black giving to the NMAAHC via identification, connection, and construction. First, through prospect research, wealthy blacks were identified as an important donor segment for the museum. Second, fundraisers actively reached out to connect with these prospects. Finally, through their interactions with prospects, donors helped to construct the value of the museum.[13]

Conclusion

This article casts light on cultural consumption among the black middle- and upper-class through examining big-gift cultural philanthropy at the Smithsonian. I develop the concept of *cultural steering* to help explain why black donors to the Smithsonian favored the NMAAHC over other museums in the complex. I suggest that this case, as well as the broader consumption of black culture by the black middle- and upper-class, can be partly explained by cultural steering. Though middle- and upper-class blacks may be attracted to black culture as a practice of black identity construction, they are also steered toward it by intermediaries. To conclude, I discuss the contributions of this study for the scholarship on the black middle- and upper-class and the literature on class and culture.

First, this article offers fresh insight on why race continues to be salient for middle- and upper-class blacks (Pattillo-McCoy, 1999a). Previous literature emphasizes that the salience of race in the cultural lives of middle- and upper-class blacks is a function of choice. In particular, it highlights how they self-consciously demand black culture. This is consistent with strategic assimilation theory. However, this article suggests that market forces also have a role to play in the black middle- and upper-class' consumption of black culture. Through cultural steering where intermediaries identify and reach out to black middle- and upper-class consumers and they construct black cultural goods as valuable, they also influence this group's consumption.

The analysis also deepens the understanding of segregated inclusion in the cultural sphere. In their research on patronage at the New York Philharmonic during the Gilded Age, (Accominotti, Khan and Storer, 2018) develop the concept of s*egregated inclusion*. Contrary to the monopolization thesis which suggests that cultural purification contributed to elite formation via exclusion of non-elites from high culture, they find that cultural purification was actually accompanied by integration of non-elites in the world of high art. Despite a degree of class integration in the symphony

hall, elites maintained their distinction by sitting in separate areas. This is an example of segregated inclusion or a form of inclusion in which new types of boundaries emerge between previously separate groups (Accominotti, Khan and Storer, 2018). In this article, I illustrate a special pattern of segregated inclusion in the cultural sphere – racialized segregated inclusion. Even though wealthy blacks have become major philanthropists at the Smithsonian, they are clustered at one museum – a museum that specializes in African American culture. This finding supports other research showing how cultural patronage contributes to ethclass formation (Banks, 2010c). In his research on ethnicity, Milton Gordon (1964) describes how horizontally segregated ethnic groups are further separated vertically into class groups. Thus, despite sharing the same class status, Gordon argues that members of the black and white middle-and upper-class are concentrated in different organizational spaces. This article elaborates how cultural consumption functions as a form of ethclass formation by bringing together members of the black upper-class in a specifically black segment of the cultural world.

When Bart Landry's book *The New Black Middle Class* was published in 1987, he noted that the paltry number of extremely wealthy blacks was too small to constitute a true black upper-class. In the ensuing years, the fortunes of blacks at the top of the class structure have improved by some measures (Bayer and Charles, 2016; Lacy, 2007). The growing wealth of this group made the realization of a national African American museum possible. It was the million-dollar gifts of blacks like Winfrey and Smith who helped to pay the bill for this monumental museum. As the black class structure shifts to include a greater proportion of high net-worth individuals, it is critical to examine their patterns of cultural consumption. How they consume has important consequences for racial and class formation and the vitality of the black cultural sector. This article suggests that due to strategic acculturation and cultural steering, their patterns of cultural consumption will not mirror those of the white upper-class. Instead, if these practices continue, upper-class blacks will have cultural lives that are distinguished by higher engagement with forms of culture symbolically linked to blackness.

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Notes

1. In his research on ethnic group relations, Milton Gordon (1964) describes an ethclass group as a collective that is bounded by both race and class. Groups such as the black middle- and upper-class and the white middle- and upper-class are ethclass groups.
2. This article focuses specifically on cultural consumption. However, it should be noted that the broader research on black middle- and upper-class consumption finds evidence that middle- and upper-class blacks articulate their racial identity and political values through consuming goods such as homes and groceries (Crockett and Wallendorf, 2004).
3. See Branchik and Davis (2009) for a historical overview of the black middle- and upper-class market segment. Also, see Crockett (2008) for an analysis of marketing blackness to the mass market.
4. The elaboration of cultural steering here differs from that of racial steering addressed in the scholarship on housing searches. In the housing market, racial steering is often defined as a process whereby prospective racial and ethnic minority home buyers are guided by real estate agents toward minority neighborhoods and away from white neighborhoods (Turner, 2013: 13). In contrast, while the elaboration of cultural steering here emphasizes how intermediaries actively encourage middle- and upper-class blacks to consume black culture, it does not emphasize how cultural intermediaries actively discourage them not to consume "mainstream" culture.
5. Foundation gifts are included if they are associated with black individuals or families (e.g. at least one of the named family members is black). See Lawrence Otis Graham's *Our Kind of People* (1999) for a discussion of the organizational life of middle- and upper-class blacks. Other black organizational gifts, such as corporate gifts, are not included in the analysis.
6. The Smithsonian Institution publicly reports large gifts via other streams as well. For example, each annual report also lists major gifts for the year in a separate section at the end of annual reports. There is also a section at the end of annual reports listing individual "benefactors" who over the course of their entire giving history have donated $1 million or more to the Smithsonian as well as foundations and corporations that have in their donation history given a single gift of that amount. Individual museums such as the NMAAHC sometimes also have separate listings of major donors. I use Leadership Gifts to estimate black rates of giving because they are arguably the most comprehensive source of public data about large gifts at the Smithsonian. The other listings in the annual report do not note what the gift was for so it is not possible to know whether it went to the NMAAHC or another museum. Relying on separate lists from each museum also has its limits as not all museums report this information. In cases where lists are available, I analyzed the race of donors. These findings are consistent with the analysis using Leadership Gifts – for example, major black donors to the Smithsonian favor the NMAAHC. In some cases, the separate donor list for the NMAAHC includes names not discussed in the annual reports. These cases are not included as part of the formal analysis for this article.
7. It should be noted that race is a socially constructed category that is both internally and externally established (Cornell and Hartmann, [1998] 2007). Or, we have a personal understanding of ourselves racially and we are also racially classified by others (Jenkins, 2000). Even though there is often overlap in these categories, this is not always the case. This study captures the internal dimension of racial identity by relying

on data such as media reports where donors describe themselves as black and membership in black organizations that they have self-consciously joined. Other data, such as public accounts where they are identified as black by others, capture the external dimension of identity.

8. This includes publicly available data such as data gathered from archives, panels, and annual reports. The findings presented here concerning strategic acculturation and cultural steering are consistent with evidence in the full dataset.
9. Videos were transcribed, and for clarity, some words and phrases such as "you know" are omitted.
10. Among million-dollar donors – including individuals, families, and middle-class social organizations – to the Smithsonian, blacks gave to the NMAAHC at a higher rate than other racial and ethnic groups. It is also the case that the majority of million-dollar donors – including individuals, families, and middle-class social organizations – to the NMAAHC were black. This high level of clustering of black donors at one museum is demonstrative of segregated inclusion that can exist in cultural spheres (Accominotti et al., 2018).
11. This statement also offers insight on donors' concern with integrating black history into broader American history.
12. To gain insight on donors' interest in black culture prior to giving to the NMAAHC, I examined their patronage history. Sources such as GuideStar provided insight on their trusteeship at other black cultural institutions and annual reports and campaign documents offered background on their financial support of other black cultural institutions. To the extent possible, I also explored donors' histories of collecting black art and artifacts. I found evidence that most donors had engaged in black cultural patronage prior to supporting the NMAAHC.
13. To put the cultivation of black donors at the NMAAHC into further context, it is useful to make note of my analysis of fundraising records from other museums in the Smithsonian archives. With the exception of the other museums associated with the African Diaspora – the Anacostia Community Museum (ACM) and the National Museum of African Art (NMAfA) – I have not come across records indicating large-scale and consistent efforts to cultivate donors of African descent at other Smithsonian museums. In the case of the ACM and NMAfA, I have not come across any evidence suggesting that these types of cultivation efforts have been as heavily resourced as those at the NMAAHC.

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