



Article

# Ethnicity, Class and Trusteeship at African-American and Mainstream Museums

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## Abstract

While Pierre Bourdieu argues that cultural capital is grounded in distinct aesthetic knowledge and tastes among elites, Francie Ostrower emphasizes that cultural capital grows out of the social organization of elite participation in the arts. This article builds on Ostrower's perspective on cultural capital, as well as Milton Gordon's concept of the ethclass group and Prudence Carter's concept of black cultural capital, to elaborate how culture's importance for class and ethnic cohesion is rooted in the separate spheres of arts philanthropy among black and white elites. The argument is empirically illustrated using the case of arguably the most prominent mainstream and African-American museums in New York City – the Metropolitan Museum of Art (the Met) and the Studio Museum in Harlem (SMH). Findings show that relative to the Met board the SMH board is an important site of unification for elite blacks, and in comparison to the SMH board, the Met board is a notable site of cohesion for elite whites. This article advances theory and research on cultural capital by elaborating how it varies among elite ethclass groups. Moreover, it highlights how the growth of African-American museums not only adds color to the museum field, but also fosters bonds among the black middle and upper class.

## Keywords

capital, cultural capital, black cultural capital, elites, ethclass, trusteeship, arts, philanthropy, African-American, black, museums, ethnic museums, ethnicity

## Introduction

While Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1984; Bourdieu et al., 1991) argues that cultural capital is grounded in distinct aesthetic knowledge and tastes among elites, Francie Ostrower (1999) emphasizes that cultural capital grows out of the social organization of elite

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participation in the arts. This article builds on Ostrower's (1999) perspective on cultural capital, as well as Milton Gordon's (1964) concept of the ethclass group and Prudence Carter's (2003) concept of black cultural capital, to elaborate how culture's importance for class and ethnic cohesion is rooted in the philanthropic sphere of arts organizations. Drawing on the case of patronage at African-American and 'mainstream' museums, this article conceptually elaborates how black museums are a site of social cohesion for the black elite and mainstream museums foster social ties among the white elite. The argument is empirically illustrated using the case of arguably the most prominent mainstream and African-American museums in New York City: the Metropolitan Museum of Art (the Met) and the Studio Museum in Harlem (SMH). Findings show that the SMH board brings together a larger proportion of black elite individuals, including those who have preexisting ties such as alumni from the same Ivy League schools, and the Met board connects a higher proportion of elites whites, such as billionaires.

This study advances theory and research on cultural capital by elaborating how it varies among elite ethclass groups. Also, as the first African-American museum (the National Museum of African American History and Culture) is set to open on the National Mall in 2016, and the SMH readies to break ground on a new US\$122 million home in 2017, it is of growing importance to understand how the philanthropic sphere of African-American museums impacts ethnic social divisions within the elite. This article suggests that growth in African-American museums not only adds diversity to the field of arts institutions, but that it also fosters cohesion within the black middle and upper class. As new African-American museums are added to cities such as Washington, DC and existing African-American museums in communities such as Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Macon, GA expand, social bonds among the black elite will very likely be established and refreshed.<sup>1</sup> The argument developed in this article also sheds light on how the even broader diversification of the museum field, such as the establishment of new Latino and Asian-American museums (Loukaitou-Sideris and Grodach, 2004), may foster intra-ethnic social bonds within the middle and upper class.

## **Class, Ethnicity, Culture and Cohesion**

### *The Social Organization of Elite Participation in the Arts*

In Bourdieu's (1984) conceptualization of cultural capital, the mechanism linking class and culture is aesthetic knowledge and tastes. According to this perspective, the middle and upper class are unified by an appreciation for and knowledge about high culture, and a rejection of popular culture. Responding to critiques that the middle and upper class are not unified by high cultural tastes and knowledge,<sup>2</sup> Ostrower (1999) develops an alternative model of cultural capital.

Ostrower (1999) argues that the arts function as cultural capital, not necessarily because the middle and upper class have a deep appreciation for and knowledge about high culture, but rather because they participate in elite arts organizations in a distinct fashion. While elite arts institutions serve a cross-section of social classes, the world of philanthropy at these institutions is a space that is dominated by elites.<sup>3</sup> Through serving on boards, attending fundraisers, and engaging in other philanthropic activities that support

the arts, elites establish and renew relationships with one another. The concentration of elites in the philanthropic space of elite arts organizations not only contributes to elite cohesion because it facilitates interaction among elites, but also because it nourishes elite identity. The disproportionate involvement of elites in high arts philanthropy means that support for these institutions becomes an important lifestyle characteristic that marks membership of the elite and which garners social status.<sup>4</sup>

I build on Ostrower's model of cultural capital to elaborate how the social organization of elite participation in the arts contributes not only to elite cohesion, but also elite cohesion within specific ethnic segments of the elite. To do this, I incorporate Milton Gordon's (1964) concept of ethclass groups and Prudence Carter's (2003) concept of black cultural capital into Ostrower's model.

### *Culture and Ethclass Cohesion*

In his research on ethnic assimilation, Milton Gordon (1964) not only distinguishes group boundaries based on ethnic 'vertical stratifications' but also social class 'horizontal stratifications'. He describes groups created by these intersecting boundaries as 'ethclass' groups. Under Gordon's classification, the middle and upper class are subdivided into specific ethclass groups such as the black upper-middle class and the white upper-middle class. According to Gordon, while the middle and upper class 'tend to act alike and have the same values even if they have different ethnic backgrounds' (1964: 52), social participation within the middle and upper class, including primary relationships and organizational affiliations, is concentrated within the ethclass group.

Based on Gordon's conceptualization of ethnic and class boundaries, while we should expect there to be a degree of cohesiveness within the middle and upper class as a whole, we should also expect there to be cohesiveness among specific ethclass groups within the middle and upper class. Indeed, an emerging body of literature emphasizes that there are differences in the cultural engagement of elite ethclass groups. For example, in their research on ethnicity and arts participation, Paul DiMaggio and Francie Ostrower (1990) note that while the black middle class is engaged with historically Euro-American forms of music at similar levels as their white counterparts, they are more engaged with black music. Research on participation in the visual arts among the black middle and upper class also emphasizes a pattern of engagement with high culture typical of the elite, coupled with a distinct focus on African-American culture. For example, ethnographic research on art patronage among upper-middle-class blacks in New York City and Atlanta, Georgia, illustrates how collecting African-American art is central to the status culture of this group (Banks, 2010a, 2010b).<sup>5</sup>

Prudence Carter's (2003) research on ethnicity and culture situates black engagement with black culture as a specific form of cultural capital: black cultural capital. In her research on working-class black teens, Carter argues that certain aesthetic preferences and knowledge, such as listening to hip hop and wearing urban fashion, can be considered black cultural capital because they facilitate ethnic bonds among the youth.

This emergent body of research illustrates that there is a link between the arts and elite ethclass cohesion, and that black culture, and not just mainstream high culture, can function as cultural capital. Bringing these perspective into Ostrower's argument, I argue that

one important mechanism linking the arts and elite ethclass cohesion is the social organization of elite ethclass participation in the arts – specifically, engagement in the philanthropic sphere of different ethnically specific arts organizations. Philanthropic activity at mainstream arts organizations functions as elite white cultural capital by disproportionately bringing together white elites. In contrast, philanthropy at African-American arts organizations exists as a specific form of black cultural capital – black elite cultural capital – because it disproportionately connects elite blacks.

## Methods

I draw on the case of art museums in New York City to illustrate this argument. The ethnically diverse field of art museums in the city, as well ethnic diversity among the city's elite, make New York City an ideal community through which to examine how arts philanthropy functions as cultural capital among the black elite and the white elite. I illustrate this conceptual framework by studying among the oldest and arguably most prestigious continuously operating mainstream museum in New York City, the Met, and the longest operating and most valorized African-American museum in the city, the SMH.

This article uses primary and secondary sources, such as archival documents on the history of the Met and the SMH, to describe the ethnic and class organization of museums in New York City. To measure black elite cohesion at each museum, I examine the proportion and number of trustees at each museum who are black and have one of the following elite characteristics: work in the business and finance sector,<sup>6</sup> are billionaires,<sup>7</sup> serve on the boards of publically traded companies in the United States, serve on the board of their family's foundation,<sup>8</sup> attended an Ivy League school,<sup>9</sup> serve on the board of an elite cultural institution in New York City,<sup>10</sup> and have a noted art collection.<sup>11</sup> Elite white cohesion at each museum is measured by the percentage and number of trustees who are white and have one of these elite characteristics. While there are other measures of elite status, the first four characteristics capture trustees with high stocks of economic capital and the last three capture trustees with high levels of cultural capital.

Following other research on the ethnic backgrounds of trustees (Abzug and Simonoff, 2004), participants are classified as black or white based on membership in ethnic organizations (such as professional groups like black business associations), identification in the media (such as newspaper profiles where trustees either categorize themselves ethnically or are categorized by others), physical appearance, and ethnographic data. For any one trustee at least two forms of these types of evidence are used to establish ethnic identity.<sup>12,13</sup>

Names of trustees were obtained from the 990 returns submitted in 2011 from each institution.<sup>14</sup> Biographies and photos of trustees were obtained from databases, websites, and guides such as The Foundation Center, Who's Who in America, Guidestar, and Standard & Poor's Register of Corporations, Directors and Executives; museum sources such as annual reports and press releases; media sources, such as *The New York Times* and *New York Social Diary*; and professional sources, such as profiles on company websites.<sup>15</sup>

The next section describes the ethnic and class organization of museums in New York City. Following this, the cohesion of black and white elites on each museum board is illustrated.

## Findings

### *The Ethnic and Class Organization of Museums in New York City*

Like other major metropolitan areas in the United States, the field of museums in New York City is diverse. Despite being one of many major museums there, the Met arguably stands at the center of the city's museum field. It is the largest museum of art there, and its collection and exhibitions are regularly valorized by art critics. The SMH is the major African-American museum in the city. It is distinguished from other African-American museums by its size and status. It is the biggest African-American museum in the metropolis, its exhibitions are regularly lauded by cultural critics, and its artist-in-residence program is recognized for nurturing the careers of international art stars such as Kara Walker, David Hammons, Julie Mehretu, Wangechi Mutu and Kehinde Wiley.

Each museum focuses on collecting, exhibiting and interpreting art within specific ethnic traditions. The Met has a focus on 'great' art from across ethnic traditions coupled with a historical centering on Western culture. The SMH focuses on culture from the African diaspora, with a special focus on African-American art.

The Met was among a group of other major museums founded in the late 19th century in the United States.<sup>16</sup> It was established in 1870 by elite white men in the city who worked in fields such as business and politics. Founders intended it to be an institution that collected and exhibited art as well as educated the public about art and culture. While the mission statement of the museum in its founding days made reference to art in the most general terms, in practice collecting and exhibiting generally centered on art and sculpture rooted in Western civilization (Howe, 1913). For example, the first object to enter the Met's collection was a Roman sarcophagus. The following year 171 European paintings were acquired by the museum (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2013). Similarly, while one of the first exhibitions included art from China and Japan, 'Old Masters' and antiquities were also featured (Howe, 1913).

Today, the Met's mission statement defines the museum's focus as mainstream in nature and centered on collecting, displaying, and interpreting 'works of art that collectively represent the broadest spectrum of human achievement' (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2013: 10). Along with departments centered on Western art, such as European paintings and Greek and Roman art, there are also departments dedicated to art from non-Western regions of the world, such as the Department of Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas, and the Department of Asian Art. Similarly, there is also increasing focus on contemporary minority artists in the United States.<sup>17</sup>

Like other African-American museums, the SMH was largely established in response to the lack of diversity at mainstream museums (Burns, 2013; Wilson, 2012). It opened in the ferment of the civil rights era when activists critiqued the cultural oppression of blacks. During this time black artists and others sympathetic to their plight picketed in front of New York City museums, such as the Met and the Whitney Museum of American Art, to protest the lack of black artists in collections and exhibitions, and the marginalizing approaches to the display of their work on the rare occasions it was exhibited (Cooks, 2007, 2011).

Out of this context, the SMH was established in 1968 in the predominately black community of Harlem in Manhattan. It was originally intended to provide exhibition and studio space for artists. Over the years, the museum has evolved as a collecting museum that acquires art by black artists working in the United States and other parts of the world such as the Caribbean and Africa (Studio Museum in Harlem, 2015; Studio Museum in Harlem and Gallery Association of New York State, 1994).

Just as art museums in New York City are organized so that separate institutions specialize in featuring the art of different ethnic groups, they are also organized so that within each institution there is a distinct sphere of philanthropy. The philanthropic spheres of the Met and the SMH are dedicated towards governance and providing money, art and other resources to the museums. Philanthropic activities include practices such as sitting on the board of trustees and committees, attending fundraising galas and luncheons, and participating in special events such as tours of collectors' homes. For example, both museums have major fundraising galas each year. They also have special membership categories that provide experiences such as visiting artists' studios and the homes of major collectors, and getting private tours of exhibitions from curators. To illustrate how the philanthropic sphere of each museum is divided by ethnicity, I will now describe how black elites cluster on the board of the SMH and white elites cluster on the board of the Met.

### *Elite Ethclass Cohesion on the SMH and Met Boards*

The boards of both museums are similar in that most trustees are elite by at least one of the measures of elite status that are explored in this study. However, their ethnic compositions differ considerably (see Table 1). While over 90% of trustees on the SMH board are black, less than 10% of trustees on the Met board are black. In contrast, most trustees on the Met board are white (almost three-quarters), and less than 10% of SMH board members are white. Looking specifically at elite ethclass membership on both boards, the group that dominates the SMH board is the black elite. Most trustees on the SMH board are both black and have at least one elite characteristic examined in this study (70.83%). In contrast, it is white elites who predominate on the Met board. Close to 65% of trustees on the board are white and have at least one characteristic of elite status investigated here.

While the dominant ethclass group on the Met board is white, elite blacks also have a presence there. All three black board members on the Met board are also elite. This means that to some degree there are opportunities for elite black cohesion on the Met board. However, the small proportion of black elite individuals on the Met board means that each of them has limited opportunities to nurture such ties. Any one black trustee there can foster at most two relationships with another person in the black elite, whereas on the SMH board any one black elite trustee can potentially form ties with another 16 members of the group. The small proportion of black elite trustees on the Met board also means that it is not a signifier of black elite collective identity. Museums become symbols of ethclass groups based not only on the art and other artifacts that are housed within them, but also on the people who are associated with them. The dominance of elite blacks on the SMH board allows it, and the museum as a whole, to stand as a symbol of collective identity for elite blacks.

**Table 1.** Characteristics of trustees at the Studio Museum in Harlem and the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

	Studio Museum in Harlem <sup>a</sup> <i>n</i> = 24		Metropolitan Museum of Art <sup>b</sup> <i>n</i> = 37	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Elite	19	79.17	31	83.78
White	2	8.33	27	72.97
Black	22	91.67	3	8.11
White elite	2	8.33	24	64.86
Business/finance sector	0	0.00	18	48.65
Corporate board	0	0.00	8	21.62
Family foundation	1	4.17	15	40.54
Billionaire	1	4.17	8	21.62
Ivy League	1	4.17	13	35.14
Elite cultural nonprofit	0	0.00	6	16.22
Noted art collection	1	4.17	10	27.03
Black elite	17	70.83	3	8.11
Business/finance sector	11	45.83	1	2.70
Corporate board	2	8.33	1	2.70
Family foundation	1	4.17	0	0.00
Billionaire	0	0.00	0	0.00
Ivy League	13	54.17	2	5.41
Elite cultural nonprofit	4	16.67	0	0.00
Noted art collection	6	25.00	0	0.00

<sup>a</sup>Educational information could not be located for four board members. Workforce participation could not be identified for two trustees.

<sup>b</sup>Educational information could not be located for two trustees.

Just as all of the blacks on the Met board are elite, both of the whites on the SMH board are also elite. The fact that there are at least two white elite individuals on the board means that there is an opportunity for cohesion within this ethclass group. However, the very small number means that the opportunities for nurturing ties within the group are far less than they are at the Met. At most, each elite white trustee on the SMH board can form a tie with one other member of the ethclass group. In contrast, on the Met board any one elite white trustee can potentially form ties with 23 other elite whites. The dominance of elite whites on the board allows trusteeship at the museum to function as an activity that reinforces the bonds of the ethclass group.

Not only are elite blacks in general more concentrated on the SMH board, but specific subgroups of the black elite are more concentrated there. In fact, there are no instances where the proportion of specific subgroups of black elites are not more represented on the SMH board than the Met board. Moreover, with the exception of two black elite subgroups – being a billionaire and being on the board of one's family foundation – there are always at least two black elites of all types on the SMH board. In contrast, there is

only one subgroup – black Ivy Leaguers – who have at least two members on the Met board. This means that the opportunities for specific black elite subgroups to nurture intragroup ties are substantially limited on the Met board. They are often non-existent because there is only one member of the subgroup on the board or none at all. In contrast, on the SMH board intragroup black elite ties can be nurtured among black Ivy Leaguers, blacks in business and on corporate boards, blacks who serve on the boards of elite cultural nonprofits, and noted black art collectors.

The most salient case of the SMH board fostering elite black subgroup ties is of black Ivy Leaguers. Not only is the proportion of this subgroup greater on the SMH board than on the Met board, but in fact a slight majority (54.17%) of trustees on the SMH board are blacks with a degree from an Ivy League school. The large proportion of these graduates on the board means that trusteeship at the SMH is to some degree a symbol of collective identity for this specific subgroup of elite blacks. Perhaps even more striking is the relatively large proportion of blacks on the SMH board with a degree from one specific Ivy League institution. Over one-quarter (29.17%) of the SMH board is comprised of blacks who graduated from Harvard. Blacks from other Ivy League schools on the SMH board can also find fellow alumni to bond with. There are three black graduates from Columbia (12.50%) and three from Yale (12.50%).

Since there are two blacks with Ivy League degrees on the Met board, it also offers an opportunity to nurture bonds within this specific subgroup of black elites. However, the opportunities are fewer. Each black Ivy Leaguer on the SMH board can potentially build or nourish ties with 12 other black Ivy leaguers. In contrast, on the Met board each black Ivy Leaguer can only bond with one other. Moreover, whereas on the SMH board black Ivy Leaguers can specifically nurture ties with those from their alma mater, there are no such opportunities on the Met board, as one black Ivy League graduate has a degree from Harvard and the other is a graduate of Columbia.

Like black Ivy Leaguers, there is also a higher proportion of blacks with other types of cultural capital on the SMH board. While there are no blacks who are on the boards of elite cultural nonprofits or with noted art collections on the Met board, there are four (16.67%) and six (25.00%) blacks with these characteristics, respectively, on the SMH board. Moreover, there are two elite cultural boards where two black SMH board members currently sit. Two SMH trustees are on the board for the New York Public Library board and two sit on the board of the Whitney Museum of American Art. As such, the SMH board is not only more likely than the Met board to be a space where blacks who serve on the boards of elite cultural institutions connect, but it also reinforces existing ties between trustees who on the same elite cultural boards.<sup>18</sup>

The SMH board functions similarly with respect to reinforcing ties between blacks with noted art collections. To varying degrees, all of the blacks with major art collections on the SMH board collect art by African-American artists. For example, two of the 2011 trustees were recently recognized in a list of the world's top 200 art collectors. In the discussion of one of the SMH board members, Raymond J. McGuire, it is noted that '[h]e collects contemporary art including work by Romare Bearden and supported the recent Carrie Mae Weems retrospective at the Guggenheim Museum' (Artnet, 2015). Similarly, works by African-American artists are also noted in the collection of the other SMH board member on the list. The article notes that '[w]orks by historical practitioners

like Beauford Delaney and Romare Bearden are displayed at his [Rodney Miller's] Upper East Side townhouse alongside examples from the provocative artists of today including Lyle Ashton Harris, Shinique Smith, Glenn Ligon, and Hank Willis Thomas' (Artnet, 2015). This means that not only are noted black art collectors more likely to encounter their counterparts on the SMH board than on the Met board, but that noted black art collectors who specifically have an interest in art by African-American artists connect with one another there.

While the SMH board, unlike the Met board, also unifies blacks who work in the business and finance sector and who serve on corporate boards, it does not bring together blacks who work at, or serve on the boards of, the same companies. In this way it links blacks in corporate America, but does not reinforce existing ties between those who are currently connected to the same business organizations. The two elite black subgroups that are not brought together on either museum board are billionaires and those on the board of a family foundation. In the case of billionaires, none are on either board. In the case of individuals with a family foundation, there is only one on the SMH board.

While specific subgroups of black elites are more likely to be concentrated on the SMH board than on the Met board, particular subgroups of white elites are more likely to have greater representation on the Met board than the SMH board. To take the case of white billionaires, there is one on the SMH board. However, this billionaire, Ann Tenenbaum, whose husband's work in finance has made them among the world's richest families, is also on the Met board. There she is among a group of eight white billionaires who together comprise 21.62% of Met trustees. Most of them not only share the distinction of having extreme wealth, but they have generated this wealth in their own generation.<sup>19</sup> This means that the Met board is not only distinct from the SMH board in bringing together highly wealthy whites, but also in fostering ties among highly wealthy whites who share the experience of upward mobility.

Whites on the boards of family foundations are also more concentrated on the Met board. While there is one on the SMH board, the 15 on the Met board comprise 40.54% of trustees there. Family foundations are not only a signifier of wealth but also indicate a particular approach to managing and distributing that wealth. As such, the Met board connects elite whites who from the start already have similar knowledge, values, and norms concerning the management of personal fortunes.

The Met board is also distinguished from the SMH board because it links whites with Ivy League degrees. While there is one white Ivy Leaguer on the SMH board, there are 13 on the Met board. Although white Ivy Leaguers do not make up the majority of trustees on the Met board like their black counterparts on the SMH board, they comprise a significant minority at 35.14%. White Ivy Leaguers from specific schools, such as Harvard (13.51% of the board) and Columbia (13.51% of the board), share trusteeship on the Met board with fellow alumni. As such, trusteeship reinforces existing college and university ties among the white elite there.

Unlike the SMH board, the Met board also brings together whites with high stocks of particular types of cultural capital. While there are no whites on the SMH board who are on the boards of elite cultural organizations, six whites, or 16.22% of Met trustees, hold this stock of cultural capital. In three cases, the Met board links whites who share an existing connection through serving on the same elite cultural board. Among white Met

trustees, two are on the board of the New York City Ballet, and two are also on the boards of the Lincoln Center for Performing Arts and the Morgan Library and Museum.

Similarly, while on the SMH board there is only one recognized white art collector, whites with noted art collections comprise over a quarter of Met trustees. Among these ten white top collectors on the board, four also share the distinction of specifically collecting modern and contemporary art. For example, two trustees, Ann Tenenbaum and Andrew Saul, have received recognition as 'top 200' collectors for collecting in this area (ARTnews, 2009).

The Met board is also distinguished from the SMH board by bringing together elite whites who are tied to business. While there are no whites on the SMH board who work in business or finance or serve on corporate boards, several whites on the Met board have these ties. The 18 whites on the Met board who work in business and finance comprise close to half of the board (48.65%), and the eight who are on corporate boards make up 21.62% of the Met board. Similar to the SMH board, where no blacks with business ties are linked to the same companies, none of the whites on the Met board who work in business and finance and sit on corporate boards work for, or serve, the same companies. This means that while the Met board contributes to general cohesion among the white business elite, it does not reinforce company specific ties.

Since the Met and SMH boards are ethnically integrated, it is not the case that the SMH board only contributes to ethclass cohesion among elite blacks and that the Met board only nourishes ethclass ties among elite whites. As discussed earlier, each board is a site where in different degree white elites encounter one another and black elites come face to face. It is also the case that both boards contribute to elite cohesion across ethnic groups. As integrated boards they are entities where black and white elites, as well as elites from other ethnic groups, bond through engagement in a culturally exclusive activity. Moreover, cross-ethnic ties among specific subgroups of elites are also established and reinforced on both boards. For example, one of the two Cornell graduates on the SMH board is black and the other is white. Similarly, while neither of the black Ivy League graduates on the Met board are fellow alumni, each attended the same school as some of the white trustees on the board.

While the ethnically integrated nature of the SMH board means that its role in elite cohesion is not just nurturing bonds among the black elite, the higher proportion of black elites on the SMH board comparative to the Met board highlights the fact that this is one of its notable functions. Similarly, the mixed ethnic composition of the Met board means that its role in elite cohesion is not simply bringing together elite whites. Yet the relatively higher proportion of elite whites on the Met board in contrast to the SMH board casts in relief the comparatively salient role that it plays in this regard.

## **Discussion**

This article argues that one means through which the arts function as cultural capital for elite ethclass groups is through their social organization. Through philanthropy at black and mainstream museums, elite blacks and elite whites, respectively, become socially unified. The argument is illustrated through comparing the cohesion of elite blacks and elites whites on the SMH and Met boards. Findings show that relative to the Met board,

the SMH board is an important site of unification for elite blacks, and in comparison to the SMH board, the Met board is a notable site of cohesion for elite whites. I now discuss the implications of these findings for broader research on inequality and culture.

By elaborating how distinct forms of cultural capital exist among black and white elites, this article contributes to broader critiques that Bourdieu's (1984) conceptualization of cultural capital does not address its multiplicity. Critiquing Bourdieu's notion that cultural capital is chiefly an asset of dominant groups, researchers argue that nondominant groups, such as ethnic minorities, have their own forms of cultural capital (Bennett et al., 2009; Carter, 2003; Hall, 1992; Lamont and Lareau, 1988; Warikoo, 2011). This article contributes to this perspective by conceptualizing and elaborating how different forms of cultural capital contribute to membership of different ethnic segments of the elite – high culture designated as universal and historically grounded in the West appears to play an especially important role in contributing to elite white cohesion, while black high culture plays this role for elite black membership. The elaboration of the concept of black elite cultural capital also enriches Carter's (2003) concept of black cultural capital by distinguishing its specifically middle and upper-class form.

It is also important to discuss the findings from the perspective of historical research on the composition of mainstream arts boards. This article finds that although elite whites are the dominant ethclass group on the Met board, the board is also ethnically diverse. This is in contrast to earlier decades, when the board was comprised entirely of elite whites. If other mainstream museum boards follow this pattern, then mainstream museum boards have declined in their importance for the social cohesion of elite whites.

The findings also highlight broader inequality in the composition of the black and white elites. While the SMH board has one white billionaire, and the Met has eight, neither board has any black billionaires. The lack of any black billionaires on the boards is likely related to the lower number of black billionaires in the population at large. Research on wealth inequality consistently finds that, across class, blacks have less wealth than their white counterparts (Oliver and Shapiro, 1997; Shapiro, 2005). This is rooted in both the legacy of past systematic barriers that restricted black wealth accumulation – such as slavery and Jim Crow – as well as in ongoing discrimination – such as ethnic bias in bank lending (Blanchflower et al., 2003; Oliver and Shapiro, 1997; Shapiro, 2005). The fact that other subgroups of elite blacks cohere more on the SMH than the Met board suggests that if the population of black billionaires was higher they would follow this pattern as well. It is telling that Oprah Winfrey (Forbes, 2012), the only African-American billionaire who is a major museum philanthropist, focuses her giving on an African-American museum. She is on the council for the National Museum of African American History and Culture, and in 2013 she donated US\$12,000,000 to the museum.

Finally, this article also sheds light on research that explores class cohesion, power and nonprofits. William Domhoff (2013 [1967]) argues that the American upper class dominate the boards of nonprofits and execute policies that reflect their status. Michael Useem (1984) makes a similar argument within the context of big business, asserting that when elite 'inner circle' executives serve on the boards of arts institutions, they act to promote the interests of corporations. The argument developed and illustrated in this article, that the rule of various arts boards is divided among different ethnic segments of the US elite, adds texture to this argument. Given research showing that across class

there are ethnic differences in the viewpoints and politics of blacks and whites – for example, evidence showing that a linked sense of fate informs black political attitudes and behavior (Dawson, 1984) – some aspects of governance at black and white museums may vary because of the different ethnic makeup of the boards.

Research on cultural capital casts light on the establishment and reproduction of inequality. As the elite becomes more ethnically diverse,<sup>20</sup> it is increasingly important to investigate not just how culture distinguishes the working class from the middle and upper class, but also how culture distinguishes different ethnic groups within the middle and upper class itself. The incorporation of ethnicity into Ostrower's theory of cultural capital makes visible the way in which the social divide between the black and white elite is borne and cultivated through cultural philanthropy.

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### Notes

1. Along with the SMH, other African-American museums such as the Museum of Contemporary African Diasporan Arts in Brooklyn, New York and the Tubman African American Museum in Georgia are undergoing or have recently undergone major expansions.
2. Criticism of Bourdieu's (1984) model of cultural capital is based on evidence that to some degree cultural tastes and knowledge are shared across social classes (Halle, 1993), and that the aesthetic disposition of the middle and upper class is characterized by omnivorousness, or openness, rather than exclusion (Bryson, 1996; Khan, 2011; Peterson and Kern, 1996). Research suggests that cultural openness is particularly characteristic of elites in the United States, in contrast to France where Bourdieu conducted his research (Lamont, 1992).
3. While both the audiences for high arts institutions and the supporters of these institutions are disproportionately elite in nature, the concentration of elites is even greater in the philanthropic sphere. For example, in 2008 53.9% of visitors to museums in the United States were at least college graduates and 33.2% of this audience had incomes of US\$100,000 or more (Iyengar et al., 2009). Similarly, 66.3% of the audience for opera were at least college graduates in 2008 and 41.4% of this audience had incomes of US\$100,000 or more (Iyengar et al., 2009). However, in her research on trustees at two leading art museums and two leading opera houses, Ostrower (2002) finds that boards are comprised of at least 94% millionaires.
4. In his research on arts philanthropy among Boston Brahmins at the end of the 19th century, Paul DiMaggio (1982a, 1982b) also emphasizes how cohesion within the group was facilitated through founding the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and the Boston Symphony Orchestra.
5. Also see Andersen and Thomas (2009), Fleming and Roses (2007), Gans (1999), Grams (2010), and Halle (1993: 139–170) for discussions of black arts participation among the black middle and upper class.
6. In the case of trustees who are retired or who left formal labor market work for other reasons (such as shifting to domestic work), the last-known job is used to determine employment in the business/finance sector.

7. Trustees are classified as billionaires if either they or a spouse is discussed in biographical material as being a billionaire. Also Forbes Magazine's billionaire lists were checked to see if trustees or their spouses appeared (Forbes, 2011).
8. One SMH trustee who has an eponymous family foundation, but is not technically listed as a director, is included in the calculation of this statistic.
9. Attendance at the Ivy League is measured by having a graduate or undergraduate degree from one of these institutions.
10. Cultural organizations are considered elite if they meet criteria related to age and prestige – specifically, if they were founded from the mid-19th to early 20th century when high cultural institutions first emerged in the United States, and if they are considered to be among the leading cultural institutions in their respective fields. This includes institutions such as the American Ballet Theater, the Metropolitan Opera, and the Whitney.
11. Trustees are counted as having a noted art collection if they are included in lists of major collectors, such as the annual ARTnews '200 Top Collectors' list, or if they are described in biographical sources as being a recognized collector.
12. I am conducting an ethnography of philanthropy at African-American museums. During the course of this research informants in the art world have ethnically identified some trustees at these museums.
13. It is important to note that ethnic identities are socially constructed categories that shift across contexts (Cornell and Hartmann, 2007 [1998]). One aspect of the subjective nature of ethnic identities is that they are categories that are both internally asserted by individuals and groups as well as being externally imposed on them (Jenkins, 2000). Since how individuals are ethnically categorized by others can play an important role in the ethnic membership that they assign to themselves, there is often overlap in external and internal ethnic identities. However, there can be differences in how individuals think about themselves ethnically and how others think of them. On one hand, the methods of this study capture the internal ethnic identities of trustees by relying on data such as membership in ethnic organizations that they have self-consciously joined, and media accounts where they make reference to their ethnic identities. On the other hand, the methods of this study capture the external ethnic identities of trustees, for example drawing on public accounts where others have classified them ethnically.
14. The United States Federal Government requires that tax-exempt organizations submit yearly 990 returns. The forms are publicly available and list an array of information about each organization including board members. Trustees who rotated off of the Met's board during the course of 2011 and ex officio trustees are not included in the analysis. For both museums, board members who are employed by the institution are not included in the analysis.
15. There are some instances where complete biographies of trustees could not be compiled. Missing data are indicated in Table 1. There are no instances where missing data would change overall patterns in the data.
16. For example, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, and the Saint Louis Museum of Art were established in the 1870s.
17. For example, in 2004 and 2011 the Metropolitan Museum of Art had solo exhibitions for the artist Romare Bearden who is African American.
18. While trusteeship at the Whitney reinforces a connection between the two black elite individuals who have an existing tie on the SMH board, my analysis of 2011 Whitney board members reveals that, consistent with the theory elaborated in this article, blacks comprise only 4.55% of trustees there. In contrast, white elites are the dominant ethclass group on the Whitney board.
19. Those listed by Forbes as billionaires are either given scores delineating the degree to which they made their own fortunes, or had 'self-made' used as a descriptor for 'source of wealth' on

the lists (Forbes, 2011). According to Forbes, a self-made score from six to ten indicates that a billionaire 'truly made it on their own' versus having inherited their wealth (Fontevicchia, 2014). Five of the eight white billionaires either have the descriptor self-made attached to their Forbes profiles, or have a self-made score above six. One white billionaire has a self-made score of five, which still indicates a moderate degree of upward mobility. Another white billionaire is included on the list as part of a family of billionaires whose wealth dates back to the early 20th century. Another trustee whose husband is described in biographical material as a billionaire but who is not included on a Forbes list, had a father who was also a businessman. The extent to which his fortune was amassed independently is not clear.

20. See Zweigenhaft and Domhoff (2011) for evidence of growing ethnic diversity among the upper class in the United States.

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