THE AMBIVALENT GIFT

The Diverse Giving Strategies of Black Philanthropists[1]

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Abstract

The question of who holds responsibility for racial uplift within African American communities is an enduring one. This paper investigates the understanding of racial obligation on the part of Black elite philanthropic donors. Through in-depth interviews with twenty elite donors, I investigate whether African American elite donors use philanthropic activity to realize their racial obligations by supporting Black nonprofit organizations and charitable causes that directly benefit Black people. I find that Black donors are deeply ambivalent about their position as members of a racial group that is marginalized while they are individually privileged because of their class position. They attempt to reconcile this ambivalence through their philanthropic giving. Donors at times embrace the importance of their racial identity as a principle that organizes their giving practices, but in other instances the very same donors reject race as a factor orienting how they think about their charity. Donors express this inconsistency through three different giving strategies. First, Black donors advocate for what they consider to be Black causes within mainstream organizations—initiatives they believe will directly and positively benefit Black people. Second, while they may support Black nonprofit organizations, they qualify the types of Black organizations worthy of their support. Third, donors reject race as an orienting principle altogether. Indeed, while there are few distinctive patterns among Black elite donors, no matter how they give they do so with an eye towards maintaining a mainstream sensibility that emphasizes integration, efficiency, and success. It is perhaps the diversity of contradictory strategies that poses the most fundamental challenge to the notion of community that permeates discussions of race and responsibility. I conclude by arguing that the ability to define when and how race matters to them is a particular privilege of the Black elite.

Keywords: Philanthropy, Ambivalence, African Americans, Elites, Donors

INTRODUCTION

Robert is a talker. As soon as I sit down in his office to discuss his philanthropic endeavors, he begins to ask me questions about my research. He mentions that his

parents also went to graduate school for PhDs, stating that was part of the reason he was inclined to speak with me. As I settle into my seat in his office, I notice the plaques and awards on the walls: honors from his workplace, from *Black Enterprise* magazine—all commemorating his professional achievements. Robert is one of the longest-tenured African Americans at his corporation, and, as is fitting for his occupation, he is deeply engaged in New York City's philanthropic world. He says he first joined a nonprofit board at the urging of a White woman he went to church with, who "made it her mission" to get him involved in a range of religious charities in New York City. From there, Robert began to support education, the arts, and health care. He is very discriminating about the organizations he supports and is actively engaged in each, never just sending money but also dedicating his time to serve in leadership positions. Coming from a civic-minded family, he has participated from a young age in what he refers to as "service organizations" such as Jack and Jill of America—an exclusive, invitation-only organization for elite Black families, established so that children could participate in service activities for the Black community as well as in cultural and educational enrichment (Graham 2000). He began tithing at church at a young age. While philanthropy is clearly an important part of his life, Robert's concern is that his civic-mindedness does not help the people who may need it the most:

> And one of the worst things that has happened to us [the Black community] is desegregation because now I can live wherever I want, go to church wherever I want and I tend to do that and I'm not saying me, I'm saying the broad me. People of the upper middle class and above who are Black, they go to the best neighborhoods and they get to the best schools and they leave the inner city and they go live in Darien (Connecticut) or whatever and commute into the office.

While Robert is proud of his accomplishments—and those of wealthy, professional African Americans that are like him—he is concerned that his mobility is evidence of a splintering Black community. He worries that his actions may not be in the best interests of African Americans, that he is not able to resolve the tension between doing what he wants and doing what he should.

Popular and academic discourses alike on the role of those W. E. B. Du Bois referred to as "the talented tenth" mobilize a familiar and not entirely untrue narrative. Historically, patterns of racism and segregation have ensured that elite Blacks remained in a racially homogenous community, where they were responsible for making contributions to that community in the service of racial uplift. Today, however, Blacks have more opportunities. They are not destined to live in racially homogenous communities, and, while it is still difficult, they are able to achieve upward mobility. As a consequence of their improved class position, elite Blacks ostensibly lose their racial connection to the Black community and stop making contributions to their racial community, as Robert discusses above. Yet the demands for racial uplift are still placed squarely upon their shoulders. The seeming incompatibility of their roles as elites and as Black people—and, for some, the ambivalence that arises from the tension of that opposition—is something they must negotiate, but how?

This article discusses one practice with which Black elites attempt to reconcile this ambivalence—the giving away of money to philanthropic organizations. I investigate how affluent Black professionals living in New York practice philanthropy, focusing on financial professionals who support mainstream, predominantly White organizations. I examine how affluent Black philanthropists resolve, or at least

confront, their conflicting statuses (Lenski 1966)—oppressed by race, yet advantaged by class—through their giving practices and philosophies. I find that Black donors reject the notion of a unified, monolithic Black community, opting instead to define their racial identity—as well as the obligations that come along with that identity—in myriad ways, some of which confirm their position as "race men" and women, and some of which enable them to realize the privileges and power of their class position. No matter how they give, they do so with an eye towards maintaining a mainstream, individualistic sensibility that emphasizes integration, efficiency, and success. It is with this understanding that elite Blacks use philanthropic giving as a way to develop strategies and repertoires to evaluate organizations and define causes in ways that are purposefully racially distinctive, but also, and indeed simultaneously, resistant to imposed racial obligations. Black donors criticize Black organizations, support causes that benefit Blacks within mainstream nonprofit institutions, or vehemently reject any form of racial responsibility; and many donors employ more than one of these approaches. It is perhaps the diversity of strategies that poses the most fundamental challenge to the notion of community permeating discussions of race and responsibility.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Historically, Black elites have not had the opportunity to support institutions that did not explicitly benefit Blacks—first, because of segregation, and second, because most Blacks did not have the means to support mainstream organizations in financially substantive ways. There is a rich history of African Americans across the economic spectrum supporting their own institutions, with donations both large and small (Carson 1993; Fairfax 1995). African Americans have always built and supported institutions within their own racial communities and continue to do so. As Pattillo-McCoy (1998) writes, the quintessential example of this mutual giving has been the Black Church, which has always acted "simultaneously as a school, a bank, a benevolent society, a political organization, and a spiritual base" (p. 769). The church has performed extrareligious functions both economic and social since its inception (Lincoln and Mamiya, 1990). This was only possible because congregants pooled their financial resources to support the church. Indeed, it is one of the first, and most enduring, instances of Black charitable giving.

While a handful of Black elites were attending White institutions such as Oberlin and Harvard as early as the post-Reconstruction era (Gatewood 2000), it is only now, in the post–Civil Rights era, that there exists an opportunity for Blacks to participate in mainstream organizations as supporters or beneficiaries; the data indicates that they do (Jackson 2001b; Mottina and Miller, 2005). For Black charitable donors today, it is not only their racial identity that determines how they will spend their philanthropic dollars. Indeed, options exist to support an array of nonprofit organizations that are not exclusively or even predominantly Black, such as their alma maters and foundations associated with the corporations they work for, as well as the organizations suggested by their elite peers. Organizations like these are an important part of their social and professional worlds.

As the structure of Black communities has changed, the question of who holds responsibility for racial uplift within these communities remains. Racial uplift has always been a hotly debated issue within the Black community. From what constitutes racial uplift to who is obliged to enact it, there never has been a consensus among Blacks. For some African Americans, racial uplift demands either a return to

the community or a commitment never to leave in the first place. For others, racial uplift depends upon their individual actions—they consider their attempts at upward mobility and achievement as a challenge to the racial prejudices endured by Blacks. Yet another version of racial uplift entails supporting that which is distinctively Black—Black institutions, Black leaders, Black people (Banks 2009).

The argument for the importance of racial uplift is twofold: first, that all Blacks have similar interests and even destinies; and second, that Blacks have obligations to one another by virtue of being Black, because of their shared oppression, or "linked fate" (Dawson 1994). Du Bois (1999) for example, argued that, "Internal problems of social advance must inevitably come—problems of work and wages, of families and homes, of morals and the true valuing of the things in life; and all these and other inevitable problems of civilization the Negro must meet and solve largely for himself" (p. 73). However, there is an implicit tension underlying discussions of racial uplift. First, do Black people across class boundaries feel a sense of linked fate? If so, do they feel that they ought to act in a manner that benefits all Black people? In the case of Black elites, whether they possess that sense of linked fate has always been a question. They have been criticized as apathetic (Winch 1993), overly exclusive (Frazier 1957; Gatewood 2000), or ignorant of the troubles that working class Blacks face (Frazier 1957). In short, middle- and upper-middle-class African Americans are considered by the working class not to be authentically Black (Harris and Khanna, 2010; Harris-Lacewell 2004).

In Graham's (2000) important book *Our Kind of People*, he discusses the derision that members of the Black elite feel about forming bonds of solidarity with Blacks that they consider to be of lower class status. Although the Black elite has always supported the Urban League, the United Negro College Fund, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), "the irony is that while today most of these successful people will still write checks for the NAACP, they do not consider it part of their social circle in the way they would have done before the 1960s" (p. 12). While they feel an obligation to support such institutions, it does not seem to be the case that they derive any pleasure from this type of philanthropy. One reason is that today Black elites simply have more options, as one informant in Graham (2000) argues: "The NAACP did wonderful things for us in the South—and up here too—and I'm happy to give to them because they help all of us, but you just don't find a whole lot of professional Blacks socializing among the NAACP. We've got our own groups" (p. 12). This splintering along class and occupational lines may not eliminate a sense of racial obligation, but it certainly does change the nature of it.

Graham's work points to an important post–Civil Rights trajectory. The understanding of what a sense of "linked fate" means is evolving. As Robert acknowledges at the beginning of this article, Blacks have historically been forced to participate in a more involved, hands-on sense of racial uplift, characterized in part by a politics of respectability (Gaines 1996; Higginbotham 1993). As time went on and Blacks gained more opportunities, the Black community became more dispersed, spatially and symbolically. Elites were able to isolate themselves, if even to a minor extent, in what are now the wealthy Black enclaves of cities such as Atlanta, New York, Philadelphia, Washington, DC, and Chicago. Even with this self-exclusion, Black elites still contributed to causes that benefited all Black people, such as the Urban League, the United Negro College Fund, and the NAACP. They did so, however, by writing a check. There was little participation in grassroots advocacy, and limited interaction with Blacks of other classes. They contributed the tithe, but withheld the time and talent.

For some elites, this energy has been refocused in the founding of groups that perform outreach while remaining exclusive. The Links, for instance, is an organization for elite Black women founded by upper middle-class "society" women in Philadelphia that has always included community service to benefit less advantaged Blacks as part of its mission. Indeed, the founders point out that the service requirements have always been just as stringent as the financial requirements, which are considerable. As Sanders-McMurtry and Haydel (2005) report, ". . . the women who were chosen to participate also had to demonstrate their worthiness and dedication through their actions and deeds, not merely through their social connections or financial portfolios" (p. 112). Active engagement with the Black community, particularly those who were less fortunate, was essential for the women of this organization. Black elites have also focused their energies on supporting the creative works of Black artists through support of galleries and museums that feature Black art, as well as by purchasing the work of individual Black artists (Banks 2009). In these two cases, elites use their resources to purposefully participate in a type of racial uplift that directly benefits Blacks.

When actions are performed in the name of racial uplift, what shape should those actions take? With the expansion of the Black middle class and the increased class heterogeneity within the African American population, questions of racial uplift have become even more fraught. Here, literature on Black gentrification is instructive, as it focuses on the ambivalence experienced by members of the Black middle class as they try to negotiate social environments that are stratified by class but racially homogeneous (Pattillo 1999, 2007). Generally, this research concludes that Blacks of different class positions may feel a sense of belonging, or linked fate, with a racial community, but one's class position informs how one interacts with others. It is unclear, however, if the ambivalence experienced by middle-class Blacks is a product of repeated interactions with Blacks of a lower class position, or if the ambivalence is a product of Blacks' membership in the middle class—in which case the ambivalence would exist even in the absence of interactions with Blacks of different class positions, and perhaps even increase as Blacks improve their class position.

Ultimately, there is no clear consensus in the literature that the Black middle-class or Black elites have abandoned the cause of racial uplift. In his ethnographic account of class heterogeneity in Harlem, anthropologist John Jackson (2001a) explains, "It has not always been undeniably clear that wealthier Blacks have a different set of socioeconomic needs, desires, and goals than their lower-classed race-mates. The more operative question has usually been how to best perform the much more pressing task of racial uplift" (p. 129). Pattillo (2007) continues in a similar vein in her account of Black middle-class gentrification in a South Side Chicago neighborhood: "While Black middle-class brokers in NKO definitely have their self-interests served by securing financing to invest in a home, they also express a mission to reestablish a thriving Black neighborhood. . . Whether they are coming back or not, they emphasize their 'Blackness' on the block as a strategy of racial uplift" (p. 130). Scholars of economic stratification among Blacks have pointed to the importance of the "linked fate" that middle-class African Americans feel towards the Black community, arguing that it is perhaps even more salient among educated Blacks (Dawson 1994; Feagin and Sikes, 1994; Harris-Lacewell 2004; Lacy and Harris, 2008; Pattillo 2007).

This continuing sense of racial solidarity across class lines persists in part because of the difficulty in escaping the perils of racial inequality. Even members of the Black middle class have a tenuous hold on economic security. They live in closer proximity

to lower-class Black neighborhoods (Pattillo 2007, 1999); are employed in industries and sectors that are on the decline; have lower rates of wealth and home ownership than their White middle-class counterparts (Conley 1999; Oliver and Shapiro, 1996); and finally, continuously encounter racial discrimination (Benjamin 2005; Feagin and Sikes, 1994; Lacy 2007). The Black elite certainly experiences similar hazards, but not to the same degree.

All of these discussions of mutual obligation, intraracial interaction, and linked fate reify the idea of a bounded Black community by posing the question of what responsibilities Blacks have to one another. I argue that when affluent high-achieving Blacks leave their Black community and enter into mainstream society, they re-imagine their community in ways that do not assume racial identity as a basis of solidarity. For Black elites, this re-imagining is one component of a broader sense of sociological ambivalence. Merton (1976) introduced sociological ambivalence as a concept which "refers to incompatible normative expectations of attitudes, beliefs, and behavior assigned to a status (i.e., a social position) or to a set of statuses in society" (p. 6). More specifically, "this second kind of sociological ambivalence is essentially a pattern of a 'conflict of interests or values' in which the interests and values incorporated in *different* statuses occupied by the same person result in mixed feelings and compromised behavior" (p. 9). There is a normative expectation for these donors to be race leaders because of their elite status (Drake and Clayton, 1993; Du Bois 1999). At the same time, they are members of an elite world that has its own set of expectations. Here, ambivalence arises as a result of membership in two seemingly incompatible imagined communities: a *Black*—historically marginalized—community and an *elite* community. Social actors go to great lengths in order to prevent ambivalence. As Smelser writes, "Because ambivalence is such a *powerful*, *persistent*, *unresolvable*, *volatile*, *generalizable*, and *anxiety-provoking* feature of the human condition, people defend against experiencing it in many ways" (p. 6, emphasis added).

I argue that donors' expressed ambivalence about their charitable practices—indeed, about their obligations as elite Blacks—is born out of the inconsistency of their racial and class statuses. Thus, the argument Lenski (1966) presents that "an individual with inconsistent statuses or ranks has a natural tendency to think of himself in terms of that status or rank which is highest" (p. 87) does not adequately describe how Black donors make sense of the interaction of their class privilege and racial marginalization. As Smelser (1998) argues, ambivalence is not only psychological, but also socially structured, arising when individuals attempt to balance competing obligations or commitments, or as a product of their membership in groups that demand loyalty or dependence. Indeed, Merton (1976) acknowledges that while much work on ambivalence focuses on a "psychological orientation" (p. 5), a sociological orientation is equally important, and further, that a theory of sociological ambivalence observes that "ambivalence is located in the social definition of roles and statuses, not in the feeling-state of one or another type of personality" (p. 7). I examine ambivalence as a sociological phenomenon produced by conflicting structural positions and expressed through discourse and practice—in this case, through accounts of philanthropic giving. Donors are not ambivalent about giving per se: instead, they are ambivalent about how they give, and thus seek out ways of giving that help to alleviate that tension.

Similarly to intersectionality theory, which focuses on interlocking modes of oppression, I argue that examining only one dimension of Black donors' identity in order to explain their ambivalence is insufficient. Scholars of intersectionality argue that, especially in the case of women of color, analysts and activists alike consider modes of oppression such as sexism and racism as mutually exclusive, despite the fact

that as Crenshaw (1991) writes, "racism and sexism readily intersect in the lives of real people" (p. 1242). Indeed, Crenshaw continues, proponents of intersectionality argue "the need to account for multiple grounds of identity when considering how the social world is constructed" (p. 1245). These multiple dimensions of identity such as race, class, gender, and sexuality are mutually constitutive, bound together in their shaping of individual experience.

While intersectionality theory allows for the fact that types of oppression differ in degree and kind, the theory's emphasis on the interaction of different modes of oppression constituting a cumulatively worse state of inequality can obfuscate the distinctiveness of different statuses. The concept of sociological ambivalence, there-fore, complements intersectionality theory; while both capture the importance of multiple dimensions of identity, sociological ambivalence highlights the conflict and inconsistency between axes of identity rather than the duality of interlocking facets of identity. Sociological ambivalence provides a rich opportunity to analyze not only the way in which race and class structure one another, but also how they can stand independent of one another. Additionally, using these theoretical perspectives in combination enables one to examine the role of *privilege*, which, for important reasons, has not been the focus of intersectionality theory.[2]

I propose that donors attempt to allay their ambivalence by developing strategies for both distance and intimacy with charitable causes and organizations that are racialized as Black. Donors do not negotiate their ambivalence in unilateral ways. In some respects, they closely identify with their Blackness in order to organize their giving practices, but in other instances they distance themselves from a racial identity that might orient how they think about their charity. In each case, they develop an explanation that justifies the distance, or lack thereof, they put between themselves and the larger imagined Black community.

This results in a series of practices that are both contradictory and idiosyncratic. First, Black donors advocate for what they consider to be Black causes within main-stream organizations. Second, while they support Black organizations, they qualify the types of Black organizations worthy of their support. Third, some donors reject race as an orienting principle altogether. It is important to point out that individual donors do not stick to a single strategy: a single donor may adopt more than one of the strategies described. Indeed, each donor's individual giving practices are contra-dictory, with few distinctive patterns among donors. It may seem that the strategies they adopt are not only diverse, but are, in fact, at odds with each other. This apparent incoherence is a clear illustration of the ambivalence they are attempting to reconcile. Yet it also points to the fact that these donors are creating new ways to "do" race and make sense of their own racial identities, which are strongly influenced by their class status.

METHODOLOGY

This project encountered the usual roadblocks that researchers encounter when studying elites. Elites are difficult to gain access to, even if easy to identify. In the case of the elites in this study, it was often difficult to identify them as Black. A list of board members for a nonprofit organization, for instance, does not provide informa-tion about the racial identity of those board members. One way I sought to overcome the challenges of identifying and then gaining access to Black elites is through a strategy similar to what Lindsay (2007), in his study of Evangelical elites, refers to as leapfrogging, where he first approaches leaders in the community he seeks to study,

and asks them to refer additional interviewees. I did the same, "starting at the top" (Ostrander 1993): contacting influential Black leaders in the philanthropic sector such as foundation officers, and after speaking to them about their own work, requesting that they each refer additional interviewees. This strategy enabled me to use a reference to gain access, assure my elite interviewees that I "knew the right people," (Ostrander 1993) and gain their trust.

Many times, my respondents referenced each other as individuals I should interview and even facilitated introductions. It was clear that even if they did not intimately know each other, they knew of each other. These connections were verified through additional research I conducted—looking at the "society pages" in the *New York Times*, checking lists of donors in the annual reports of nonprofit organizations where donors are listed by the size of their monetary contribution, and asking fund-raisers (whom I interviewed for a different portion of this project) to suggest donors that would fit the qualifications of my sample. As a result, these donors occupy a particular niche of Black donors, and are not representative of Black donors in general. To simply label the respondents "Black philanthropic donors" would be too general, and entirely too vague. Instead, the donors discussed in this study are a specific type of New York financial elite that occupies a rarefied, affluent professional and social niche within the landscape of elites. Further, they mainly support mainstream organizations that are predominantly White in their leadership and clientele, participating in philanthropy in a manner that is amenable to the demands of the elite philanthropic scene in New York City.

The analysis in this article is based on in-depth, semistructured interviews conducted in 2008 with a total of twenty donors. Seven were women, and thirteen were men. Five donors were over the age of sixty years old, but all other members of the sample were in their late forties or early fifties. All donors served on at least one nonprofit board in New York. On average, each donor served on five boards. The highest number of boards a single donor served on was ten. Ten respondents worked in finance (or had recently retired from working in finance), and ten worked in the nonprofit sector. Of those working in the nonprofit sector, two had previously worked in finance, and two served on corporate boards. Thus, even though there is variation in the occupations represented in my sample, nearly all members have strong connections to the financial sector. Considering the scope of the financial services industry in New York City, this is not entirely surprising. This sample is drawn from a very small universe of Black donors. Data based on a recent survey on nonprofit organizations show that only 7% of board members are African American and 51% of all nonprofit organizations are composed solely of White members (Ostrower 2007). In addition, this group is very small by virtue of its income and wealth. Given the very small universe of Black donors and board members in New York City, where this study was conducted, I do not disclose any of the organizations that my respondents support.

My interviewees are upper-middle-class or upper-class donors, who, with the exception of one donor, do not live in Black communities. Instead, they are well integrated into elite White networks and have been for their entire adult lives. They have attended prestigious Ivy League universities and in some cases preparatory schools. Only two respondents in my sample attended a historically Black college or university. Each respondent in my sample holds at least one post-bachelor's degree. Additionally, the respondents work and live among their elite White counterparts. They amassed their wealth and privilege through their employment in mainstream institutions of finance, nonprofit, and government.

The donors in this study have either contributed a minimum of 5000 dollars annually to nonprofit organizations, or they have sat on the board of at least one

nonprofit organization. Most have done both. I use board membership as a proxy for wealth, because most boards have a minimum monetary contribution that is expected of all members. Many boards discussed in this article require much more than a five thousand dollar minimum. For instance, Lincoln Center expects a $250,000 annual contribution. The initial contribution expected of a trustee at the New York Public Library is $5 million. Boards are sometimes willing to waive these requirements if a donor can donate time and expertise (Pogrebin 2010). Having a somewhat flexible threshold for recruiting interviewees enabled me to recruit broadly from a very small population. While not all donors are able to provide vast wealth, they contribute more than the minimum threshold of five thousand dollars, and can open doors to new sources of wealth through their association with nonprofit foundations and their membership on corporate boards. Like the corporate elites discussed in this study, they have leadership positions in large nonprofit organizations.

Interviews focused on several themes. First, I asked donors for general perspectives about philanthropic giving, their personal histories of giving including the organizations they supported, and how they first began to participate in philanthropy. The interview schedule then moved on to solicit respondents' opinions on the state of racial diversity among board members and major donors at large, prestigious nonprofit institutions. Finally, I asked donors whether they feel a sense of obligation towards Black organizations or causes that benefit Black people. Interviews were semistructured; most donors were eager to offer their opinions on specific organizations or bring my attention to topics they believed I should cover in the study.

FINDINGS

What Makes a Good Organization? Criticisms of Black Organizations

The donors in my sample support a set of organizations that are classified as elite. These include cultural institutions, hospitals, and educational institutions: the type of organizations that fit the profile of an elite donor. With the exception of one very-high-status Black cultural institution, the organizations they support would not be considered "Black organizations" or mutual aid organizations; they do not have a Black leadership, nor do they explicitly advance the interests of a Black community.

My respondents explain that they do not automatically or naturally support Black organizations, drawing on three rationales. First, they question the stewardship of Black organizations. Donors express wariness about having their name associated with an organization that has bad or questionable leadership. Second, they criticize the relevancy of Black organizations, arguing that their mission and branding are outdated. Finally, donors argue—erroneously—that because Black organizations have depended on financing from the government, they are not structured to have a fundraising apparatus that cultivates major gifts from individuals. Donors argue that, as a result, Black organizations are unable to compete in a competitive philanthropic marketplace. In short, Black organizations are not successful enough for them to invest in. Their ambivalence is born out of a frustration that these mutual aid organizations are not successfully achieving their goals.

Robert, the donor discussed at the beginning of the article, argues that the mutual aid organizations simply do not meet his standards:

> I'm very discerning about where I'm going to spend my time and how I'm going to spend my time. And so no matter whether it's a Black organization or White

organization, they better be good stewards of resources and no hanky-panky and good bookkeeping and good management and they better be organized. And I've gotten to that point where I would have a nervous breakdown if I'd go into some of the board meetings and get involved with some of the groups that are sadly defined, the mutual aid groups [African American organizations], it would drive me mad. I don't think . . . I'm professional like this way, the trains run on time so I couldn't do that that way. And I'm also concerned about what they do with the money.

Robert argues that Black organizations have poor stewardship, expressing concerns both about how the organization is managed and how they use their funds. His implicit comparison is to organizations that are not mutual aid groups—ostensibly the boards he does sit on, such as a well-known performing arts organization in New York, a hospital network, and his Ivy League alma mater. For Robert, mutual aid groups do not meet the standards for what constitutes a good organization. Even though he invokes a color-blind sentiment (Bonilla-Silva 2003) when he says that it does not matter whether the organization is Black or White, his critique of a bad organization is directed squarely at Black mutual aid groups, and, indeed, mutual aid is implicitly synonymous with Black.

Robert's criticism certainly has historical resonance. In her history of the United Negro College Fund, Gasman (2007) points out that, "The stigma of inferiority associated with segregated Black institutions (whether by law or practice) has resulted in a constant questioning of the rationale for the nation's Black colleges" (p. 2). Fearful of this stigma, elite Blacks shun Black organizations in favor of what are construed to be superior, *elite* organizations.

Dwight, who is a board member in addition to leading a nonprofit organization, offers a critique of what he considers to be old Black organizations:

Nobody wants to give to that old, you know 'a mind is a terrible thing to waste,' which is not sexy anymore and that's why if you look through your research, if you've looked at what's happening with organizations like NAACP, UNCF and Urban League, people view them as the old dinosaurs of the Civil Rights Movement and nobody wants to give to them anymore because they've not reinvented themselves and made themselves fresh and relevant to the marketplace.

He continues:

We're really looking at "okay, what is the product that we produce?" It's not just about a mind being a terrible thing to waste, but it's about can we create opportunities for the student to be able to have a very successful career of—become a part of mainstream economical model.

In this respect, being "relevant" means being able to integrate into a mainstream economic model. Indeed, with a focus on how a "product" is perceived in the "marketplace," Dwight invokes the language and sensibility of capitalism to critique Black organizations. Much like Robert above, Dwight understands the philanthropic world as a site where organizations compete with one another for resources. Dwight's criticism is not of the mission of the organization, but rather it's branding. In fact, he leads an organization that focuses on generating resources for historically Black organizations, and throughout his career has worked at and supported organizations that are Black in both their leadership and their constituency. Dwight has an insider's

frustration, and his criticism about Black organizations is not such that he is against all organizations that are Black in their leadership or population served. Indeed, of the organizations he specifically mentions, several, such as the NAACP, are known for their interracial leadership. Rather, his ambivalence lies in how organizations market their racial concerns. Like his peers, he makes a distinction between organizations that are innovative, "fresh" Black organizations and those that are "old dinosaurs." Old organizations focus on Blacks in peril—their discourse on race is about the distinctiveness of Black oppression. "Fresh" organizations are those that integrate the mainstream—to do this means, in part, to brand oneself in a way that redefines the discourse about race to be more amenable to mainstream concerns. Dwight's ambivalence is not expressed as a rejection of organizations that support a Black constituency, but rather a critique of how racial uplift is defined *vis-à-vis* the missions of these organizations.

Since the first campaign of Barack Obama, much has been written about the generational gap between Blacks who participated in the Civil Rights Movement and younger Blacks who are considered the beneficiaries of the gains made by the older generation (Bai 2008; Cose 2011). This generational gap is not only relevant for people, but also institutions—in this case institutions that were founded before the Civil Rights Movement and those founded after. The Black director cited above is certainly not alone in his criticism. Interestingly, not one donor in my sample mentioned that s/he supported the NAACP or the Urban League, and in an interview I conducted with a past president of the Urban League, he verified that his organization had always encountered difficulties in cultivating wealthy Black donors. One donor supported a historically Black college that she had no personal affiliation with (she was not an alumna nor was anyone in her family), one donor contributed to a Black church, and one donor made a single contribution to the United Negro College Fund (UNCF). Some donors supported Black arts institutions, but with the exception of the one-time donation reported above, none supported what would be considered the major institutions of Black philanthropy and advocacy, such as the NAACP, the Urban League, or the United Negro College Fund.

Ron, a donor who works in finance and sits on the boards of seven nonprofits in New York City, expressed that many African Americans who might be expected to be generous contributors may not have the capacity or desire to give, and that this is a problem that plagues Black organizations, putting them at a disadvantage in the competitive world of charitable giving. He describes his experience with the board of the only Black organization on which he sits, which had a majority of African American board members. The institution was facing financial problems, which Ron attributed to the trustees' reticence to make large monetary contributions. As chairman, he convinced his board members to contribute a minimum yearly gift of ten thousand dollars after an extended period of persuasion:

Ron: We don't have a history of giving.

Jane: Do you mean giving in general?

Ron: In general. Took me eighteen months to get a board to agree to giving or getting for each board member ten thousand dollars, eighteen months to get that through.

Jane: That's a lot of convincing, eighteen months.

Ron: Eighteen months.

Jane: And how would you characterize the opposition to it?

Ron: It wasn't necessarily opposition. Well I'll tell you what happens, for those that the conflict comes in there. The government has supported a lot of these organizations for a long time and people have taken a ride, this may seem harsh, but they've taken a ride because the organizations have a profile of them being on the boards and answers their profile but they don't have to pay anything, right? When it gets to the point where as the world evolves it gets more competitive, the government cuts back the private sector's got to come in and these people who have for years been part of this and that's been part of their social profile, now say 'so why do I have to give money?' Now part of this is because they don't have the money to give, part of this is because they've been subsidized for quite some time by the government. These organizations can't exist that way.

Having a minimum contribution for board members is a common practice in the philanthropic world, and the ten thousand dollar amount is less than what this particular donor gives to the other organizations that he supports in a board member capacity. Although by "we" he means African Americans, he tellingly distances himself in this critical assessment. He is ambivalent towards Black organizations as well as other Black donors that he considers to be dependent on government subsidization, as well as of his own membership in such organizations. What he wants to do for this organization, in order to make it more competitive, is encourage the board members to participate in the type of giving that is characteristic of most nonprofit boards: a minimum annual gift. From his perspective this will not only make the organization more autonomous in a time of shrinking governmental support, it will also make the organization more amenable to the concerns of elite philanthropy. Like Dwight, Ron is concerned that the organization is not adapting to the demands of the philanthropic world—that it is unsustainable given its current structure.

It is important to point out that these critiques are not merely practical, organizational criticisms. In the case of Ron, the government does not fund most Black organizations; foundations do. The critique of the organization as being dependent on the government is not that different from other normative critiques of government dependency, particularly in the case of welfare reform. Undoubtedly, these critiques have racial overtones. Rather than abandoning the organization as irrelevant or unable to meet the demands of a competitive philanthropic marketplace, however, Ron instead works to improve the organization, spending a year and a half working with the board of directors. He is only able to do this because of his own elite status. He has the financial resources to lead by example, as well as the cultural and social capital to lend a level of prestige to the organization simply by being a board member. Additionally, he is emboldened in his criticism of this particular organization because he is familiar with what he considers to be the best practices of other nonprofit organizations.

Donors, thus, offer harsh criticisms of Black organizations. They want the organizations to meet their standards, and because of their own experience across the nonprofit sector as well as their professional occupational experiences, they have what they consider to be an informed opinion about what makes a good organization. Yet, while their critique is directed squarely at Black organizations, the basis of their critique is formed in part by an ostensibly color blind, capitalist mindset. Given their professional backgrounds, this is not surprising. Donors adopt a different set of

concerns beyond racial obligation that motivate their giving. In many ways what this represents is a rejection of organizations that are defined solely by Blackness. This can be accomplished through distancing oneself from these organizations or through developing a new model of what it means to be a race-conscious organization. In order to integrate into the mainstream, donors attempt to reconceptualize race—or abandon it entirely. Their apparent frustrations regarding Black organizations, however, are evidence of their enduring concern for the fate of such organizations. Even as they work to resolve it, donors' ambivalence remains.

Selecting Causes: Embracing Black Causes within Mainstream Organizations

While donors may be hesitant to support Black *organizations*, their support of Black *causes* is another matter. Donors choose to support what they describe as Black causes, but only through the elite mainstream institutions they deem legitimate. They do not, for instance, support race-specific organizations that they consider to be poorly managed or ineffective in achieving their mission, nor do they support elite mainstream organizations without any consideration for supporting Black causes. Donors are conscious not only of the organization's identity, but also of the identity they construct through their association with nonprofit organizations. In most respects, they want to support the types of organizations they consider to be aligned with their status as elites: they want their elite identities to be legitimated by the prestigious organizations with which they choose to associate. Supporting prestigious institutions to reproduce or affirm one's own status has always been an important aspect of elite culture (Beckert 2001; Kendall 2002). The manner in which donors select causes serves to confirm their competence in the philanthropic world. Simply being a philanthropist is not enough to make one truly elite. Rather than only giving money away, one must be discerning about the organizations they support—one must demonstrate a particular type of knowledge about the institutions that are high status. It is no coincidence that for the donors of this study, these organizations are not defined as mutual aid.

But if this is the case, what are donors supporting, and why? Donors' racialization of these causes in interviews signals an attempt to reconcile the ambivalence they feel regarding their desire to associate with organizations that affirm their elite status and their desire to support causes that they consider especially relevant to Blacks. As board members and major donors, they actively seek out opportunities to support initiatives that they believe will positively affect Black beneficiaries. If these opportunities do not already exist, then they create them. It is at precisely these moments, when they resolve their ambivalence in such a manner, that the intersection of their race and class identities is most apparent. On the surface, their giving patterns resemble those of other elites: they give to the same *types* of organizations as most elites. What is distinctive about their giving is how they support causes *within* the organizations. Here, we see that rather than prioritizing one dimension of their identity over the other, both dimensions simultaneously structure the decisions they make regarding charitable causes. They are able to exercise their class privilege and influence to ensure that Black causes are on the agenda of organizations they support.

Robert, who previously voiced a critique of mutual aid organizations, explains his giving in the following way:

> You might think of this as general giving but I would say it's not. By giving to [an educational nonprofit] I'm giving to poor inner city school kids and what does

that define? Black and Hispanic kids in most urban school systems. I gave an early childhood education center up in the Bronx at an institution called—it's part of the [a religious social services organization], they own it and run it. But bar none the kids in that program and the parents that benefit from it are Black and Hispanic . . . I'm giving to these long established [organizations] depending on how you look at them, if you look at the board or anything like that you might say it's a White institution but they're doing social services work that's very much focused on minority populations. So I think if you looked at my dollars you would say they fall in general philanthropy but with some real direction to programs and issues and initiatives that really have an impact on the African American community.

Donna, who also works in finance, continues in a similar vein:

The causes I give to all support Black folks on some level, though the organizations other than church are not all run by or for Black people. I would not give to an organization that did not positively impact Black people or issues that significantly impact us, as there's enough dollars around [without her investment].

Donors maintain a closeness to Black *people* (notably children), while shunning Black *organizations*. To be clear, race does not cease to matter, but instead matters in very specific ways. Donors will support mainstream institutions but make sure they are contributing to initiatives they think will benefit Blacks either directly or indirectly. Black donors want to participate in philanthropy in a manner that they believe appropriate to their position in the class hierarchy, which means supporting organizations of their choosing in a manner which they dictate. In order for them to do this, however, "representing the community" to use the words of one donor, means negotiating a tricky terrain of status consciousness.

Linda sits on the boards of high-profile arts organizations as well as educational institutions, including a historically Black college. Claiming that she always supports Black causes, she explains her motivation:

Jane: How did you decide to focus specifically on organizations that benefit African Americans? Is that something that you consciously seek out when you're choosing organizations to support?

Linda: Always.

Jane: And why is that?

Linda: Because I'm an African American.

Linda gives a very simple answer, and she was surprised that I would even ask such a question because, to her, her motivation is so obvious. While she supports Black causes because she is Black, her support of Black causes does not translate into support for Black organizations. She explains,

Well I think three quarters of the groups I'm involved with are not aimed specifically at minorities or African Americans. (But) whatever their mission is there are opportunities to find ways to engage and support African Americans and that's what I find of interest.

This donor said explicitly throughout the interview that she supports Black causes across all of her philanthropic activities, and even when supporting mainstream organizations, she advocates for increased Black representation in both programming and staffing. In this respect, Linda is like many other Black patrons of the arts that also consider their service as museum board members as an opportunity to advocate for the increased representation of Black artists (Banks 2009). Her love for the arts leads her to sit on many museum boards, and she uses her position of influence to advance racial interests, such as increasing racial diversity among museum curators. She aligns her support of Black causes with her broader interests in the arts and education. Linda's support of high-status arts organizations insures that she remains firmly planted in elite social networks. This model of giving cannot be neatly subsumed under the paradigm of "Black philanthropy." At first glance, one might think that, given the types of organizations she supports, her claim that she is always thinking about Black interests is insincere. What she does through her philanthropy, however, is advocate for the integration of the elite institutions she is part of—not only through her own presence as a board member, but through her commitment to achieving diversity on multiple levels such as programming and hiring African Americans for leadership positions in the organizations she supports. She also wants to replicate for others the experiences that she has had. Indeed, she believes that the type of support she partakes in has a trickle-down effect.

This type of strategic, targeted giving is comparable to the strategic assimilation that Lacy (2007) discusses in her study of upper-middle-class Black suburbanites. Middle-class and affluent Blacks certainly benefit from their integration into the middle class and the privileges and opportunities they have earned. The donors in this study go to great lengths to insure that their giving will benefit other African Americans. Rather than departing mainstream settings to support Black causes, however, they are especially adept at bringing their racial commitments to the agenda at mainstream organizations.

The donors who distinguish between Black causes and organizations voice a critique of Black organizations as inadequate, or challenge the notion of racial obligation are more likely to be of a younger, post–Civil Rights generation. They are also more firmly entrenched in mainstream organizations—whether through work, residential neighborhoods, or their alma maters. The trend of younger donors practicing a type of giving that is more individualistic and less race-conscious is tentatively substantiated in the literature on Black giving (Mottina and Miller, 2005), but it is important to point out that Black donors are not necessarily exercising a lower racial consciousness because they choose to support more mainstream organizations. Instead, they deploy different understandings and criteria of what it means to be supportive of one's race.

Resisting Obligation

While donors do support Black causes, they say that they do so of their own accord, and are adamant in their conviction that not all Black donors are required to act similarly. Ron, who spoke earlier of the difficulties he experienced convincing a board to make an annual contribution to their organization, says that he supports organizations that are "close to the community." Additionally, he sits on the boards of several high-profile arts organizations in New York City, in many cases as the only Black trustee. He personally expresses a feeling of "responsibility to the point of obligation" towards African American causes, but takes issue with the assumption that all African Americans feel similarly:

> I think that's such a blanket statement [that African Americans only support African American organizations]. I don't believe that. When you make the organizations relevant people will get involved or if they don't feel they're particularly relevant to their lives or their interests, then they're not going to get involved. I can't make such a sweeping generalization as that though, that's a little unfair, it's uninformed, it's unsubstantiated.

None of my donors agreed with the statement "all Black people ought to support Black causes or organizations," although all of my donors did support a Black cause or organization. While this donor personally supports Black organizations and causes—although not exclusively—he is strongly resistant to the argument that other Blacks should be required to act similarly. Claiming that individuals should support organizations and causes that are "particularly relevant to their lives or their interests," he espouses a particularistic and individualist rationale for his giving, and giving more generally. Although he experiences a sense of obligation to support Black causes, he does not project this onto others. While he feels a racial obligation, he does not naturalize that obligation as an essential part of every wealthy Black person's nature. Indeed, he adopts a laissez-faire approach to giving. In short, he does not give to organizations simply because they aid Blacks. He is selective about the organizations he supports, due to the limited time he has to spend with each organization and a desire to be an active participant in all organizations that he supports. Indeed, he has served as chairman for many of the boards on which he has sat, and has been honored by several foundations for his philanthropic work, which he does in addition to his full-time job in finance.

Allen has made contributions to Black organizations, but at the request of a relative. When I ask him whether he believes supporting Black institutions is important for him as a Black man, he replies, "It's like race has never been a deciding factor for me in any part of my life." Similarly to Ron, he supports organizations that are "relevant"—an organization that speaks to a cause he is interested in, or an organization that an individual close to him has benefited from. He differs from Ron in that the relevancy of an organization is never determined by racial considerations.

John, who works at a nonprofit organization and serves on several boards of nonprofit organizations, also took issue with those he refers to as the people who "want to know how come that Black guy's not volunteering in East New York to rebuild a community on Saturdays." He asks why there ought to be a racial consideration in the first place, and argues that this type of racial obligation is projected onto affluent Blacks in a way that it never is projected onto affluent Whites.

> They're mainly Whites unfortunately, who think, well, they [upwardly mobile African Americans] should be living, you know in El Barrio or East New York. But they're [upwardly mobile African Americans] not living there. Because they're actually doing what everybody who finally went and got two degrees does, live a better life like most Americans.

This donor's statement revisits the theme of the consequences of upward mobility for African Americans, stating that Blacks should not be expected to stay in deteriorating neighborhoods simply because they are Black. Instead, they should do what "most Americans" do: follow a mainstream path that rewards merit. If people have the opportunity to live a better life, shouldn't they take it? As Wilkins (2004) argues in his discussion of Black lawyers performing public service, "As a preliminary matter, given the small number of Blacks who have penetrated the upper echelons of corpo-

rate America, many Black lawyers believe that succeeding in private practice is in and of itself an important contribution to social justice" (p. 6). Individual achievement should be considered an adequate contribution to the cause of racial uplift. Instead, there remains an expectation that Blacks will not follow the trajectory of the upwardly mobile—that their racial obligations will structure their actions instead. Perhaps, as suggested above, achieving upward mobility is their way of fulfilling a racial obligation. Indeed, donors use the advantage of their class position to achieve racial advancement in a subtler manner.

Herein lies the paradox that Black donors face, one that is also present more generally in discussions of race and achievement. Successful Black people are applauded for subscribing to an ethos of meritocracy and individualism, but are also criticized for not helping other Blacks and not fulfilling an obligation to their racial community. Donors strongly, and sometimes angrily, assert their belief in this ideology of individualism by opposing any imposed obligation to support Blacks, claiming that when they do so it is of their own volition. Indeed, the expectation that Black donors are obliged to act in ways that are fundamentally different from traditional models of elite philanthropy implies that Black donors are, in some way, fundamentally different from their elite counterparts.

My interviewees' resistance to embracing any obligation to support Black organizations stands in sharp contrast to the literature that discusses how other minority groups participate in philanthropic giving. In Ostrower's (1997) study of elite donors living in New York City, she finds that most of the Jewish respondents in her sample contribute to a Jewish-affiliated fund in addition to their other philanthropic contributions. She states: "Donors spoke of this gift as an obligation they felt they had as a Jew" (p. 56). Some of her respondents likened it to a tax, or a donation that one could not evade. Unlike the donors in my study, the Jewish donors commented on how successful Jewish organizations were at soliciting donations. Indeed, the manner in which the two groups discuss giving to Black and Jewish causes, respectively, could not be more different. In later research, however, Ostrower (2004) finds that Black and Hispanic trustees do not see their racial or ethnic identities as the defining characteristic of their role as trustees. If they do consider their racial identity important, it is only as one of many characteristics that influence their giving.

Donors' qualifications on their giving do not end with giving to Black causes within mainstream organizations. It is not just any cause that grabs the attention of Black donors. In fact, even within their support of Black causes, they associate themselves only with causes that are, in the words of Steve, "high potential":

> I'm not saying that I don't think that those who have fallen through the crack[s] or [are] at risk for falling through the cracks don't need support, but I want to see those folks who can get into mainstream America and they can do a good job at it. That's what's most important for me. So that's my passion, that's what I'm looking at. So I mostly run into donors who are similar to donors for this organization that they have that model in mind. It's not working with crack addicted mothers or [their] children that kind of thing, it's a very different model.

Black donors consider the task of integrating high status and mainstream organizations an important one, and they pursue this goal even to the detriment of Black organizations that they believe do not promote this model. This discourse not only frames a worthy organization, but also a worthy recipient of charity (Loseke 1997). The organizations and causes that Black donors support are filled with the "high

potential" individuals described above: students, artists, performers—or people who are in a precarious situation but not because of their own actions—children and people who are ill, for example. Although there are many people who are disadvantaged, only some are worthy or capable of rehabilitation, while others would be considered members of the undeserving poor (Katz 1989). Donors also want to support beneficiaries who are in their image—people who are of similar potential and even of similar status. Through supporting such individuals and causes, elite Black donors are able to reinforce their elite identity while also reconciling some of the tension between their class privilege and sense of racial obligation. Philanthropy is harshly criticized as an institution for reproducing the elite class rather than helping those who are disadvantaged (Odendahl 1990; Ostrander 1995). If this is the case, we might ask if the strategy advocated by Steve results in the reproduction of racial inequality for the most vulnerable of Black people. If this is the case, then perhaps Black advancement is in danger if those in a position to lead or advocate for community-based programs and policies that benefit African Americans leave the community (Harris and Khanna, 2010). Steve, like all of the donors discussed in this article, chooses to integrate a mainstream model of philanthropy rather than challenge it or support an alternative model. While his enthusiasm for supporting individuals who already have good chances for success comes at the expense of individuals who are arguably in greater need, he expresses an important point: that there is more than one way to be Black.

CONCLUSION

How are we to make sense of such contradictory practices? No matter what the normative critique of mainstream philanthropy is, philanthropy has always been a model of how class works: how the wealthy and elite inhabit and assert agency in a social world. The task for elite Black donors, then, is to figure out how to navigate this social world. One might imagine that Black donors who are newly elite would feel the most pressure to legitimate an elite identity, and hence this would be the primary motivation for their giving. Instead, my data illustrate that Black donors have multiple concerns regarding their philanthropic practices. Indeed, Black elite donors want the organizations and causes that they support to reinforce the identity they have constructed for themselves not just as elites, or just as Black people, but as *elite Blacks*. This means choosing organizations that adhere to the norms of the social world they inhabit, and causes that support people that they believe are similar to them—and not only similar on the basis of their race. Through some of their concerns they express an individualistic ethos, in which they reject notions of communal obligation. At other times, however, they articulate a communal responsibility filtered through a racialized discourse.

It is important to remember that the donors in this study are supporting a system from which they themselves have benefited. They have successfully integrated mainstream institutions, and ascended to the highest echelons of accomplishment within them. As such, they have strong reason to believe that there are opportunities for Black people to excel within these institutions. To facilitate that, they work to identify such individuals and support institutions that provide those opportunities—even if it means creating the opportunities themselves. Whereas scholars of color-blind racism often critique the ideal of meritocracy as a way to circumvent discussions of race, the respondents in this project believe that meritocracy has given them the opportunity to achieve, and that meritocracy can be improved upon and expanded.

In many respects the Black donors with whom I spoke participate in elite philanthropy in ways that mirror their White counterparts. They give to the nonprofit organizations that are the foundation of elite philanthropy—the New York Public Library, a well known ballet company, major New York hospitals, and organizations that are the mainstay of the New York cultural landscape such as the Whitney Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Museum of Modern Art. Their giving focuses on arts and education, making them no different from other elites (Ostrower 1997). While elite Blacks have used their cultural capital to assert the importance of Black artistic expression (Fleming and Roses, 2007), the donors in this sample use their financial capital to gain access to mainstream forms of social and cultural capital—not only for themselves, but also for the beneficiaries of their philanthropic contributions.

The respondents in this study have high expectations about the organizations and causes they support. While they all support a range of organizations, it is clear that their discourse about Black organizations and causes has racial overtones. Donors denigrate Black organizations, criticizing both their stewardship and purpose. At the same time, they argue that race does not matter, or at least that it shouldn't matter, when making decisions about what organizations and causes to support. They push back against racial obligations, while at the same time exercising a form of racial consciousness. Their support of causes relevant to Black people illustrates that they do not unilaterally reject a sense of racial obligation. All of the donors in the sample supported some type of organization or cause that directly benefited Black interests, even those who voiced a harsh critique of Black organizations. Indeed, their sentiments are conflicting and at times contradictory.

What all of these donors have in common is that they have the ability to exercise a great deal of choice in the philanthropic world (Barman 2008). Rather than simply responding to philanthropic causes, they are able to create their own philanthropic projects and initiatives. Thus, they can decide not only when but also how race matters. Donors of lower socioeconomic status cannot exercise the same purview. For instance, if a donor who makes a small contribution is dissatisfied with the number of Black artists showcased at the Museum of Modern Art, she has to take her philanthropic dollars elsewhere. Linda, the donor interested in art, has the power and resources as a board member who contributes sizable financial gifts to advocate for more Black curators and lend her own art to an exhibit featuring African and African American art. Through this exercise of privilege, affluent donors have the ability to identify problems in the philanthropic world and attempt to solve them.

The ability to define how race matters to them is a particular privilege of the Black elite. While their ambivalence is a product of their position as elites, their status is also what provides them with the tools to confront their ambivalence. Rather than saying that race matters less for them because of their class status, their words indicate that race matters in different ways. For instance, they express an awareness of the inadequacy of some Black institutions and actively voice a critique of them. Second, they push back against racial obligations in vocal ways, and try to reimagine their commitment to Black people.

While they are certainly ambivalent, it is not the case that their privilege erases their racial consciousness—that they consistently prioritize one axis of their identity over the other. Even as they reject Black institutions, they are able to support Black causes because the high level of support they give to nonprofit organizations enables them to have a voice in the direction of the organization. By defining how and when race matters for these organizations, privileged African Americans attempt to reconcile their own ambivalence about how race matters for *them*. Their privilege enables

them to practice philanthropic giving in such a way that, as Hollinger (2008) writes, "the ethnoracial categories central to identity politics would be more matters of choice than ascription" (p. 1034). This is not to say that their decisions are devoid of racial considerations, but rather that those decisions are not controlled by racial considerations. It is here that donors recognize the duality of their racial and classed identities—how they intersect—rather than accepting the incompatibility of their two very different social positions. Indeed, this recognition has political consequences, as these donors work to direct the resources of very influential nonprofit institutions towards causes that directly benefit African Americans, or divert their own resources from institutions with Black leadership and a majority Black constituency.

This study does not specifically address the professional benefits that donors may gain from serving on the boards of nonprofit institutions or performing public service. Future research might examine the overlap between donors' professional networks, social networks, and public service networks, to examine how donors translate different forms of capital. This would enhance our understanding of philanthropic giving for donors of all races.

I do not find any variation along gender categories in what is an admittedly small sample. Future research should investigate whether men and women of the Black elite experience ambivalence in different ways. The women in my sample all had careers of equal occupational status to the men in my sample. Unlike the respondents in studies of White elite women (Kendall 2002; Ostrander 1984), my sample is composed of women who do not devote themselves to philanthropy as a full time occupation. Future research should also investigate other sources of intraracial variation, such as Black donors who support Black institutions, as well as Black professionals who serve a Black clientele, in order to determine how their sense of racial identity, as well as their professional networks, influence their giving practices.

While philanthropic practices provide a useful illustration of the status struggles that affluent Blacks participate in, in no way are these struggles—or the ambivalence that comes along with them—unique to the philanthropic world. The sense of ambivalence described in this paper is also felt by Blacks with high-status careers and by Blacks in their residential choices, to highlight two examples. To be clear, this ambivalence is a result of affluent Blacks' social location. This paper departs from classic discussions of sociological ambivalence by showing that Blacks do not always prioritize their more privileged status over a marginalized social status—in this case race. Instead, their understanding of racial marginalization guides how they use the privileges of their class position—and vice versa, how they invoke the insights gained as a result of their upward mobility to criticize Black organizations. These practices, as described by the donors of this study, are indeed simultaneous. This paper calls for scholars of race and class to reconsider debates about whether race or class matters more than the other, and focus instead on how these two social positions are mutually structuring of one another for all of us, not just affluent Blacks.

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NOTES

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2. The point I am making here is not that intersectionality theory is inadequate. Intersectionality theory was developed, however, to analyze the distinct nature of multiple oppressions experienced by women of color. This article is mainly a study of privilege. Nevertheless, the insight of intersectionality—that scholars must attend to multiple axes of identity rather than studying them in isolation—is just as important in studies of privilege, particularly when discussing people of color.

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