**Research Agenda**

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I study cultural consumption with a focus on race and ethnicity. In particular, my work is aimed at explaining how racial boundaries shape, and are shaped by, cultural patronage*.* Sociological research on cultural patronage typically centers on class. My research complicates this approach by analyzing how racial and other social boundaries are also implicated in the practice. I began developing this approach in my book [*Represent: Art and Identity Among the Black Upper-Middle Class*](http://www.patriciaannbanks.com/new-page-96) (Routledge 2010) which is the first major empirical and theoretical analysis of art collecting as a practice of black identity construction. By accounting for the ways that art consumption reproduces racial identity, *Represent* complicates Pierre Bourdieu’s influential theory of cultural capital which asserts that participation in high culture reproduces class.

More recently, my effort to develop theory on cultural patronage has focused on black cultural philanthropy. My second book ([*Diversity and Philanthropy at African American Museums*](http://www.patriciaannbanks.com/new-page-3)), which was completed while a [Fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University](https://casbs.stanford.edu/people/patricia-banks), analyzes individual giving to African American museums. Since the 1960s, hundreds of African American museums, such as the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C., have opened across the United States as part of what is termed the black museum movement. In *Diversity and Philanthropy at African American Museums,* I draw on over 80 in-depth interviews with trustees and other patrons of black museums in eleven cities, as well as participant observation and archival research, to provide an inside view of the philanthropy that fuels this renaissance. More specifically, I investigate the *museum values* of patrons, or how they define what is important about the cultural institutions that they support. I find that while patrons share membership in the upper-middle and upper-class how they assess the worth of African American museums varies in both subtle and considerable ways depending on race and ethnicity, generation, profession, and lifestyle.

By illustrating the multidimensionality of museum values and considering the structural and cultural conditions that enable and constrain various values*, Diversity and Philanthropy at African American Museums* complicates class-centric theories of cultural philanthropy. Whereas class-centered approaches to patronage infer that cultural institutions are contexts where the upper-middle and upper class bond around shared values, my research shows how they can be spaces where tensions among various subgroups within the elite are reproduced. *Diversity and Philanthropy at African American Museums* was published in May 2019 in the Routledge research series on Museum Studies. It has been featured in a podcast for the [New Books Network](https://newbooksnetwork.com/patricia-a-banks-diversity-and-philanthropy-at-african-american-museums-black-renaissance-routledge-2019/) and written about in the [media](https://news.artnet.com/market/studio-museum-residency-analysis-1638781).

In a series of articles published in *Cultural Sociology*, the *Journal of Consumer Culture*, and *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, I further develop theory on race and cultural patronage by drawing on ethnographic and archival data: “[Ethnicity, Class and Trusteeship at African-American and Mainstream Museums](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5674a50040667afe3f604575/t/5d9403200046262a02b1c348/1569981217552/Patricia+A.+Banks%2C+Ethnicity%2C+Class%2C+and+Trusteeship+at+African+American+and+Mainstream+Museums.pdf)” (*Cultural Sociology*, 2017) brings together Milton Gordon’s concept of the ethclass group with theory on black cultural capital and cultural capital more broadly to conceptualize how art patronage contributes to elite ethclass formation; “[High Culture, Black Culture: Strategic Assimilation and Cultural Steering in Museum Philanthropy](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5674a50040667afe3f604575/t/5d940001305d4917a626ac58/1569980420430/Patricia+A.+Banks%2C+High+Culture%2C+Black+Culture-Strategic+Assimilation+and+Cultural++Steering+in+Museum+Patronage.pdf)” (*Journal of Consumer Culture*, 2019) examines how the interplay of strategic acculturation and cultural steeringby market intermediaries contributes to a racially distinct pattern of cultural consumption among the black upper-middle and upper class; and, “[Money, Museums, and Memory: Cultural Patronage by Black Voluntary Associations](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5674a50040667afe3f604575/t/5d9401518a1b0b3affb0eca9/1569980755968/Patricia+A.+Banks%2C+Money%2C+Museums%2C+and+Memory-Cultural+Patronage+by+Black++Voluntary+Associations.pdf)” (*Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 2018) elaborates how gifts by black middle- and upper-class voluntary organizations to African American museums are enabled by racial uplift ideology and directed at nurturing counter-narratives about African Americans.

My research on the art market offers further insight on cultural patronage and social boundaries. In “[The Rise of Africa in the Contemporary Auction Market: Myth or Reality?](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5674a50040667afe3f604575/t/5d940059d6eaba092d1b7d41/1569980506309/Patricia+A.+Banks%2C+The+Rise+of+Africa+in+the+Contemporary+Auction+Market-Myth+or+Reality%3F.pdf)” (*Poetics*, 2018) I assess claims that the market for contemporary African art is booming by drawing on an original archive that I compiled of all artworks consigned at Christie’s New York May and November contemporary sales from their inception in the 1970s until 2015. Findings show that there has been a slight rise, but not a boom, in the consignment of works by African born artists in the post-1989 era. Examining shifts in artistic legitimation, I speculate that the small increases are related to directed efforts to valorize contemporary African art as well as other shifts in the symbolic valuation of contemporary art such as the increasing legitimization of black artists. An essay in *Contexts* (2019) magazine, “[Black Artists and Elite Taste Culture](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5674a50040667afe3f604575/t/5d9405aa8150ce0213bb5ad4/1569981886324/Patricia+A.+Banks%2C+Black+Artists+and+Elite+Taste+Culture.pdf),” uses an original archive of auction data from Christie’s and Sotheby’s to examine omnivorism among elites. Consistent with theory suggesting that the tastes of elites have become more diverse over time, I show how there has been an increase in work by black artists at auction over the course of the late 19th to early 20th century. However, I also find support for the theoretical caveat that the omnivorous tastes of the upper-middle and upper class have boundaries: Across time, works by black women are less represented in sales.

In two ongoing book projects, I further build on this line of inquiry. *Black Culture, Inc.: How Cultural Patronage Pays for Business* (*Stanford University Press*, Culture and Economic Life Series, Under Contract), examines corporate support for the arts. While it is clear how the black cultural sector benefits from corporate giving, what is less apparent is how businesses gain from supporting black culture. In *Black Culture, Inc.* I draw on ethnographic and archival data to analyze the racial dimensions of business support for the arts. I am finding that corporate support of black cultural institutions and initiatives is a form of *diversity capital*. I define diversity capital as cultural practices and values that allow organizations to solve problems and leverage opportunities related to race and ethnicity and other social differences. Black cultural philanthropy functions as a form of diversity capital because firms rely on it to cultivate reputations as inclusive and unbiased and to market to black consumers.

My second ongoing book project is *Race, Ethnicity, and Consumption: A Sociological View* (*Routledge,* Under Contract). Sociologists have long addressed issues related to race, ethnicity, and consumption. However, research on this topic has been scattered across various subfields. At a time when consumption itself as a subfield has become more institutionalized in the discipline and there is widespread public interest in issues such as discrimination in the marketplace, culture and the maintenance of ethnoracial minority identities, and corporate boycotts to contest inequality, it is especially important for sociological approaches to race, ethnicity, and consumption to be compiled in one volume. This book will provide an overview of the sociological scholarship on race, ethnicity, and consumption by exploring six themes: identity, crossing cultures, marketing & advertising, neighborhoods, discrimination, and social activism. It will also provide a framework for thinking about the links between race, ethnicity, and consumption. The framework highlights how ethnoracial social and symbolic boundaries and consumption are mutually reinforcing.