

UNCOVERING A HIDDEN "I" IN CONTEMPORARY URBAN ETHNOGRAPHY

Alford A. Young Jr*

University of Michigan

Considerations of the self in ethnography have taken on various forms, including reportage of how the researcher gained access to a field site as well as achieved rapport with those who were the focus of study. I contend here that there exists a less well-recognized form of selfhood in ethnography that pertains to the moral self of the ethnographer. This self reflects the sociopolitical or aesthetic orientation taken by the ethnographer of the problem that has framed the research endeavor resulting in the ethnographic product. Through assessments of the work of some ethnographers, including myself, who study people in social categories in which the ethnographer holds membership, this essay explores that dimension of the ethnographer's moral self.

Ethnographers simply cannot hide from their work. In the course of reading an ethnography, their visibility surfaces as readers consistently ask themselves, "Who is the author of this work?" That question really is a cover for a variety of related questions that concern readers' reflections about the purpose and intentions of the author, including: "Who is the person that gained access to this setting and what might this mean for the kind of work that was produced?" "Who is that person that was in dialogue with the research participants and what implications might this have for the work that was produced?" and "Who is that person that is describing the scene, or interpreting the behaviors and thoughts of the people under ethnographic study, and what might this mean for the work that was produced?" The visibility that researchers experience is a unique and particular quality of the craft of ethnography.

Intense preoccupation with these questions is understandable because ethnography reveals itself to its audience through narrative. Thus, the storytelling nature of this tradition places the researcher/author—in effect, the storyteller—at the forefront of the readers' attention. Such concerns may not easily arise in other branches of sociology, especially demography or survey research, where reporting on findings takes a less personalized form. In those approaches, the data remain primary points of emphasis as they are presented in the form of tables and graphs. This imagery holds attention beyond and above the voice of the author who is communicating these findings represented in them. A particular property of ethnography, then, is that the self—meaning the author's self—is of paramount interest.

*Direct all correspondence to Alford A. Young Jr, Departments of Sociology, University of Michigan, 500 S. State St, Ann Arbor, MI 48109; e-mail: ayoun@umich.edu

That being said, inquiries into selfhood have a long-standing history in ethnography. Throughout that history, considerations of the (author's) self in ethnography have taken on various forms, including reportage of how the researcher gained access to a field site as well as achieved rapport with those who were the focus of study. A second form is discussion of whether or not, and how, the author writes him- or herself into the ethnographic account. Is the author a participant observer who helps create the events or episodes that were documented in the ethnography, or is the author a distant and often an invisible party who simply reports on and interprets the phenomena under study?¹ I contend here that there exists a less well-recognized form of selfhood in ethnography. This form concerns what will be referred to here as the moral self of the ethnographer. This self is a reflection of the sociopolitical or aesthetic orientation taken by the ethnographer of the problem that has framed the research endeavor that led to the production of his or her work. This aspect of the self is one that is more subtle than other self aspects reflected by the author. It has to do with how ethnographers present the social problems or issues that exist in the social groups or communities under study, and also what is suggested as solutions or remedial steps for resolving these problems. The objective of this essay is to explore that particular dimension of the ethnographer's moral self. I argue that ethnographic writings often either explicitly or implicitly reflect how they, themselves, represent models of the kind of social conduct that can help alleviate these problems.

Ethnographers who study social groups in which they hold membership—a group to which I belong—are a unique set of researchers to explore this phenomenon.² This is because the issues and concerns that are associated with their work are often directly tied to their social experiences aside from those concerning their professional lives as scholars. For example, African-American female ethnographers who study the experiences of African-American women may encounter the same events, circumstances, and conditions that they study in their lives outside of the research context. Accordingly, these ethnographers may experience a unique form of self-study while in the course of doing their work.³

In the following pages I draw from my experiences as an African-American qualitative sociologist who has dedicated most of his career to the study of African-American men in order to deepen extant explorations of the moral self of the ethnographer. I situate my exploration of myself within consideration of how other more traditional ethnographers who have also conducted studies of social groups and categories, in which they hold membership, reflect a certain kind of moral self in their work. As members of the social groups and categories that we study, we often articulate a social change or advancement agenda that ties directly to our personal experiences and interests in these social groups and categories.⁴ Most importantly, though, I will demonstrate that this condition holds even if the connection is not always made explicit by the researchers themselves in the text. Hence, I refer to this kind of moral self as a hidden "I," because it is a form of self that is currently less apparent in the ethnographers' explorations of their experiences and conduct while in the field.

In making my claims about the dimension of the moral self that I label the hidden "I," I contend that the manner by which solutions, designs for improvement, or policy recommendations are articulated must be considered in relationship to the manner by which ethnographers position themselves in their ethnographies. Specifically, I contend that the fieldworker is effectively revealing a kind of moral self as she proffers various recommendations of improvement for the community, setting, or social group under study. Thus, this dimension of the moral self that I refer to as hidden remains as such because ethnographers do not call attention to it in the same ways in which they call attention to other issues such as how they gained rapport in the field, or made contact with certain kinds of informants in hard-to-access contexts (including studies of people regarded by many others as social deviants, elites who privilege their privacy or anonymity, or highly private or stigmatized issues such as sexual conduct or criminal activity).⁵

This agenda deviates from the traditional concerns mentioned earlier about the analysis of ethnographies. Even the most conventional inquiries into the role of the ethnographer will focus disproportionately on rapport or problems of access, development of voice, and so on. Instead, readers may expectedly fixate on matters concerning how ethnographers enabled rapport in field sites, or whether they placed themselves firmly into their narratives by making themselves as actual characters in their accounts. Accordingly, this essay explores another dimension of the self in the ethnographic tradition, one that is equally verdant for yielding analytic insights into the ethnographic craft.

THE APPEARANCE OF THE HIDDEN "I" IN THE MORAL SELF OF THE ETHNOGRAPHER

Anthropologist John Jackson's *Harlemworld* (2001) exemplifies the emergence of the moral self. The book addresses the racial homogeneity yet sometimes extreme class diversity existing among late 20th-century African-American residents of Harlem, a community in New York City. In this work, Jackson, who was himself raised in the borough of Brooklyn, speaks lucidly about his status as a New Yorker who has navigated some of the social class divisions in Harlem. Specifically, we learn that Jackson's research participants took notice of what they believed to be his widely divergent ways of interacting and communicating with the various people that he encountered while exploring Harlem. As Jackson explains, these divergences were associated with his encounters with people of different class standing. These contacts involved interactions with members of the Columbia University community (where Jackson was a graduate student while conducting the dissertation research that led to this book) and with middle- and lower-income residents of Harlem.

Jackson doesn't contest this observation. Indeed, in explaining his own interaction style, he refers to himself as a code switcher who believed himself quite adept at engaging people across various class stations. However, he also suggests that some observers of his behavior became confused about him (and here he is referring to people who he

regularly associated with throughout his fieldwork and who came to regard him as a common associate, if not a friend). These perceived inconsistencies in Jackson's behavior caused doubt. His associates questioned whether the public self they were exposed to reflected the person they thought that they had gotten to know. This resulted in creating discordance between what was necessary for interacting with various residents, that is, code switching, and the ability to continue successfully navigating the local field site.

In *Harlemworld*, Jackson refers to these encounters and the reactions associated with them as analytical fuel for delivering his account of how class matters for Harlem residents. In doing so, he departs from conventional ethnographic accounts which tend to look at such discordance as either obstacles to entrée or as troubles that informants present. In contrast, for Jackson, these moments are data and they enable him to argue that class is relevant as a means of situating people in terms of manners of street corner engagement and association. Jackson makes the point that he failed to be reflective of how his own manners of public sociability affected some of the people that he both associated with and came to appreciate in Harlem. His failure of accountability during his time in the field is an example of what Jackson ultimately argues to be the failure of many Harlem residents who, irrespective of their particular class standing, fail to be accountable to each other in how they interact in the social space named Harlem. That is, Jackson vividly argues that many black Americans in Harlem are disturbed and distrustful of how black Americans in class standings other than their own respond to them. In essence, they demonstrate a lack of respect either by appearing (in the minds of lower-income Blacks as they think about more privileged Blacks) as mirror images of White America who do not "keep it real" or (in the minds of more privileged Blacks as they think about lower-income Blacks) as people who do not maintain proper respectability and, thus, tarnish the image of black Americans in the eyes of White (and Black) America. Jackson stresses that black Americans in Harlem must have toleration, and ultimately respect, for their (class-inflected) differences. He makes his case by extrapolating upon his own failure to appear to keep it real with the lower-income black Americans that he encounters in Harlem. His failure to do so is one of his prime examples of the vacancy of racial cohesion in Harlem.

Essentially, then, Jackson positions his own behavior as emblematic of a broader and an endemic social problem in Harlem. Namely, in what ways and to what degree do African Americans of various class backgrounds engage each other in Harlem, a region which arguably is the quintessential African-American community in this country. The possibility for improved racial unity, then, rests in people exactly like Jackson, that is, black Americans who frequent the streets of Harlem and care to be fair, responsible, and proper in how they encounter this class diversity and engage each other. His activity and his reflexivity both reflect a critical problem and the necessary steps toward creating a solution for these residents and for black Americans more generally.

As such, this exemplifies an aspect of John Jackson's (not immediately evident) moral self. He does not simply make his case by making the very traditional

commitment of ethnographers to interpret the experiences of the people that he studies. Instead, in *Harlemword* he explicitly invokes his own behavior as an example of the problem extent in his research, as well as a necessary step for resolving it (which, for him, is first developing a critical self-awareness of his role in contributing to the problem). Hence, his argument about the importance of social awareness, understanding, and mutual respect across class divides for Black Harlemites (and, by implication, black Americans) is revealed through his account of his own failure to demonstrate what he finds essential for black Americans to do. Commenting about his failure is, in essence, Jackson's deliberate invoking of his (moral) self to sustain his argument about community advancement.

Sociologist Mary Pattillo provides another ethnographic account reflecting a hidden moral self. Her work, *Black on the Block* (Pattillo-McCoy 2001), is an ethnography of a Chicago-based African-American community where she resided. In similar fashion to Jackson, Pattillo explores class diversity in the African-American community. However, she focuses on a single city block that houses a mix of stable white-collar professionals and working-class African Americans—contrasting Jackson's much more geographically expansive view. She writes that these residents were in constant supervision of each other. In the course of everyday life, members of the two classes often regarded their opposing faction as the source of the major problem identified in their community. For example, lower-income African Americans spoke of the growing presence of haughty and arrogant Black professionals who had no regard for more common Black people. For the upper-income African Americans, it was their lower-income neighbors who lacked the capacity to act appropriately in public and who failed to exemplify proper social conduct.

In a particularly insightful vignette, Pattillo explains how two of her neighbors identify each other to her as models of what is wrong with the social makeup of their neighborhood. The woman of opposite socioeconomic standing complains how the other behaves in ways that demonstrates the inappropriateness of black Americans to contribute positively to a healthy community. The reader finds Pattillo in awe that each woman is able to speak so candidly about the other without any sense of understanding that the object of their derision was saying the same thing.

This episode is used by Pattillo to reveal the class-specific tensions that took place within this specific residential community. For our purposes, it becomes another meaningful revelation about the ethnographer's moral self. In the conclusion, Pattillo comments that any possibility for a socially healthy African-American urban community rests in the capacity of black Americans across class divisions to learn some degree of toleration, if not full appreciation, for those African Americans who occupy a different class standing than themselves. As Pattillo argues, this is because for black Americans, the urban sphere will necessarily have to serve as the site for crucial cross-class interaction so that social resources relevant for its sustainability can be effectively transferred. Accordingly, Pattillo's capacity to offer a sensitive ear for women who stand in opposing class categories models the kind of African-American social conduct that she argued is essential for the survival of that community.⁶

Again, this is a case of an ethnographer offering something other than the standard reflective practice in participant-observation writing. In this case, Pattillo avoids any commentary about the potential challenges of negotiating trust between two conflicting individuals and, instead, focuses on her positioning as a data point for making a substantive claim. The dynamic among the two women is filtered through Pattillo's own desire to inhabit a space where both low-income and professional-status African American can coexist. Accordingly, this account is presented as a rich source of empirical data. Most importantly, it serves as such precisely because Pattillo's moral compass is quite similar to her informants. That is, she and they desire to create a livable community, and this can happen only if black Americans build sustainable relationships across class divisions, and she becomes the example of that possibility. The turn taken in her work reveals the kind of a moral self that is of concern here. Rather than solely portray the women as equivalent causal factors for the social problem that she explores which would reflect a more traditional ethnographic approach, she invokes herself as reflective of a solution. Furthermore, she does so without conscientiously acknowledging this in her work. Instead, her conclusion consists of a package of strong claims about the necessity for cross-class relations as a solvent, and her unwillingness to explicitly invoke herself here means that this moral self remains hidden throughout her policy-relevant argument.

Finally, I refer to sociologist Elijah Anderson's classic ethnographic text *Streetwise* (Anderson 1990). In looking at how African Americans contend with each other in a blighted urban community in Philadelphia, and with the white American residents of the neighboring community, Anderson makes consistent mention of a social category that he labels Old Heads. These are elderly or senior African Americans who in prior years achieved secure employment in the industrial sphere, and who appeared to be models of socioeconomic stability, if not extreme mobility, in the modern African-American urban landscape. In much of his writing, but especially in *Streetwise*, Anderson laments that the Old Head does not garner the attention and respect of younger cohorts of African Americans, and especially African-American males (also see Anderson 1999). Anderson views these younger folks as more preoccupied with street-centered culture, making gains in illicit economies, and other facets of the so-called fast life.

The argument put forth by Anderson has been highly and hotly debated (Wacquant 2002). Yet, aside from the structure of the argument, what remains critically important for the present purpose is how Anderson posits himself as a model of the very social type that he argues has significant value for transforming the dire situation of many low-income African-American males. In *Code of the Streets* (Anderson 1999), a collection of ethnographic and ethnographically informed essays that is based on the same community as *Streetwise*, Anderson positions himself as an Old Head in his presentation of a lengthy account of John Turner, an ex-offender and street hustler who aims to turn his life around in the very neighborhood where he engaged in the activities that landed him in jail and that crystallized his public identity as a street-centered person. Anderson's revelations about John Turner are presented to the reader

as emerging from Anderson's deep investment in learning about this man, watching him try to change his life situation, and periodically providing him with material and social support so that he could do so. Anderson's work at being his mentor—essentially his Old Head—reflects the kind of engagement that Anderson stresses is missing in the community in which he studies so intently. Like Jackson and Pattillo, Anderson also implicates himself in his account. Moreover, and much like Pattillo, Anderson does not conscientiously write about himself as a model of necessary behavior for older men to engage younger people in the blighted urban sphere. Instead, he rather casually explains that John Turner was not simply one of his main informants in the field, but a mentee. Anderson also refers to his constant engagement of Turner as not simply meeting Anderson's desire for information but also providing Anderson with opportunities to inform Turner about job prospects and other such matters. Hence, Anderson models the kind of social type that he argues is needed, but also largely ignored, in the social settings that he researches.

DISCOVERING MY OWN HIDDEN "I"

My understanding of how my own (previously hidden) sense of self has surfaced in my work has been informed by my considerations of each of these efforts. I offer that my approach to researching African-American men, a group in which I hold membership, affords another lens on the moral self of the ethnographer (and, as I explain in the first endnote, in this case more appropriately put as the ethnographic interviewer).

I have committed to a nearly two-decade pursuit of how low-income, urban-based African-American men make meaning of the social world and their situations within it (Young 2004). This project is strongly rooted in my life experience as a Black man reared in an urban environment. I often witnessed African-American men who would be classified by distant observers as members of the underclass demonstrate the capacity to think and act in ways that challenged such classification. Perhaps like any group, some men affirmed the stereotypes associated with the underclass by engaging in violence, delinquency, and the like. But so too did they display extreme selflessness (putting themselves in harm's way for the sake of friends and family) and provide a sense of reflexivity and moral fiber that escapes depiction in both scholarly and popular portraits of the underclass. Accordingly, a cornerstone argument ruminating throughout my scholarship is that the cultural complexity of low-income African-American men is often understated or ignored, and that the analytical lens constituted by the proliferation of the term underclass has fueled this shortsighted vision. That lens reduces the image of such men to hostile, frustrated, socially defensive individuals who are criminally inclined and predisposed to violence and aggression (Katz 1989; Aponte 1990; Fernandez and Harris 1992). Associated with this portrait are depictions of such men as being opposed to cultural patterns and norms associated with mainstream institutions (Glasgow 1980; Auletta 1982).

I was born and raised in East Harlem in the 1970s and 1980s. Though I am not the product of an economically challenged family, I witnessed the proliferation of heroin

and then crack, and saw firsthand their impact on a wide range of behavior, from crime and delinquency to family formation and community life. My father was a college graduate and throughout my childhood worked as a certified public accountant for a predominantly African-American accounting firm. Yet, as 1960s-affected African Americans, he and my mother chose to raise my sister and I in a community much like the south Bronx neighborhood where they experienced much of their childhoods. Consequently, I came of age in the era of the underclass and had a front-row view and daily interaction with the kinds of men who were believed by many Americans to represent that image. I came away feeling that there was greater complexity and depth to these men's lives, far more than the one-sided media images of criminality and despair. Indeed, the very men who were seemingly mindlessly destructive to themselves and to others on certain days could on another day be reflective and thoughtful. The contradictions were many and deeply rooted: the same man would be patient if sometimes aggressive, passive if sometimes hostile, and insightful if sometimes uninformed about the world in which they lived. In exploring how these men interpreted various aspects of the social world and their place in it and all the attendant contradictions and conflicts therein, my own work has been an effort to reclaim that which I experienced through direct association with African-American men throughout my life.

This biographical experience led me to formulate a particular kind of scholarly pursuit, namely ethnographic interview-based projects that explore how such men think about social opportunity in America, the quality of local job markets, the relevance of race for mobility, and what they understand to be the good life and how it is accessed. I aimed to create a space to capture what I encountered in my own life regarding disadvantaged African-American men (Young 2010, 2006, 2004, 2000, 1999, 1997).

My personal mobility trajectory provided me with a reflective framework to understand these men's attempts to engage mobility. That is, my efforts to study such men, including exploring how they make meaning of various employment sectors and opportunity structures in American society, mobility strategies and schemata related to those ends, notions of the good life, and ideas about family and fatherhood, are informed by my reading of the African-American men who populated my childhood community of East Harlem. The research interviews were a more formal version of the street corner encounters and conversations that were a part of my life experience. In looking at the issues that frame my research agenda, my work has been an effort to capture a sense of the civic identities and orientations of these men, rather than to represent them solely as delinquents in need of remediation and regulation or social problem cases in need of intervention. Obviously, like the men I was exposed to in East Harlem, some of the men could benefit from various forms of intervention, and other community residents might benefit from some of them being more highly regulated. Yet, this does not erase the need to attend to other dimensions of their humanity if a more thorough and responsible understanding of who they are is to surface in social scientific inquiry. Hence, the variation in the content of what these men have to say about the issues that I bring to their attention is the basis for rigorous analysis and the generation of empirical findings about this population. The framing of the kind of

individuality that is too often denied them ultimately serves as the basis for the kinds of inquiries that I pursue in order to discern whether, and if so what constitutes, any variation in their views.⁷

In short, I aspired to talk to Black men about the issues that some of them talked about in my neighborhood barbershop, on the street corner, in public housing lobbies and vestibules, and other quasi-public spaces when urban-based Black men tend to gather. As I grew into adulthood, I marveled at how many of the men in my neighborhood who knew that I was bound for college would approach me to make points about how they thought the world worked, and would seek my validation of their claims, or debate me about what I read in comparison to what they thought. After I became college educated—and especially after I matriculated to graduate school—I was perceived by some of these men as a smart guy (and by this I do not mean a smart aleck). That is, I became a source of information about how the other, much better off, half lived in American society. On winter days when I was not away at school, I would pass by my male neighbors on the street corners, and the casual conversations that we would have often would include inquiries about what I was learning in school and why I thought it mattered to learn so much history and social studies. My studies made little sense to some of the men that I encountered, but to others, my doing so created spaces for them to raise questions about how the social world operated and what might become of them in it. I recall one conversation nearly two decades ago with a retired neighborhood drug dealer, a Black Latino in his mid-20s who was tired of “looking over his shoulder,” as he explained and who was, at the time this conversation took place, seeking a job and a way to return to school. During one of our casual conversations as we crossed a cement basketball court he said “Tell me about Marxism?” He heard the word while passing through the famed 125th street of central Harlem, where a man on a street corner was lecturing to the public about social justice and social inequality. My neighbor heard the word “Marxism” come out of the lecturer’s mouth, and he held on to the term until he saw me one day.

I explained to him that Marxism provided a vision of the social world that allowed thinkers to explore how much class differences matter for how people thought about the world, developed different kinds of desires, and created images, understandings, and interpretations that seemed to be legitimate ways of thinking for everyone despite their often favoring those in positions of social and economic power. He talked about his sense of himself as living on the bottom tier. Drug selling did not make him wealthy, just occasionally financially secure, and at the time that we had this conversation, he was not selling drugs but working as a day laborer. Hence, it seemed to me that he was certain that Marxism was a way of thinking that could better define him. Our conversation was no more than 20 minutes, and we never spoke about that topic again, but I recall this as one of many exchanges that I had with young men of East Harlem that shed light on their ways of thinking and living that did not surface in the imagery resulting from the underclass debate.

In another scenario about that same point in time, I was awaiting my turn in a local barbershop (actually just one block east of the basketball court where my

exchange about Marxism took place) when the men in the facility began discussing the OJ Simpson trial. Each of the men attempted to top the expressivity of the others by sharing their sense of how Simpson has become the victim of a racist system that was designed to persecute Black men. I marveled at how the men engaged in their banter, as well as how a few of them, who knew that I was by then a college graduate and involved in further study, would glance in my direction while talking so that they could discern whether I supported their arguments. At one point I left the barber-shop to visit a small grocery store a few doors down (what New Yorkers would know as a "bodega") to get a beverage. One of the men in the shop followed me there. Upon entering the store, he said to me something along the lines of "Look, you and I are smart. We know better about OJ!" We both laughed as he went on to say that Black men just have to get loud and assertive (my words more than his) whenever we get together, and that it was therapeutic (again, my words) for us to do so even if we failed to make sense when we spoke. We both soon returned to the barbershop. By the time it was my turn for a haircut, all of the men who were involved in the conversation had departed. Upon entering the chair, my barber, who was equally invested in that earlier exchange, said to me, "You and I are the only educated brothers in here. We both know that OJ went up in that ass and killed them people! But you know how we [meaning Black men] gotta be when we get around each other!" We then both laughed, yet my laughter was as much about how at least two of the men situated me as uniquely like themselves—intelligent and critical—while placing all of the other men out of such a classification.

It is these exchanges and many others that left me with a vivid sense of the range of common-sense making efforts that African-American men commit to in their everyday lives. They are often full of ideas about the social world and their situation in it, and what they do in public sometimes influences how they think about such matters. Alternatively, sometimes men may not have ideas about certain aspect of everyday life, and the only way to know is if and when they willingly and bravely reveal their ignorance. It is these kinds of engagements that I believed too often escaped the public depiction of these men in the age of the underclass. My quest as an ethnographic interviewer of such men, then, became one of giving voice and perspective to such men as makers of common sense, and doing so while capturing all the diverse ways that they do so along with the range of expression that comes with such efforts.

The hidden "I" as it pertains to my research experiences emerges in representing my involvement with these men as a necessary and healthier way to engage them in order to advance a more thorough understanding of who they are and how they operate as social beings. Whereas John Jackson, Mary Pattillo, and Elijah Anderson represent themselves as models or ideal-typical reflections of healthy or appropriate community-level engagement, I regard my efforts as representing what I have come to believe is a more appropriate manner of engagement of the individuals whom I study in civil society. Hence, my effort—and the surfacing of my moral self—involves the quest to reassert a new place for these men in the minds of the broader American citizenry.

CONCLUSION

What is at stake in the efforts of the ethnographers considered above is the presentation of a certain kind of moral self that appears as they write about themselves as part of the social setting that they have studied. The moral self is the hidden "I" that is, upon careful reflection, quite present in the efforts of at least some ethnographers who contribute to this research tradition. What makes this "I" a hidden one is that the writings of these ethnographers do not contain sustained commentary or inquiry about themselves as moral actors in these settings. In fact, in many cases, the authors do not discuss themselves at length but only explain why and how they appeared in the settings or scenarios that they then present to the reader as evidence about what is going on in those settings that is sociologically relevant. In other words, the authors do little more in these accounts than present the case that they knew enough about the respondents to garner the comments that they did or make the kind of observations that they did. The authors' moral selves emerge when the ways in which they write about their positions in the field while collecting data (either commentary or observations) is assessed against the kind of policy or remedial arguments made regarding what could lead to a healthier or improved community. In essence, they argue that how they depict themselves in the field is a reflection of how community residents could engage each other differently in order to help advance the positive vibe of the community under study.

The preceding examples reflect multiple ways in which ethnographers can locate themselves in their writing about their work. For instance, John Jackson elucidates how his representations of self and his efforts to acknowledge problems that emerge in those representations inform about improved manners of social conduct in Harlem. That improvement is a core component of his vision of what would make for a healthier social community for Black residents of Harlem, and for black American communities more generally.

In comparison, Mary Pattillo's work demonstrates that an ethnographer can represent herself as a model of the kind of social conduct or comportment that would contribute to a healthier social community. In her work, she vividly invokes herself as someone (and, more particularly, an African-American woman) who can be called conversations with people of various class standings about sensitive issues. Ultimately, she represents the model of the neighborhood citizen that she feels is most conducive for developing the kind of social cohesiveness that is essential for the advancement of the south side Chicago neighborhood that is the focus of her work.

A third example of the moral self of the ethnographer, represented by Elijah Anderson, involves serving more explicitly as the kind of social type that is argued to be a crucial resource for the social health and well-being of the community. In Anderson's case, for at least one young man in his ethnography he is the kind of Old Head that is sorely needed in the community that he has studied. In presenting himself as such a figure, Anderson essentially fulfills the same agenda as does Pattillo. That is, Pattillo represents herself in the way in which she believes that the research

participants/community residents should do, and Anderson represents himself as a model of the social role needed for corrective intervention in the community.

Finally, in my own case, I envision myself as a self that calls African-American men into a new kind of public identity. Hence, rather than encouraging new forms of action or interaction, my "self" is linked to the quest for new forms of recognition of the men (which implies new forms of action and interaction on the part of the audiences for my scholarship). To be clear, my emphasis on audience does not dismiss or deny that Jackson, Anderson, and Pattillo call for work to be done by their audiences as well. However, as more engaged participants in their field sites (that is, as actors in those settings who are involved in more than just interviewing), their bodies can be on the line and involved in more direct and diverse ways than is mine.

Ultimately, the value of foregrounding this dimension of the moral self develops grounds for new consideration of writing in ethnography. A strong agenda in urban ethnography involves defining a problem or set of problems and then offering solutions, or at least insight that facilitates them. Accordingly, this kind of inquiry elucidates how and why ethnographers produce their visions of the so-called just society. Coupled with this effort is the project of grasping the emotions, hopes, and desires that ethnographers have for the people that they study (which sometimes is amplified by studying people in social categories or groups in which the ethnographer is a member). Greater recognition of the hidden "I" can only advance the possibility for this research tradition to fulfill that agenda. Hence, rather than provide a unique moment of navel-gazing or self-absorption, the form of "I" that I aspired to unpack in this short essay plays a critical role in the fate of the urban ethnographic tradition (and probably many other scholarly traditions) as an intellectual resource for generating an improved human condition.

NOTES

¹The emphasis placed on gaining rapport in the field has been a primary preoccupation in the century-old enterprise of ethnography if not social science inquiry more generally (Merton 1972; Wilson 1974; Baca Zinn 1979; Reisman 1987; Andersen 1993; Stanfield 1993; De Vault 1995; Naples 1996; Collins 1998). As such, ethnographers' accountability in discussing rapport has become a principle way in which they explain how they are implicated in their own studies. A secondary point of emphasis has been on the extent to which ethnographers position themselves in the body of their work. As various literary devices have been employed in ethnographic writing, the question of whether and, if so, how the researcher is a subject in the analysis lends to considerable debate about the believability, balance, and sophistication of ethnography.

²I must note that my membership in this group of scholars is unique in that I am not a traditional ethnographer. Instead, and as I discuss more fully later in this article, I conduct ethnographic interviews as my primary source of data collection. Accordingly, I do not extensively rely upon field notes for my findings but rather occasionally supplement my data with references to such notes. As my research involves direct exposure to an interaction with the people that I study, I do share on the very experiences that I discuss here as relevant to the ethnographic enterprise.

³I am intentionally careful here about not implying an essentialist notion that the experiences of someone in a social category or group (racial, gendered, or otherwise) are identical to those of another person who holds membership in that group or category. Instead, I simply aim to posit that people who share group membership are uniquely situated to reflect upon the experiences of others in those groups and categories. Hence, while I am an African-American male who has never been incarcerated nor subjected to the penal system, I am quite conscious of how my black male body may be susceptible to system power agents in ways that other people may not be. This is true even as a proverbial white collar professional, I have access to resources and identity characteristics that allow me the possibility of circumventing what other Black males may encounter if subjected to those same agents.

⁴Indeed, the most recent turn toward positionality is built from consideration of ethnographers who study people with whom they share social categories. Female ethnographers who study women or African-American ethnographers who study African Americans are uniquely situated in debates about subjectivity in ethnography (Riesman 1987; Song and Parker 1995; Reinharz 1997; De Andrade 2000). Often, their research pursuits take the form of studying home (or at least matters that are close to home). In doing so, such ethnographers often reference aspects of their life situations or of their personal histories that directly relate to the social patterns and processes that are at the heart of their analyses.

⁵Ethnography is ripe with examples of scholars who provide rich depictions of how they gained entry into field sites that do not appear to be common places for them to occupy. Some recent examples include Mitch Duneier (1999), a Caucasian ethnographer who explains his access to a group of mostly African-American street corner salesmen in New York City that began with his constant passing-by of these individuals as he resided in the community in which they worked. Another example is that of Carol Stack (1974), a Caucasian who moved into the all-African-American low-income neighborhood of the small city where she conducted her ethnography of reciprocity and social exchange among families.

⁶The notion of the moral self surfacing in ethnographies of social groups in which the author also holds membership differs from what surfaces when ethnographers are studying social groups in which they do not hold membership. For instance, scholars studying racist groups (unless such scholars are overtly committed racists, themselves) have to confront their moral selves differently. This often may involve actively suppressing reactions to the behaviors and opinions of those whom they study, or else demonstrating no empathy for these individuals (which would be a stark contrast with some of the emotional dispositions of scholars who study social groups in which they hold membership, especially if such scholars ultimately support or find value in the goals and objectives of group members). (See, also Venkatesh 2002; Desmond 2012).

⁷It is highly important that I make the distinction between the material that serves as the basis for analysis and the image of the self that I maintain of these men. Otherwise I run the risk of conveying that I am simply looking in my research for what I already believe exists. To be clear, prior to my research I believe that what exists is a narrowed portrait of these men that merits the introduction of a more expansive vision of them. What I do not know to exist, and what I aim to discern in the course of my research, is the precise degree of depth of interpretation about the social world that such men can offer, and how and why it may vary for men across different communities, patterns of life experience, and patterns of social exposure, relationships, and interactions. Exploring and documenting the range, diversity, and content of their views latter became my focus in research.

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