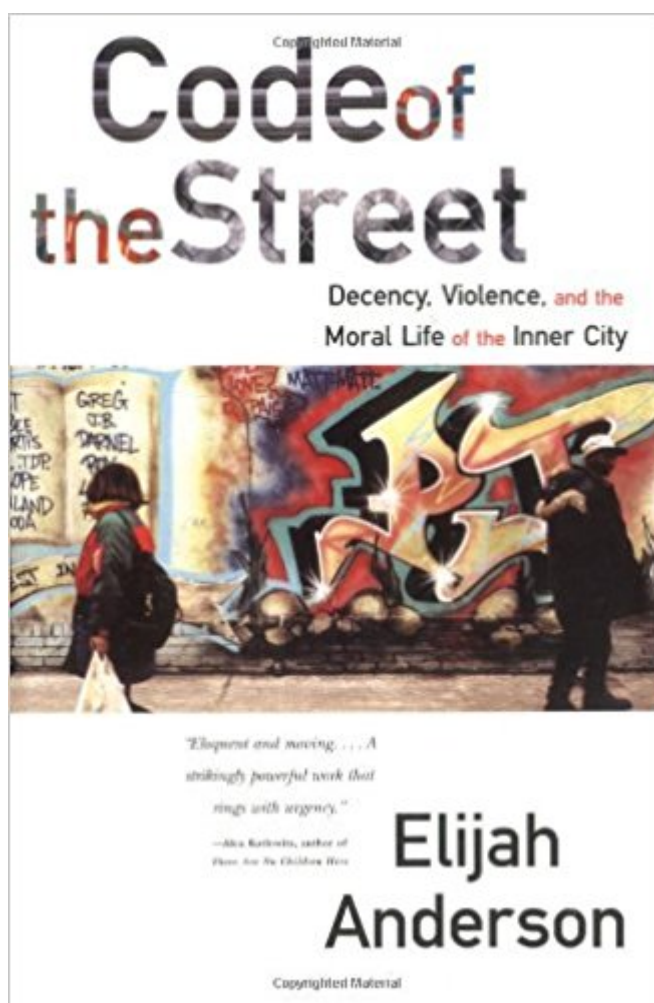


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Code Of The Street: Decency, Violence, And The Moral Life Of The Inner City



Synopsis

Unsparring and important. . . . An informative, clearheaded and sobering book. —Jonathan Yardley, *Washington Post* (1999 Critic's Choice) Inner-city black America is often stereotyped as a place of random violence, but in fact, violence in the inner city is regulated through an informal but well-known code of the street. This unwritten set of rules — based largely on an individual's ability to command respect — is a powerful and pervasive form of etiquette, governing the way in which people learn to negotiate public spaces. Elijah Anderson's incisive book delineates the code and examines it as a response to the lack of jobs that pay a living wage, to the stigma of race, to rampant drug use, to alienation and lack of hope.

Book Information

Series: Code of the Street

Paperback: 352 pages

Publisher: W. W. Norton & Company; Reprint edition (September 17, 2000)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0393320782

ISBN-13: 978-0393320787

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.9 x 8.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 12 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 79 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #6,378 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #21 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Sociology > Urban](#) #60 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Specific Demographics > African-American Studies](#) #1340 in [Books > Reference](#)

Customer Reviews

As sociologist Elijah Anderson shows in the detailed and devastating *Code of the Street*, the senseless crime in the inner city represents a complex, though ultimately self-defeating, set of social mores. These mores, called "codes," stress a hyperinflated sense of manhood through verbal boasts, drug selling, sexual prowess, and—ultimately—violence and death. "At the heart of the code is the issue of respect," Anderson writes, "loosely defined as being treated 'right' or being granted one's 'props' (or proper due) or the deference one deserves." Anderson reveals a world where unemployment is rampant, teenage pregnancy is common, and social and educational achievement is viewed as "acting white." Although Anderson states that racism is a major factor for this condition, he notes that this type of behavior is further exacerbated by modern economic and political forces,

and that it has existed as far back as ancient Rome. As an African American himself, Anderson moves through the middle- and lower-class Philadelphia neighborhoods with ease, interviewing a variety of subjects, all of whom deal daily with consequences of urban decay--from the high-achieving young woman who had to reject her poorer relatives to better herself, to the former delinquent who tries to go straight after returning from prison. For Anderson, these are the true heroes of Code of the Street: people who overcome the temptations of the streets to help create a better space for the next generation. --Eugene Holley Jr. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Not content to sugarcoat problems or to stockpile blame, Anderson (*Streetwise* and *A Place on the Corner*) takes a piercing look at the complex issues surrounding respect, social etiquette and family values in the multicultural neighborhoods along Philadelphia's Germantown Avenue. A major artery of the city, the street reflects the vast social and economic difficulties confronting many of the nation's urban centers. The book soars above other, similar studies when the author takes on the so-called "code of the street" in black areas. A journalist and professor of social sciences at the University of Pennsylvania, Anderson explores the differences between the "decent" families and the "street" families that form the spine of the communities, stressing the daily pressures that shape their choices and goals. He presents candid interviews with such residents as Diane, a principled single mom with four sons, battling valiantly to keep her family out of the trap of despair; Don, an aging gypsy cab driver and churchgoer; and Maggie, a dutiful mother who falls victim to drugs. Some of the book's most compelling chapters deal with the high cost of the drug culture and violence to the inhabitants of the inner city. Alternating between straightforward narrative and interviews, and without pandering to racial stereotypes, Anderson uncovers the confrontation between hard-working families struggling against tremendous odds to preserve their dreams of a better life for their children and the code of the streetA"the thug life"Athat is often the worst enemy of African-American communities. (Aug.) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I'm a black man just in case many of you did not know this. I enjoy being a black man and would not want to be anything else. Of course I also love being autistic so yeah I'm weird. Anyways I have many friends of different ethnic backgrounds and they ask me to explain the inner city codes of the street. You need to know I am clueless about the inner city urban life of today. The inner city West Side Baltimore neighborhood of Rosemont that I called home over 50 years ago is not the ravaged

war torn Rosemont that exists today. My inner city Rosemont childhood home was a strong mesh of neighbors who watched out for each other, owned our homes, had nice cars and children that knew and practiced respect with every adult they encountered. Drugs were something bad kids used in nasty neighborhoods we were insulated from experiencing when I grew up. I grew up in nice places to volunteer and nice hospitals that took our private insurance. I went to hospitals filled with people like me who were autistic nerds and geeks who were clueless about society in general. About inner city urban street thug life and the mentality that goes with it we knew nothing. Towards the time I became an adult drugs were only just beginning to destroy my childhood home turning it from a secluded enclave to a drug infested hell hole. In my day the code of the street was being a good person, respectful honest and hard working. I am no better than the thugs of the street but, I am indeed a different type of black man than those I see infesting urban ghettos. I regularly ride the horrible public transit bus system in Baltimore, Maryland. I earn a spectacular living but I am also unable to drive due to my autism and many other disabilities. I listen to the wild, insane things said and done around me on Baltimore's transit buses and realize there is a Code of the Street in operation all around me. There is an invisible Code of the Street with its own unique morals, sense of decency and violent undertones. I look at these people living the Code of the Street and they appear like animals from my sheltered perspective. My perspective reveals the Code of the Street as a wretched existence. For me The Code of the Street is an existence so devoid of humanity that I can hardly call the culture I see unfold before me "LIFE" as I understand its meaning. Yet everyday I ride the Baltimore transit bus and I bare witness to unspeakable levels of cruelty, stupidity and most strikingly I see a gross lack of manners and any hint of refinement. On the Baltimore bus I see a whole collection of routine inhumanities done one to another that border on the criminal. I see parents cursing at their children in the guise of offering correction and insight as if they were adults. On my Baltimore transit bus ride I experience every manner of vulgarity visual, verbal shared fully brazenly without shame with those responsible so clueless they think nothing of it. I hate to say it but, I understand why urban areas have such high unemployment. The Code of the Street produces people with few to none of even the most basic the social graces needed to work in a good job. Survival skills taught by the Code of the Street readies one for survival in a prison filled with thugs, cheats, murderers and lowlifes. The Code of the Street offers almost no preparation developing skills needed to enter the better jobs in a professional workplace. I became interested in the Code of the Street because; it inflicted itself on me each day when I suffered the chronic indignity of its ill manner ignorant vile patrons each day on the bus. I wanted to find out more about the Code of the Street because; I saw on the bus at times people with nothing sharing what little they had with

others. I often overheard conversations where people scraping the bottom were given insights on where to go to survive to the next crisis. On the bus I saw despair such that I have never known and people strong enough to withstand it. I saw strong friendships even love among people with nothing more than the clothes on their backs. I've heard strong men so desperate to work they begged to the point of crying for a job sweeping up hair at a barber shop. This Code of the Street was not just about monsters. the Code of tthe Street was about survival and people wanting desperately to work but the jobs they can do no longer exist on these shores. The Code of the Street is both blessing and curse to those who must survive within it. The Code of the Street destory's upward mobility but enhances the most survival at such a low level of achievement that it is dehumanizing. The Code of the Street is an extention of prison culture. The Code of the Street assumes you are a broken person, one unable to get a good job in the mainstream workplace due to a criminal record, no education, serious disability, addiction, mental illness or social ill. The Code of the Street governs the lives of those mainstream society has thrown away and hardly ever encounter. the Code of the Street governs the the lives of the chronically unemployed and under-employed. The Code of the Street functions not unlike addiction it makes poverty easier to live with and manage but only if one mortgages their future for the meager immediate comforts of today. The success idict is the opposite. To be successful one must invest in the better future by foregoing the joys of today by investing in education, investing in stocks, bonds and mental discipline now for a future payoff that lift's one out of poverty. The Code of the Street teaches that working one's way to success is a lie, poverty, hate, ugliness and ignorance is all there is and all there ever will be. Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City helped me understand a world all around me that I had never sought admittance to because; I judged the cost too steep. After reading Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City I still hate my ghetto bus ride home, but I no longer hate all the people I see. Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City is a hard life and the people at first glance are hard people, thats just the way it is.

Elijah Anderson takes readers along with him on an expedition, seeking to decode the "Code of the Streets." Anderson begins his research in an inner-city neighborhood in Philadelphia. The book certainly follow its title well as it explains residents in the area activating the codes on a daily basis; the codes are not only a part of life, but a method used to survive. Example, one subject, a gang member, knows all to well about rival gangs. He knows of the circumstances of venturing into the turf of rival gangs: the code for him is to not venture far off alone, attract attention from attire and

gang colors, or arouse suspicion about gang involvement. Readers learn all the common activities that plagues poverty-stricken neighborhoods across the nation: unemployment, job-outsourcing, crime, drugs, and gangs. All of these common issues are what everyone sees on the surface when it comes to these areas. However, although all of these things are explored, Anderson seeks to know, follow, and understand the subjects. For example, not everyone living within the confines of the city blocks takes part in those activities. There are plenty of hard-working, descent people, committed to their jobs, families, and changing the community. He explores those people trying to leave their old lives behind and begin new ones. In the end, we as the reader will sure be receiving a lesson of what is the "Code of the Streets." An interesting element about reading this book was that it not only tackled the stereotypical cliches of inner-city dwelling, but seeks to know its history. When we get a timeline of events, There comes a level of reasoning in understanding the current state, and why the residents have to go by certain (sometimes illicit) means to get by. This book does exactly that.

Anderson's work provides a clear picture of the social reality faced in inner-city urban areas. It is an honest and sobering depiction of inner-city African American neighborhoods in Philadelphia. It highlights these individuals' struggles to navigate and thrive in the world they grow up in and it provides clear evidence as to why some choose to go to the street to make ends meet, how some stay decent, and how some alter between the two during the course of their lives. Best of all, it recognizes those that, for whatever circumstance that befell them, must attempt to live in these areas while working hard to stay decent and live, as best as possible in such cases, conventional lives. Though focused on urban areas, many of the same elements such as alcohol consumption and drug addiction do exist in pockets of poor rural areas also. Anyone who grew up in a single parent home, regardless of race or perhaps even geographic location, will find that they can relate to many of the experiences expressed throughout this book. A highly recommended read for anyone with an interest in criminology or the social sciences. I have only one criticism of the book. Specifically, it's attempt to layout a solution towards the end comes off as overall too brief and simplistic. In fact, the work becomes increasingly redundant in terms of highlighting the need for jobs and training or education. Frankly, I believe it would have been better had the author stopped short of offering proposed solutions and, instead, let the book's content speak for itself. The goal of this book is clearly more about insight and understanding of the inner-city subculture, it is not aimed at solving the inner-city problems per se. With that said, you shouldn't read this book looking for all the answers to solving inner-city poverty or crime, but you should read it if you want to understand

the experiences and plight individuals living in these areas must face and endure.

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