

Book Reviews/Comptes rendus

ELIJAH ANDERSON, *A Place on the Corner*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003, x + 271 p.

This work utilizes an ethnographic framework to examine the social order of African-American men on the South Side of Chicago in the early 1970s. In particular, Anderson studies the men who hang out at Jelly's, a liquor store/bar. In examining these men, he finds that there is a lot more going on beneath the surface than the average person would expect. He determines that there are three main groups interacting: the regulars, the wineheads, and the hoodlums. The regulars are a group of people that Anderson describes as striving toward decency. The wineheads and hoodlums are people who have perhaps fallen from grace. In discussing these three groups, Anderson discovers a social order and stratification system: the regulars are at the top of the social order, while the wineheads and the hoodlums are a step below.

Anderson explores these themes in each of the seven chapters. In the first chapter, he sets the scene. We see in this chapter that the barroom is a place for more reserved interaction between mainly strangers, while the liquor store provides the main setting where the regulars interact. Anderson also shows here how he gained entrée with this group through a man named Herman. In the next chapter, Anderson seamlessly blends sociological theory and key concepts such as the "the extended primary group" and "social order" with ethnographic examples, as he does throughout the book. The middle chapters provide in-depth ethnographic examples of each of the three groups. The sixth chapter demonstrates the social order within the system and how the men have formed a support system for each other.

In the conclusion, Anderson examines some of the more important findings from his study. His main foci include the concept of being "down," the mobility between the groups, and once again the concept of social stratification among the groups. At the conclusion of the book, he ties his work into the larger field of urban poverty. He states that we cannot just attribute these processes of identity to the structural situation of African-American men in society. Instead, Anderson argues that we must look at it as a process of social exchange and interaction which produces a social order.

Particularly fascinating in this second edition is the appendix. Here the reader gets an in-depth look at how Anderson conducted his fieldwork. We

see that while the work started as a project for a class, it grew into a much larger study and finally into the book. The appendix provides an excellent example of not only how to conduct fieldwork, but how to integrate it with theory and make it cohesive.

This book is interesting historically as it gives a clear picture of urban poverty and the lives of African-American men in the 1970s. However, on its twenty-fifth anniversary, it is clear that the volume continues to have relevance in understanding today's urban environment. Anderson's book has clear sociological significance and, more generally, represents a classic in the field of urban ethnography.

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