Code of the Street

I. Elijah Anderson's Code of the Street
 A. Structural Causes
 B. Content of Code of the Street
 C. Neighborhood Organization
II. Seattle Neighborhoods and Crime Survey
 A. Data Collection
 B. Models & Measures
 C. Findings

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the structural causes of code of the street
3. Know the content of the code
4. Understand decent versus street as ideal types
5. Understand the neighborhood organization of codes
6. Understand how the Seattle Neighborhoods & Crime Survey tested the code of the street
7. Know the principle findings of the empirical test

Anderson's Code of the Street

- Builds on Wilson's underclass thesis and subcultural theories
- Add a cultural component to Wilson
  - How do black young men adapt to disadvantage?
  - Innovate a distinct status system based on violence
- Example of Differential Social Organization
  - Decent families: Organization against violence
  - Street youth (code of the street): Organization in Favor of Crime

Structural Causes of the Code

- Structural disadvantage in labor market
  - WJ Wilson's concept of urban underclass
  - Self-respect not derived conventionally
  - Result: alienation
- Distrust of social institutions (police)
- Develop own system of justice and control
  - Organized system for resolving disputes and allocating respect & status
  - Based on violence: hypermasculinity
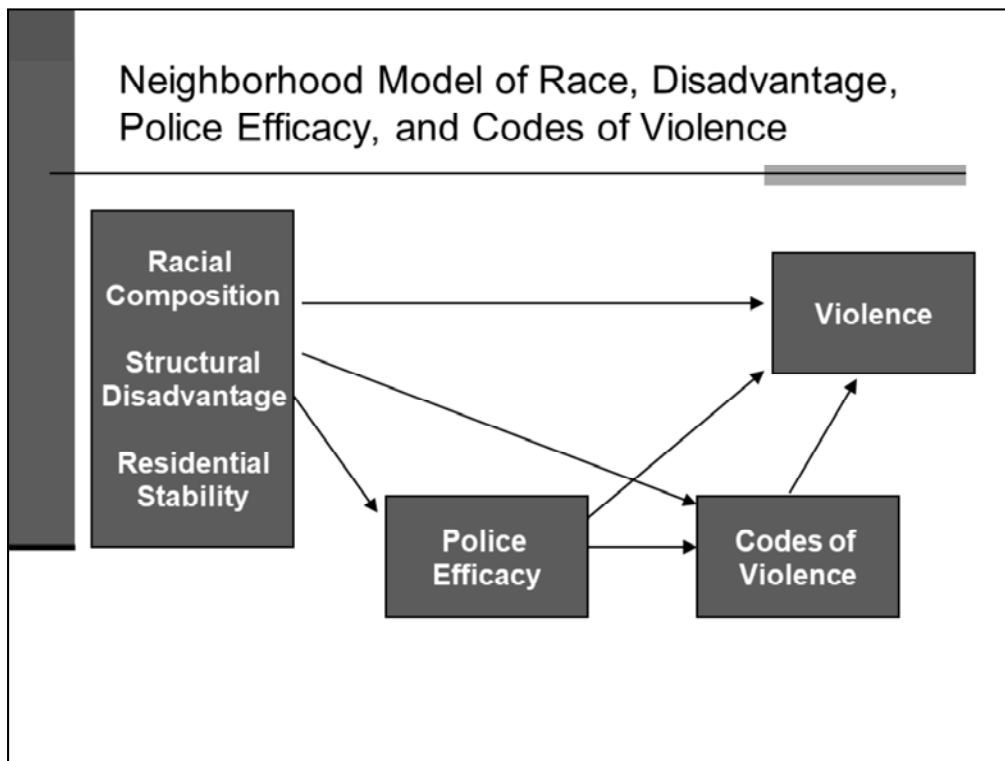
Code of the Street: Content

- Status based on "rep" for violence, toughness
  - Quick to resort to violence
  - Skill as a fighter
  - "Go for bad," fearless, use a gun
- Never back down from a fight
  - Always come to aid of one's crew or intimates
  - Respond in kind to insults or threats
- Exact revenge
  - If a peer or family is insulted or preyed upon
  - If girlfriend is insulted or violated
- Gain "juice" or rep by preying on the weak
  - Take their material possessions (jewelry, shoes)
  - Hit on their girlfriends
  - Assault, humiliate others
- Staring, stepping on toes are viewed as threats

Social Organization of the Code of the Street

- Norms Govern Behavior on the Street
  - Allocate respect and status
  - Provides a way of resolving disputes
- Knowledge of the code allows one to avoid violence
  - Don't stare or otherwise threaten
  - Project a violent image, as tough, crazy, not to be messed with
- Ideal types: Decent and street
- Decent people have to know the code or they'll be punked.
- Implication: Code is a system property of neighborhoods not individuals

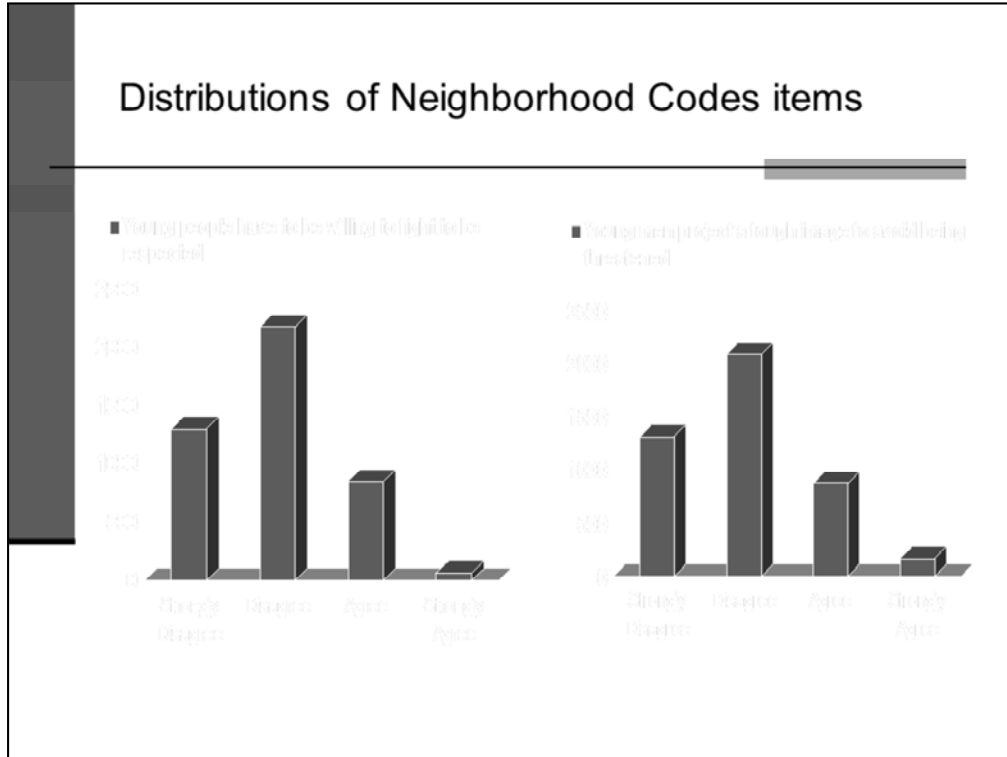## Seattle Neighborhoods and Crime Survey

- Seattle: Metropolitan area without extreme residential segregation or extreme concentrated disadvantage

- Sampled 4,904 households within 123 census tracts in Seattle

- Disproportionate oversample of census blocks with high concentrations of minorities

- Interviewed one adult in the household (SBRI)

- Response rate around 50%

Neighborhood Model of Race, Disadvantage, Police Efficacy, and Codes of Violence

Racial Composition

Structural Disadvantage

Residential Stability

Police Efficacy

Codes of Violence

Violence

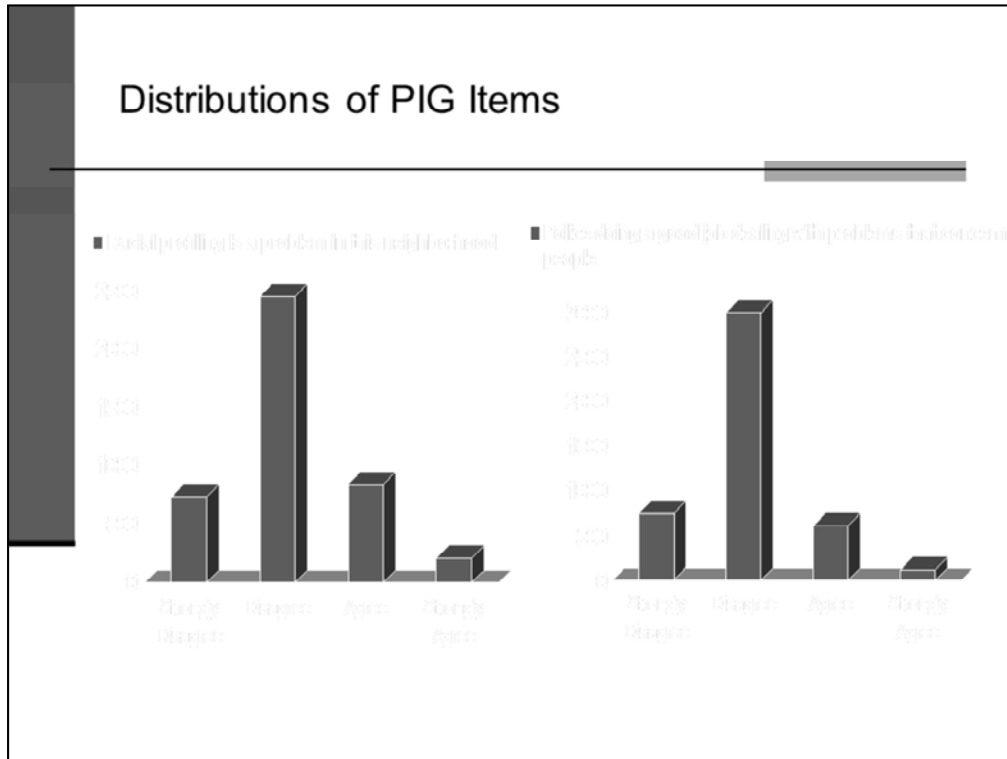## Measures of Neighborhood Codes of Violence
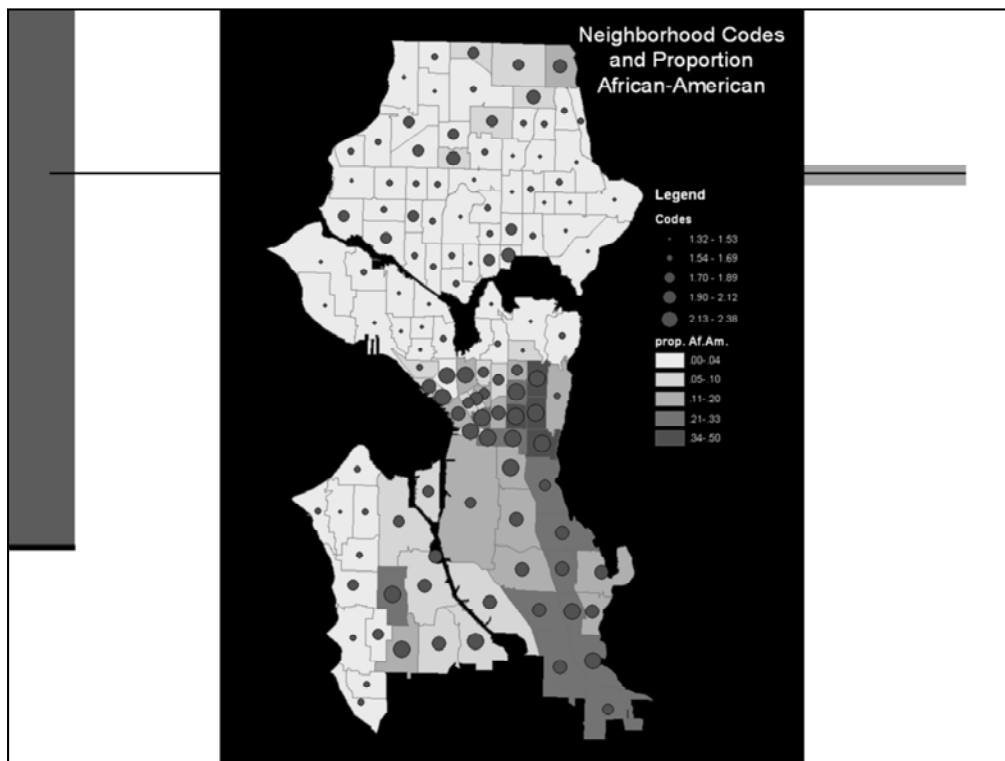## alpha = .87

In this neighborhood...

■ Parents teach their kids to fight back if they are insulted or threatened.

■ For young people to gain respect among their peers, they sometimes have to be willing to fight.

■ If a loved one is disrespected, people retaliate even if it means resorting to violence.

■ Young men who own guns are often looked up to and respected.

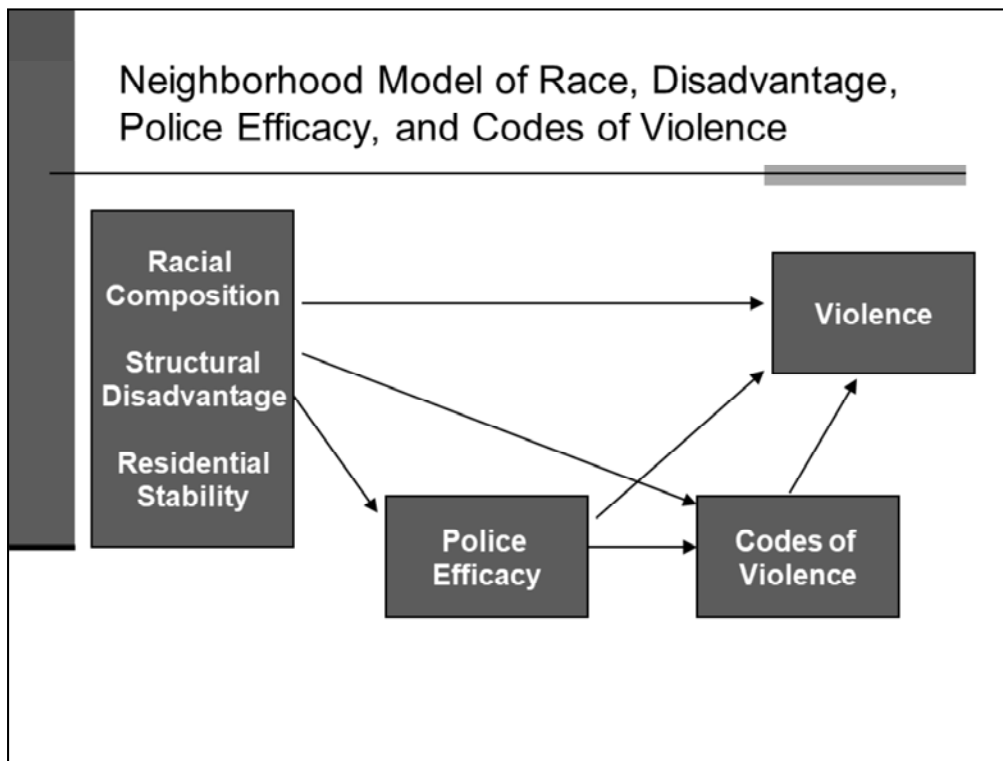■ Young men often project a tough or violent image to avoid being threatened with violence.

Distributions of Neighborhood Codes items

Measures of Police Inefficacy Gauge (PIG)
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- In this neighborhood, police just hassle residents, rather than being helpful.

- Racial profiling is a problem in this neighborhood

- The police are doing a good job in dealing with problems that really concern people in this neighborhood.

Distributions of PIG Items

Neighborhood Codes and Proportion African-American

Neighborhood Model of Race, Disadvantage, Police Efficacy, and Codes of Violence

Notes: