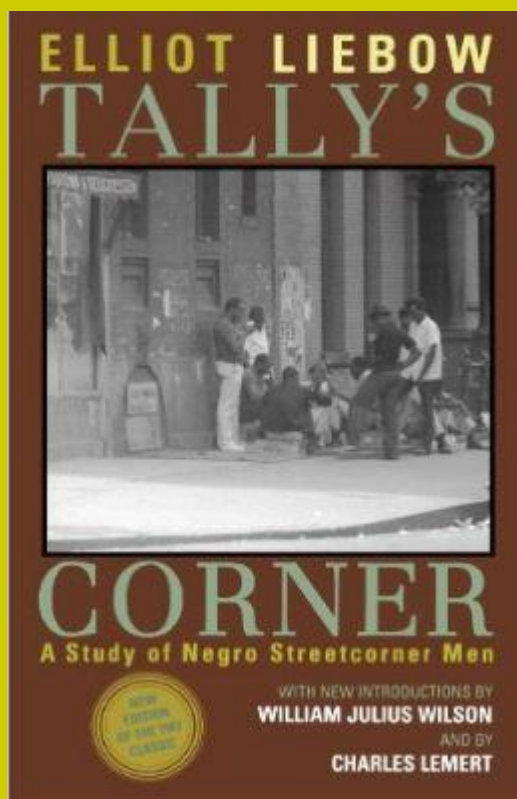


Based on participant observation, this study describes and interprets the daily routines of 24 African-American men who frequented a streetcorner in the District of Columbia's second precinct as a base of operations.



The author collected data during 12 months of intensive participant observation in 1962 and on a more intermittent basis through the first 6 months of 1963. The study spanned the four seasons of the year and all hours of the day and night. The 24 African-American men who were the subjects of the study were unskilled construction workers, casual day laborers, menial workers in retailing or the service trades, or unemployed. They ranged in age from the early 20's to the middle 40's. Some were single, some married; some of the married men were living with their wives and children, and others were not. Areas of researcher participation and observation included the streetcorner, the alleys, hallways, pool rooms, beer joints, and private houses in the immediate neighborhood. Often, however, associations that began on the street corner led the researcher out of the neighborhood to courtrooms, jails, hospitals, dance halls, beaches, and private houses elsewhere in the District of Columbia and nearby Maryland and Virginia. The framework for data presentation and analysis is a portrait of the "streetcorner man" as breadwinner, father, husband, lover, and friend.

By organizing the materials around roles and relationships commonly recognized elsewhere in American society, the study product should lend itself to direct comparison with similar models drawn from middle-class behavior or from other segments of the lower class. The author concludes that the "streetcorner man" does not reflect nor measure his worth by an independent urban subculture. His behavior is not so much a way of realizing the distinctive goals and values of his own subculture or of conforming to its models, but rather as his way of trying to achieve many of the goals and values of the larger society; failing to do this, he conceals his failure from others and from himself as best he can. The author further concludes that the inability of the African-American man to earn a living and support his family is the central fact of lower class African-American life. Ways of addressing this are suggested. Appended discussion of methodology and 64 references