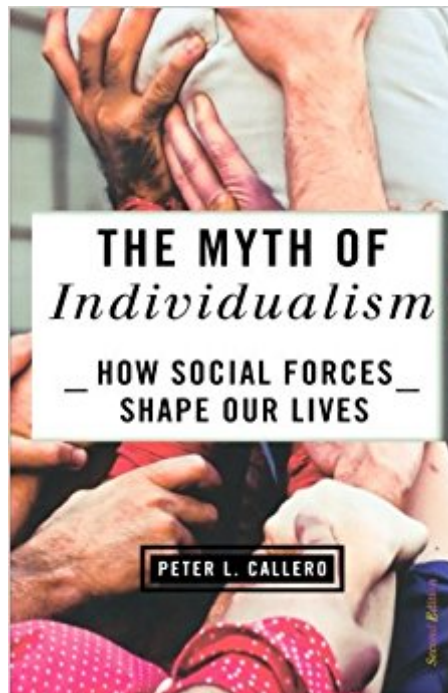




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# The Myth Of Individualism: How Social Forces Shape Our Lives



## Synopsis

New edition forthcoming in time for fall 2017! Despite some popular arguments to the contrary, Americans are like people everywhere: naturally social, interdependent, and shaped by social forces. *The Myth of Individualism* offers a concise introduction to sociology and sociological thinking. Callero challenges the dominant belief that human behavior is the result of free choices made by autonomous actors. Drawing upon personal stories, historical events, and sociological research, Callero offers an informative outlook on enduring social problems that can help us begin the process of developing a sociological perspective. By acknowledging the limits of individual effort and control, we gain insight into our own lives and the lives of others. Callero engagingly examines the fundamental importance of cultural symbols, the pressures of group conformity, the influence of family, the impact of social class, the wide reach of global capitalism, and the revolutionary potential of collective action. The second edition is updated throughout, including new examples from the recent financial crisis and the Arab Spring. It also includes a new chapter on the power of mass media and how media influences our lives. *The Myth of Individualism* is a must-read for anyone interested in how powerful social forces shape individual lives in subtle but compelling ways.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Peter Callero has scored again with the second edition of *The Myth of Individualism*. As before, this text is highly recommended as a supplement to an introductory text in sociology. Callero has produced an extremely readable overview of some difficult theoretical and conceptual problematics in sociology. He is able to integrate issues of micro and macro sociology using excellent concrete

examples. A complementary and dialectical relationship between symbolic interactionism and basic structuralism is accomplished that is comprehensible to undergraduate students. The dialectic is demonstrated in a way that is clearly critical and even counter-hegemonic. This text is a true pleasure to read. (Dean Braa, Western Oregon University)

In *The Sociological Imagination*, C. Wright Mills tells us that sociology promises an understanding of the connections between biography and history, self and society. In *The Myth of Individualism*, Peter Callero delivers on this promise. By showing how to think about ourselves as both products of society and its makers, Callero nurtures the sociological imagination while also helping us see what it means for creating a more just world. (Michael Schwalbe, North Carolina State University)

Individualism is a set of beliefs that economic success comes from one's own hard work, and that private life is more important than public life; it is an ideology based on self-determination, where a person can freely choose what he or she wants to do. However, these beliefs are not sustained by reality. To become a person, one is dependent on others, viz., one's family and friends. As one becomes a person, one is confronted by different group memberships and the rules of conduct associated with those groups, which again limits one's independence. Confronting the social class system, some individuals learn that hard work and responsibility have little connection to the American Dream; they are buffeted by economic forces they little understand. Interspersed with references to people whose attempts at individualism resulted in punishment, e.g., Ted Kaczynski, or in social change, e.g., Rosa Parks, the book's argument, then, is that social forces limit the freedom of each of us. Most people won't need a book to tell them this; they will know it from their own experiences. Nevertheless, Callero (Western Oregon Univ.) offers a reminder. Summing Up: Recommended. General and undergraduate libraries. (CHOICE)

*The Myth of Individualism* offers a concise introduction to sociology and sociological thinking. This engaging text challenges the dominant belief that human behavior is the result of free choices made by autonomous actors. Drawing upon personal stories, historical events and sociological research, Callero shows how powerful social forces shape individual lives in subtle but compelling ways. The second edition has been updated throughout, including new examples from the recent financial crisis and the Arab Spring. The second edition also features a new chapter on how media influences our lives.

From the first edition: Professor Callero, with head and heart, knows of what he writes, for he combines powerful narrative, praxis, and vision. One would expect no less from a scholar of society who has dedicated his life to seeking both truth and social justice. Such is a dialectic we all need to practice. And in the spirit of seeking truth and a better world, readers of this fine book can engage in

a constructive debate with the author: is individualism a myth (in the pejorative sense) or is it an imaginative personal growth opportunity to go deep into one's spiritual and existential solitude (like Thoreau, for instance) and discover a profound social and ecological solidarity? Callero engages us if we decide to think with our whole beings as we read, in the best Socratic and Gandhian satyagraha traditions. (Frank Fromherz, Portland State University)

From the first edition: Peter Callero's *The Myth of Individualism* is the kind of introductory sociology text that is needed to reach the millennium generation of students flooding into our colleges and universities. Current freshmen do not accept something as 'true'; just because someone in authority tells them to think that way; they want to understand 'why'; things are the way that they are and believe that they can impact pressing social issues. Instead of the 'time-tested' approach of many intro Sociology textbooks—i.e. cataloging the social institutions and processes—Callero invites students to actively engage in sociological thinking by focusing on how our society's blind acceptance of logic of individualism masks individuals' understanding the relationship between our personal lives and the social forces that structure them. With examples taken from current events, *The Myth of Individualism* will inspire students to reject reductionist explanations for social outcomes (e.g. the rich are rich because they work harder than other people), and to utilize a sociological perspective in responding to the issues they encounter in everyday life in a complicated world. (Peter Collier, Portland State University)

I'm using this to supplement a paper I am writing on Individualism. I tried reading all of the book but could not make it through except to read the most pertinent parts. The author confuses the Rousseau individualism with Adam Smith individualism and so jumps back and forth between the two. He confuses value and price leading me to believe he has little understanding of basic economic concepts. The only source he quotes to back up individualism in the beginning of the book is Milton Friedman- not Hayek, Adam Smith, De Tocqueville, Mandeville, etc.- simply to lob softballs which tells me he did not research the origins of individualism as he would probably agree with the originators of the term, the French branch of Saint Simonians. If you are looking for a book to tell you about individualism look elsewhere (namely the authors mentioned above).

My sociology teacher has this book as our required textbook, and it's actually interesting in my opinion.. bought brand new.

This was just the book that my wife needed for her class.

Simple to comprehend and great execution. For those who desire a new mindset, or seek to see society in new forms, take a moment to read this book. If you're stuck in your individualism this piece will hopefully alter your perspective.

Personally i really dont like reading especially if its a required book for class. However the contents in the book allows a better understanding on how an individual can impact society and that individualism is a myth.

I believe this will make a great supplementary text for my introductory class. The author really captures the ideas regarding cultural values and beliefs and social structures that benefit some in society while disadvantaging others.

I liked this book because it gives a cruel enough shake to accepted beliefs, and ends up wrapping up with a small but truthfully real hope. Also, it gives so much knowledge about things that are not specific to sociology and are very interesting. By the way, the seller was also nice and i got my book on time for my class.

Perfect condition. A Plus!

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