



**WESTERN  
MICHIGAN**  
UNIVERSITY

The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare

---

Volume 34  
Issue 4 December

Article 18

---

2007

*Deadly Worlds: The Emotional Costs of Globalization.* Charles  
Lemert and Anthony Elliott.

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw>



Part of the Social Work Commons

---

#### Recommended Citation

(2007) "*Deadly Worlds: The Emotional Costs of Globalization.* Charles Lemert and Anthony Elliott.," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 34: Iss. 4, Article 18.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15453/0191-5096.3308>

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol34/iss4/18>

This Book Note is brought to you by the Western Michigan University School of Social Work. For more information, please contact [wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu](mailto:wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu).



**WESTERN  
MICHIGAN**  
UNIVERSITY

ethnic, class, and age backgrounds. The ethnographic portrait that Sidel presents is a moving one which provides valuable, powerful insights into the experiences of these women, their backgrounds, the difficulties they encountered, their resilience and their achievements.

In addition to reporting on her interviews in great detail, Sidel quotes extensively from the literature to support her case. She does not dismiss the role of marriage or of the need to avoid teen pregnancies but she rejects the simplistic theologies on which current public policies towards single women are based. She argues convincingly that efforts to reduce teen pregnancy and promote marriage must be linked to policies that address the fundamental problems of low income and material need that, she contends, present the greatest barrier to the realization of the American dream for these women and their children. The book offers a powerful alternative to the current orthodoxies that shaped government policy. Hopefully, its alternative imagery will influence public opinion and ultimately promote policies and programs that support rather than demonized single mothers. Sidel's extremely important book deserves to be widely read.

Charles Lemert and Anthony Elliott, *Deadly Worlds: The Emotional Costs of Globalization*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006. \$ 19.95 paperback.

Much of the social science literature on globalization has focused narrowly on economic aspects and on the way international trade, the flow of finance capital, the activities of multinational corporations and currency speculation have fostered far more frequent exchanges and a growing interdependence between the world's nation states. Although this focus predominates, social science literature has been criticized for neglecting the other dimensions of globalization such as communications, population movements and the diffusion of culture. Fortunately, a more comprehensive approach to globalization has emerged and many facets of the processes accompanying globalization have now been explored.

One of these concerns the way globalization has affected individual attitudes, beliefs and behaviors. Some writers have emphasized the way a global consciousness has emerged among people all over the world and how their everyday lives are affected and changed by international events. Lemert and Elliott develop this theme by examining the links between globalization and individualism. They point out that the term individualism was popularized by de Tocqueville in the 1840s to characterize popular lifestyles in the United States. Since then, individualism has featured prominently in social science analysis and, as the authors point out, three different interpretations of individualism have emerged. The first reflects the idea that individual identity has been shaped and manipulated by capitalism, consumerism and the media. The second emphasizes the alienated and isolated dimensions of individual existence, while the third views individualism in a more proactive, reflexive way, stressing the role of individual agency in negotiating the uncertainties and risks of contemporary life. It is this latter view of individualism that is most closely associated with globalization discourse. The forces of globalization are volatile, contingent and ambiguous and it is only through reflexively negotiating this deadly world that individuals can survive. The book draws on case studies to illustrate the way that the new individualism is finding expression in the contemporary world. The authors end the book by suggesting that the insights of psychoanalytic theory can nurture and support effective individual reflexivity and foster an ability to cope with globalization's challenges.

Although the book's thesis will no doubt be disputed, the authors have drawn together and synthesized a huge body of social science literature that has accumulated on the subject of individualism over last two centuries and they offer an extremely scholarly analysis of recent trends. The book is an enjoyable and informative read which provides powerful insights into the way that human beings today are responding to the complexities and challenges of a globalizing world. Although specialized and somewhat challenging for undergraduates, it is highly recommended.