



Everyday Life: A Poetics of Vernacular Practices

Roger D. Abrahams

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A folklorist and ethnographer who has written about the Southern Appalachians, African American communities in the United States, and the West Indies, Roger D. Abrahams goes up against the triviality barrier. Here he takes on the systematics of his own culture. He traces forms of mundane experience and the substrate of mutual understandings carried around as part of our own cultural longings and belongings.

Everyday Life explores the entire range of social gatherings, from chance encounters and casual conversations to well-rehearsed performances in theaters and stadiums. Abrahams ties the everyday to those more intense experiences of playful celebration and serious power displays and shows how these seemingly disparate entities are cut from the same cloth of human communication.

Abrahams explores the core components of everyday-ness, including aspects of sociability and goodwill, from jokes and stories to elaborate networks of organization, both formal and informal, in the workplace. He analyzes how the past enters our present through common experiences and attitudes, through our shared practices and their underlying values.

Everyday Life begins with the vernacular terms for "old talk" and offers an overview of the range of practices thought of as customary or traditional. Chapters are concerned directly with the terms for intense experiences, mostly forms of play and celebration but extending to riots and other forms of social and political resistance. Finally Abrahams addresses key terms that have recently come front and center in sociological discussions of culture in a global perspective, such as identity, ethnicity, creolization, and diaspora, thus taking on academic jargon words as they are introduced into vernacular discussions.

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