

Blue Jeans: The Art of the Ordinary

Daniel Miller, Sophie Woodward



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This fresh and accessible ethnography offers a new vision of how society might cohere, in the face of ongoing global displacement, dislocation, and migration. Drawing from intensive fieldwork in a highly diverse North London neighborhood, Daniel Miller and Sophie Woodward focus on an everyday item—blue jeans—to learn what one simple article of clothing can tell us about our individual and social lives and challenging, by extension, the foundational anthropological presumption of "the normative." Miller and Woodward argue that blue jeans do not always represent social and cultural difference, from gender and wealth, to style and circumstance. Instead they find that jeans allow individuals to inhabit what the authors term "the ordinary." Miller and Woodward demonstrate that the emphasis on becoming ordinary is important for immigrants and the population of North London more generally, and they call into question foundational principles behind anthropology, sociology and philosophy.



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