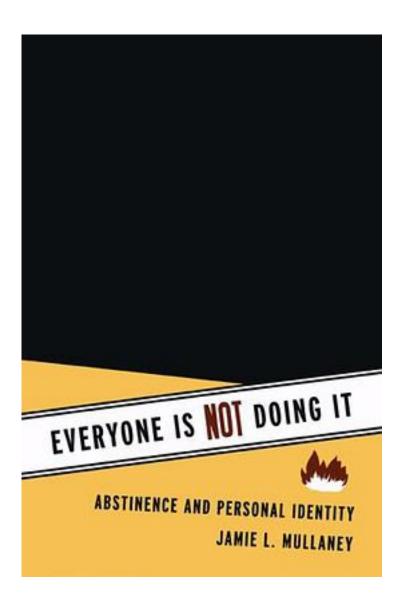
Everyone is Not Doing it



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Labels like vegan, virgin, or nonsmoker get thrown around to identify forms of abstinence, but for many abstainers such labels are also proud declarations of who they are. Setting aside the moral debates and psychological assessments surrounding abstinence, Jamie L. Mullaney here asks why it is that the act of not doing something plays such a crucial role in the formation of our personal identities. Based on interviews with individuals who abstain from habits as diverse as sex, cigarettes, sugar, and technology, "Everyone Is Not Doing It" identifies four different types of abstainers: quitters; those who have never done something and never will; those who haven't done something yet, but might in the future; and those who are not doing something temporarily. Mullaney assesses the commonalities that bind abstainers as well as how perceptions of abstinence change according to social context, age, and historical era. In contrast to such earlier forms of abstinence as social protest, entertainment, or an instrument of social stratification, not doing something now gives people a more secure sense of self by offering a more affordable and manageable identity in a world of ever-expanding options.

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