

On the Luxury of Sustainable Domesticity: Clothing Provisioning and Appeals to Conscience

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Abstract

The paper will situate the ‘essence of sustainability’ amidst the cut and thrust of everyday relations of domesticity and creative practices of mothering circulating around clothing provisioning for children. It will do so in the context of a study of the ‘greening’ of mothering, specifically exploring the ‘refractive’ quality of the identity work to be found at the heart of related provisioning strategies. In doing so the paper considers the self-sustaining practices of mothering as mothers experience themselves refracted among transient conditions of domesticity emerging from choices constructed as appeals to conscience. We will argue that facets of discourse around sustainability and resilience are inscribed within contemporary brand identities, furnishing routines of the everyday; and that socializing relations that are marked for ethical diligence are not merely situated and complex, but productive and transformative. We show that, as cultural intermediaries, brands act as expert systems distributing valorising social practices and knowledge as measures of ethical safety. To explore these issues the paper reports the findings of a study of a group of young professional women, working mothers, as they negotiate the multiple competing and conflictual spaces around mothering lifestyles, specifically relating practices of clothing provisioning for children as they implicate notions of sustainability. We describe the identity work performed by those practices, revealing the complexity of the contested space of ‘ethics’ within a matrix of nuanced acts of everyday creativity as they relate to fashion space.

Keywords

Sustainability; fashion; identity; mothering; provisioning