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Citation

Banim, Maura; Guy, Ali and Gillen, Kate (2002). Escaping the Everyday? Women's Clothing on Holiday. Everyday Cultures Working Papers 6; Pavis Centre for Social and Cultural Research, Faculty of Social Sciences, The Open University, Milton Keynes.

URL

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ISBN 1476-7767

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Editorial Presentation

'Escaping the Everyday? Women's clothing on holiday' discusses a non-everyday experience, whose significance can only be understood in the context of, and in relation to, everyday life. Maura Banim, Kate Gillen and Alison Guy explore the meaning of 'being at home' and 'being away from home' as expressed by women's choices of clothing when preparing for holiday and while on holiday. They use interviews, photographs and video recordings to capture expressions and understandings of women's identity. The project links to the National Everyday Cultures Programme (NECP) theme of leisure activities and lifestyles, and also to gender cultures, while it challenges and further develops traditional understandings of the concept of the everyday in sociological literature.

Banim, Gillen and Guy draw from debates in the literatures on tourism and on clothing fashion to develop an argument concerned with the roles of the trappings of women's everyday circumstances set against that of the holiday itself as a valuable personal experience. Do women's choices of holiday clothes show that women are manipulated by commercial interests, as 'dupe' consumers, in situations that reinforce subordinated femininity? Or do holiday clothes offer possibilities of escape and resistance in circumstances where women can realise a more 'authentic' self through their choices and uses of clothes? These questions relate to perspectives of the macro-level social embeddedness of personal choices and the micro-level examination of women's practices.

Banim, Gillen and Guy find that these two perspectives are not irreconcilable, in the same way that the everyday and the non-everyday are also interlinked. Reinforcement of identity or resistance to particular forms or aspects of identity do not happen in the everyday or non-everyday as completely separate realms of living. Opportunities for alternative possibilities of experiencing the everyday may be rehearsed on holiday while emerging from everyday life, and vice-versa. Women appear involved in the gendered work of maintaining an attractive appearance both at home and on holiday, but the holiday encourages them to be more adventurous and to take greater risks with experiences of self-presentation.

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Escaping the Everyday? Women's clothing on holiday

Maura Banim, Kate Gillen and Alison Guy

Abstract

Going abroad on holiday is now a common experience for people in the UK with nearly 39 million such visits being made in 1997 (GSS). Whether holidays represent a real escape from everyday routines or merely the illusion of escape is hotly contested in the wide-ranging academic literature on this topic. The authors of this paper draw on previous and new research to argue that holidays do represent a 'non-everyday' experience but one which can only be understood by seeing it in the context of the 'chained activities' of everyday life. Further, to understand the 'non-everyday' experience, we need to develop a more complex, dynamic and fluid definition of the 'everyday'.

The authors carried out research with 20 women as they packed to go abroad on holiday and explored with them their aspirations for their holidays and found that they hoped their choice of holiday clothes would help them realise their 'holiday self'. It became evident that holiday time is perceived as distinct and different from the normal routines of everyday life. However, the boundaries between everyday and non-everyday are fuzzy with each having the capacity to inform and potentially transform the other.

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Introduction

This paper uses our research on women's holiday clothing to contribute to the renewed interest about everyday lives that is the central focus of the Pavis Centre's National Everyday Cultures Programme. The initial impetus for this study came from a previous research project exploring women's everyday clothing relationships (Guy & Banim, 2000). During that investigation we observed that women had particular clothes that were reserved for holidays, that one woman termed, 'my funny holiday clothes'. We formed the view that an exploration of holiday clothes had the potential to tell us something about the role of the non-everyday in relation to everyday clothing relationships.

The main reason we have (previously and currently) decided to focus solely on women's clothing relationships is that in contemporary settings clothing has been more strongly associated with the feminine. Theorists such as Wilson (1987) have argued that the trivialisation of clothing/fashion can be partly explained by this association. However, by questioning these taken for granted assumptions she has revealed that while women operate within the significant, constraining ideologies of what Barthes (1983) has termed the fashion system, they are also able to challenge and subvert these prescriptions. Consideration of women and clothing is consistent with the recent re-exploration of both women's everyday lives and women and consumer culture to highlight the diverse and often paradoxical processes that underpin what seem like simple practices (see e.g. Smith, 1988 and Lury, 1996, respectively).

Although holiday clothes at first sight may seem to be part of the non-everyday realm we would argue that they are also closely related to the everyday. For example, clothes are part of the preparation for holiday that must be accommodated within ordinary routines. Our position is consistent with recent developments within the study of everyday life which suggest that everyday/non-everyday experiences have fuzzy (rather than clear) boundaries, and where boundaries exist it is interesting to consider how they are managed (Felski, 1999-2000). We would like to examine how holiday clothes are positioned in relation to the everyday and non-everyday. Furthermore, although the literature on everyday life has been relatively well grounded in the understandings of research participants, research on both holidays and clothing has been less developed in considering what participants have to say about their experiences (see e.g. Campbell, 1995). Therefore this paper presents new data relevant to three bodies of literature; everyday cultures, holiday and clothing. We shall begin by considering debates that cut across the literature around authenticity and gender.

Authenticity

A survey of the extant literature on clothing, holidays and the everyday reveals common analytical links around issues of authenticity and real/false consciousness. Across these diverse fields, theorists debate the extent to which people are powerlessly positioned as dupes in relation to powerful social structures and whether authentic self-realisation is possible. For example, in the clothing and fashion literature there are debates about whether using clothes offers people possibilities for realising new aspects of self (see e.g. Tseelon, 1995; Young, 1994) and the extent to which they merely re-appropriate manufactured meanings (Simon-Miller, 1985). Similarly, within the holiday literature one can find analyses of holidays as offering possibilities of discovering authentic feelings (MacCannell, 1992) contrasted with accounts of packaged holidays as illustrating our participation within organized deceptions (Rojek, 1995). Finally, contrasting perspectives around authenticity in everyday life are evident between the work of Felski (1999-2000) and Lefebvre (1991). Analysis by Felski highlights the diversity of the everyday, which offers opportunities for self-actualisation while Lefebvre emphasizes that we are largely trapped within everyday routines, so called chained activities.

Writers such as Wilson (1992), Wearing (1998), de Certeau (1984) and Guy & Banim (2000) have all questioned whether these systems can be as all encompassing as they have been described. They suggest that through participation in, and interaction with, these structures people are offered a means to realise agency and there are opportunities for resistance arising through our everyday engagement with clothing, leisure and holidays. For example, Wearing's post-structuralist analysis of women's leisure uses the concept of personal space within ordinary routines to describe a range of potentially liberating experiences – both physical and metaphorical. Here we can understand that the contemplation of holidays can provide some personal space within daily routines and that holiday clothes can also be a tangible realisation within that process. The planning, purchase, even the laundry and the selection of what to pack can form part of escaping the everyday.

Gender

Clothing forms a major part of our expenditure, second only to food and household costs and women occupy a central role in this type of consumption, spending more time shopping than other groups including shopping on behalf of others (see e.g. Edwards, 2000; Miller *et al.*, 1998). Both Smith and Felski have commented on the ways in which these kinds of routine, 'women-oriented' activities, have been viewed from a perspective that overlooks their complexity and diverse possibilities (Smith, 1988; Felski, 1999-2000). For example, when everyday relationships with clothing is discussed women may be ridiculed on the basis that they are overly attached to consuming and using clothes (e.g. Bowlby, 1993). Yet, through the work of feminists such as Bordo (1993) we are aware of the ways women are routinely expected to maintain an attractive appearance and are encouraged to remain involved in highly disciplined body projects which require skill and considerable effort. It is likely that many of these expectations about a woman's appearance will travel with her to holiday contexts. This perhaps is also connected to the stereotype of the woman traveller who invariably packs too many clothes¹.

While the preceding discussion has highlighted some of the ways in which gendered expectations may impact on women's holiday clothing relationships it is also possible that women may be able to exploit conventionally feminized traits and use 'holiday' as a liberating tactic (to borrow this term from de Certeau, 1984). Here we are thinking about traits such as self-indulgence and irrationality. Women may be able to deploy tactics based on these aspects, for example to justify buying/taking new styles or colours within their holiday clothes that may allow them to realize different images. Holidays may also offer, to borrow from Mead and the Symbolic Interactionists, places where women have more freedom to play and try out roles (see e.g. Kelly, 1983). It is likely that women's holiday experiences and their relationships with holiday clothes will contain elements of the regulations that govern acceptable presentation of self but may also offer opportunities for exploration and self discovery. We agree with Wilson (2001) that studying clothing allows us crucial insights into the way that gendered selves are constructed and how they are expressed both at an individual and social level.

In the final section of this review we want to return to the issue of boundaries between everyday and non-everyday in relation to holidays and holiday clothes. We want to outline possible connections with each realm.

In terms of their extraordinariness major holiday breaks represent both a physical and symbolic break from routines. The 'escape' metaphor strongly features here (Cohen & Taylor, 1992). People may escape from or to, place, climate, time, routines and relationships or patterns of interacting. Indeed, escape may be connected to transformation of self. Holidays are also extraordinary in that they are a relatively rare practice that we participate in, in the same way that Christmas could be said to be. Finally, perhaps they are extraordinary because we invest holiday, and holiday clothes, with meanings that emphasize their discontinuity with our everyday.

In terms of their relation to the ordinary, holidays may help us structure and manage the everyday. Holidays and holiday clothes may provide a way of making everyday life more real (this is what I'm working for) and more colourful (this is the kind of life I'd like to lead) as well as a means of breaking free from routines (e.g. Simmel, 1997). As foreign package holidays have become a more commonplace activity in recent times they have become part of many people's everyday meaning systems and aspirations. Our ideas about what makes 'holiday' may also be informed by more regular practices which help us construct our ideas about holiday. Here we are thinking about leisure activities, weekend breaks, evenings out etc. Lastly the everyday and holidays are connected by the ways in which everyday routines accommodate the non-everyday. We may have to forego buying certain things or alter work patterns in order to afford to have both holidays and holiday clothes (see also Nippert-Eng, 1996).

Following this review of the literature on everyday cultures, holiday and clothing we now move on to contextualize our study of women's experiences of holiday clothing. We consider the ways in which holiday clothes may be associated with both everyday and non-everyday aspects of lived experience by exploring women's accounts of the meanings and uses of their clothes on holiday. In the next section details of the design of the study are presented.

The study

The major selection criteria for this project were that participants should be adult females (over 18 years), travelling abroad on a package holiday of between 1-2 weeks and that they were either travelling alone or with other women. Adult women were recruited because they would be more likely to have income and spending control in a way that younger women may not. The context of package holidays abroad was selected as they are a common type of holiday experience in this country (GSS 1997). The final criteria about travelling alone or with other women was used because we wanted the participants to be able to focus solely on their choices about clothing and holiday. We felt that because of women's role commitments those who would be travelling with children or heterosexual women travelling with partners may have found their leisure opportunities constrained (see e.g. Henderson *et al.*, 1989; Henderson, 1994). For example, women's clothing choices could be limited by the space needed for children's items or partners' or children's attitudes about their appearance (see Banim & Guy, 2001). We acknowledged that friends or female relatives may have some influence on holiday clothing choice but felt that this would be less pronounced than partners' opinions.

We were aware that these criteria would limit the sample in certain ways. Income was a particular factor. Women participants would obviously need to have a level of disposable income to allow them to travel abroad. Furthermore, this would exclude some women who were in relationships or who had children and who would not choose/ afford to take holidays without these dependants. Nevertheless, we actively aimed to recruit women participants from a range of income backgrounds.

A total of twenty women completed videotaped interviews, eighteen provided photographs of themselves on holiday and a total of seven women participated in follow-up interviews on return from their holiday. The women were aged between 19-45 years of age and lived in the North East of England. All women participants were white and all but one was in full-time employment (she was a student). Most women worked in office and administrative jobs and the average income of these full time workers corresponded to the national average of £17,000 (GSS 1999). Their salaries ranged from £12,000 to £32,000 although fourteen of the women earned less than the average. Nine women were single, three were divorced and eight were married or cohabiting. Three of the participants were mothers including one woman who was a step-parent. Eighteen of the women were heterosexual. With the exception of five participants all were holidaying with friends. One was holidaying alone, four were holidaying with female relatives. Most holiday destinations were to holiday resorts but three women were holidaying in cities. Destinations included Europe (Spain, Canary Islands, Greece, Cyprus), USA (Florida, California, New York), Far East (Malaysia, Hong Kong). We also recorded videos of ourselves prior to going on our own holidays in 2001.

The study was designed around three inter-related methods to collect data about women's experience of holiday clothing before, and during, their trip and also to explore their reflections on their return. Firstly, videotaped semi-structured interviews were conducted with women as they prepared to pack for their holiday, usually between 2-7 days to departure. Secondly, we provided women with the means to take photographs of themselves wearing their clothes while on holiday. Lastly, audio-taped, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a sub-sample of women on their return from holiday. Here, women watched the video of themselves and our interview schedule guided them to reflect on both their intended and actual uses of their clothes. Having visual and narrative data assisted our interpretative decision-making process.

We found three main themes that illustrate the ways in which women's clothing relationships reflect the interplay between everyday and non-everyday experience: the potential of the extraordinary, preparing for the non-everyday and keeping the boundaries blurred.

The potential of the extraordinary

In this theme the data illustrates ways in which the extraordinary aspects of holiday and of holiday clothes are emphasized by participants via two discourses 'New Clothes, New Me' and 'Taking the Best of Me'. The first discourse reveals the ways in which holiday clothes are thought of as transforming or extending the range of clothed images the participants normally presented. In the second discourse participants try to realize their most positive clothed images by taking the best items from their existing clothing set on holiday. Across both discourses we can see the ways in which the non-everyday is a valued part of the holiday experience but we can also see the potential of the non-everyday to feed back and to positively influence the everyday.

New clothes, new me

All of the women had purchased some new clothes specifically for their holiday. New holiday clothes were one way that women saw they could treat themselves well through the holiday experience and they spent time thinking about how these clothes would 'perform', and imagining how good they would look (and become) in them (see Falk, 1994). We were interested to see what women were trying to achieve with these items and to explore whether they sought to create different images from their existing ones. At one extreme we found a small number of women who had purchased a substantial number of new clothes and they felt these new clothes represented a departure from their normal image. It is with these women that we will begin the exploration of the role of new clothes.

Four of the women were planning to make substantial changes to their image and this was a dominant theme in their packing interviews. Two of the women had lost weight during the year and their new holiday clothes were both smaller and also were styles that they felt 'unable to wear before' because of their size. The other two had become dissatisfied with their current images and had thought about trying out different clothes. For all these women the holiday offered both valid reasons and opportunities to assemble a relatively large number of new clothes and for taking different styles and colours. It was interesting to see that most of the women had acquired their new clothes over a longer period of time and seemed to be in the process of building up a larger collection that also included everyday wear. Although the clothes were being reserved for holiday they had occasionally tried out particular items, usually for evenings out. However, the holiday would be the real testing ground for new images and, if they were successful, there was a strong intention of keeping the images when they returned home.

Paula: I have lost weight since last time (on holiday). I used to buy loose and baggy things to cover a multitude of sins...

Alison: So with these new clothes are there any that you're really looking forward to (wearing)?

Paula: I like this blue top with navy flowers. I like the colour and it will go with those trousers. I'm trying to be co-ordinated and it is a smarter look than usual. This pink top it's quite dressy with the lacy bits on and I think it kind of suits me. They're both so different for me but I think they'll be OK.

Alison: Will you wear them when you get back?

Paula: Hopefully. I'll see.

This reminded us of the dramaturgical analogy of using the holiday as a dress rehearsal (see e.g. Goffman, 1971). Paula also participated in a follow up interview and as the following extract illustrates this transition had been achieved

Alison: OK. So what about that top then? Did that work out?

Paula: Well yes I felt quite good in that shirt and I went back to NEXT and they had another one in the sale so that was good...I wouldn't wear them for work, they're too nice but I have worn them out.

This experience of Paula shows how an image developed in the non-everyday was making the transition to the everyday.

Whilst these women demonstrated radical attempts to develop new images, most women attempted less extensive, but nevertheless important, modifications to their image. Women recognized that their clothed images were not static and they wanted to demonstrate that their image evolved in line with current fashions and trends. For the most part they had fairly clear ideas about how new clothes would extend their existing images and how they could be combined with existing clothes to create new images. In this sense we

can see that everyday knowledge about clothes and images is essential in order to achieve the desired holiday look. However, despite the fact that women sought to maintain overall coherence in their clothing sets, most had a number of items that they regarded more tentatively. These could be styles that had not been previously tried or colours that weren't normally worn. Women regarded the holiday as an opportunity to test out modifications to their existing look.

Common examples of experimental items were skirts, dresses and sleeveless tops. These styles, or particular versions of these styles such as short skirts, were seldom worn at home. While at one level women regarded these clothes as maintaining a distinction between their appearance at home and on holiday (different clothes signifying their distinctiveness on the holiday) they also considered the possibility of using some of these items on their return. Helen's case illustrates some of the calculated risks taken around certain kinds of new clothes.

Helen: Blue short skirt with navy flowers. I will take one skirt. I will probably not wear it but I will take it.

Alison: So do you feel more comfortable in trousers than in skirts?

Helen: Definitely.

Alison: And what is that about? Is it that you are not feeling that you want to be a girlie?

Helen: I'm not a girlie, girlie person. I am a track suit and jeans person... (but) I quite liked it and thought I would get it.

Later in the interview

Helen: I have bought that white, see-through top with the diagonal pattern and I would not normally wear something that is see-through but I have bought a bra top that I will wear with that.

Alison: And again is that something that you would see as being more about holiday than at home?

Helen: Yes, but if I feel comfortable in it on holiday I would wear it at home.

Helen's comments demonstrate that women also recognized the need to manage their feelings in relation to these styles. For example, they knew that initially they may not 'feel right' about their appearance in some new clothes. Interestingly, a strategy women used to 'acclimatize' themselves to these experimental items was to try the clothes on before their holiday. However, in contrast to the group making radical changes to their image, this took place in the privacy of their home rather than testing them out in more public venues so that they could assess the 'risk'. They would have some experience of habitus in these clothes but less clear ideas about how the clothes would 'perform' (Bourdieu, 1984). Although there was a risk of the clothes not performing, the holiday provided a more secure context for experimentation because any negative feedback would have no lasting impact – the clothes simply wouldn't be worn again at home.

For all participants in this study, holiday contexts seem to offer a space where women can test out aspects of their image that are not presently part of their everyday appearance but that **could** become everyday. In this sense, new holiday clothes illustrate the boundary between non-everyday and the everyday but they also reveal ways in which that boundary can be bridged.

Travelling with the best of me

Under this discourse we consider the ways in which holiday clothes reflect women's attempts to realize particular aspects of the everyday self. These aspects of identity may be felt to be hidden, or unrealized, or infrequently realized in everyday life. Therefore, these were the extraordinary images within women's general appearance.

Contrasts between the everyday and non-everyday were emphasized in the ways in which women viewed their identity on holiday. All but three of the women felt that they were 'different' people on holiday than they were at home. A few women felt that this difference was very marked 'I'm a completely different person', while for most the difference was achieved through significant, qualitative changes 'I'm a better me'. Being different appeared to be linked to realising the positive aspects of self, developing new aspects of self and presenting self favourably. One of the interesting aspects of becoming this 'better self' arose ironically from the relaxation women were afforded when they felt that they looked good.

Clothing offered a perceptible means of both becoming and signifying these different or better views of self. As noted previously, this was linked to wearing new clothes but it was also linked to wearing more of their 'special' clothes - items that had been worn at home, usually at weekends or special occasions. These 'special' clothes, which are worn both at home and on holiday seem to fit with Lury's description of 'tourist-objects' which illustrate the blurred boundaries between dwelling and travelling (see Lury, 1997). Special clothes were part of the treat of being on holiday for women as they felt these clothes would project this positive view of self. This is evident in the following quotes where women talked about some taking their favourite, evening clothes on holiday.

Emma: Really I concentrate on night-time clothes... This is all night-time wear. It is clubbing wear (at home). I like this one. It is smart and dressy and crosses over at the back. That is my favourite. This black one with big blue poppies and sloping hemline is a bit more daring... I've got a couple for the last nights. White with black flowers, but only when I've got a tan. Got to be brown because it's backless as well... This white backless one with the slits up the side and when you're brown it looks really nice.

Debbie: It's just a nice summery dress. A Saturday night dress. This is one of my favourites really, my 'pulling outfit'. It has had a bit of wear. Blue cotton dress with a low back.

Karen: I love having the choice when you go on holiday and you have your favourite numbers.

These views had parallels with a discourse that emerged from our previous study of clothing relationships which we termed 'The Woman I Want to Be' (Guy & Banim, 2000). In that discourse women identified some of the clothes they possessed which made them look good and which had enabled them to create particularly positive images. Holidays were seen to offer the opportunity to become 'The Woman I Want to Be' for a relatively enduring period of time because women felt that they would be able to wear such types of clothes more frequently than in their everyday lives. This was particularly emphasized by younger women, illustrated by Lauren.

Maura: They (Lauren's clothes) are quite smart aren't they? You like to look nice?

Lauren: Yes - to impress.

Maura: So when you are on holiday do you try to have a particular image or style?

Lauren: I don't know really. I just try to look all right. I try to leave all the crappy stuff at home. Even if it is just sitting in the apartment, I like to look nice just in case somebody knocks at the door.

Later in the interview

Lauren: You have to make the best of yourself. I want to be relaxed and I want people to say, 'Yes you look nice', all the time.

Lauren's point about making 'the best of yourself' is a process of construction that extends further than wearing good clothes. It also involved women feeling good about their bodies, being in a positive state of mind and it was also about their aspirations about having new experiences and meeting new people. Clothing then was part of a wider set of processes that helped realize this 'better self' on holiday.

Relationships and new experiences were the other key elements of being different or better on holiday. Participants talked about being able to spend more time with friends and meeting and relating to people on different terms. Their self-development would be further realized through participating in new experiences that ranged from visiting sights to eating different food and even going to different types of bars (see Urry, 1990 for a discussion of the transformation of the familiar). Holiday relationships and experiences were also facilitated because the women felt being in that 'other' context meant they could leave behind some of the conventions and norms governing their behaviour.

Sandra: I don't think you have the inhibitions when you are on holiday that you have at home. You talk to strangers a lot more than you would do. You wouldn't go to a coffee bar in the MetroCentre and talk to a stranger and say, 'How long have you been here?', but you do when you're on holiday...

Maura: So is there, as well, something about being further away on holiday that helps that?

Sandra: I think that if you are going to make a complete idiot of yourself you are never going to see those people again.

Maura: Yes.

Sandra: Like when I was in Turkey dancing to 'Steps' in the bar. I would never dream of doing that at home. Ever.

Women imagined that they would be free from their everyday concerns for the particular period of time on holiday. While Sandra's example refers to behaviours that couldn't be brought back, there were holiday routines that women sought to keep up. This ranged from eating healthily and taking exercise to reading more and watching less TV. Again we see the intention that the better self will return, even if these improvements are difficult to maintain over the longer term.

To conclude, both discourses from this theme show how clothes are important in enabling women to realize the potential of the extraordinary to develop holiday identities. In terms of the relationship between the everyday and non-everyday women want to take the new and positive, extraordinary, aspects of the everyday and to build on them during the holiday. More importantly, however, women want to bring back some of the images, the confidence and the experiences that they have developed in the non-everyday in order to enrich their everyday lives. The cycle of enrichment was a very resonant characteristic of women's holiday experience.

Preparing for the non-everyday

In this theme we use women's accounts of shopping and packing to explore the ways that everyday knowledge and skills are needed to realize the non-everyday experience of holidays. We also explore how women rely on their acquired expertise to good effect not only prior to, but also during, the holiday. The processes of shopping and packing involve women devoting considerable time and careful thought in order to assemble an appropriate holiday wardrobe. The discourses therefore reveal the ways in which women can create the non-everyday precisely because they have, and apply, their everyday competence.

Shopping stories

Looking at clothes in the shops as well as buying holiday clothes was seen by many of our participants to be a fun activity within their everyday routines prior to their departure. Buying, or considering what to buy and maybe even dreaming about unaffordable clothes helped to pleurably bridge the time gap before going away. Women could imagine holiday scenarios where they could wear the clothes they saw in the shops. This corresponds to the idea of creating metaphorical personal space (Wearing, 1998). However, women also acknowledged that clothes shopping was sometimes a chore, trudging around trying to find the right type of shorts (see Miller *et al.*, 1998). Assembling a set of clothes often required careful thought and a thorough knowledge of the clothes and of themselves. Additionally, the women had to rely on past experience and lessons previously learned about appearance. Women reported consulting with friends about items that were available and what to buy. Here we saw everyday, prior, knowledge being essential to inform decisions about what to buy and which of their existing clothes the newly bought items could be combined with.

Eight of the women mentioned the strategy of the capsule wardrobe where a small set of co-ordinating items could be taken. However, they admitted that it didn't really work in practice – they were unable to find these 'magical' multi-purpose garments or they weren't able to keep within a narrow colour range. Some of this was linked to the fact (as noted previously) that none of the women purchased a full set of new clothes for their holiday and integrating new with older items tended to lead to obstacles in achieving a capsule wardrobe. Nevertheless, we did observe women discussing the ways in which items would/could be put together to create new looks or maximize the opportunities to wear them. As the following quote illustrates it seemed more appropriate to say that they had a capsule wardrobe within a larger set.

Maura: So it is shorts and T shirts because it's going to be warm, and kind of a couple of smart things?

Claire: Yes I have a bought couple of tops like this. Sleeveless button-through blouse top that I can wear during the day and in the evening. And a couple of short navy skirts that I can wear with various tops, and again I can wear during the day or in the evening.

Although the women felt skilled and competent in shopping for clothes prior to their holiday, and while window shopping was a popular activity on holiday, most women reported that they never bought clothes on holiday. Two sets of reasons were given for this that illustrate the value of everyday knowledge and how it is applied towards a different end on holiday – namely to allow the women to avoid making mistakes in their clothing choice and purchase. The first set of reasons were pragmatic and grounded in their everyday knowledge about home. It was felt that the clothing would be of inferior quality to those available at home or that the clothing available would 'only be good for holidays'. By this they meant that items weren't suitable to wear at home and therefore wouldn't represent good value for money. The second set of reasons focused on an awareness that their judgement may not be as accurately deployed on holiday as at home. The women weren't sure that clothes purchased on holiday would really suit them or their lifestyles as one woman said, 'they probably wouldn't look right at home'. The exception to the 'no shopping on holiday' rule came from the three participants who were travelling to cities and who planned to spend a considerable time shopping. In city contexts women felt both the clothing and their judgement would be 'on form'. Women felt more confident shopping in cities perhaps because they seemed to be comparable to shops at home although the extraordinary was present when they also emphasized that the attraction of shopping abroad was that 'you find things that you'd never see at home'.

These shopping discourses have shown that the ways in which everyday knowledge about (self and) clothes underpins both shopping at home and also decisions not to shop on holiday. On the one hand this type of knowledge is essential to achieve a holiday wardrobe but it must not be abandoned or compromised whilst on holiday.

Assembling the suitcase

Packing clothes, in contrast to shopping, involved women in making final choices about what to take. There were more anxieties about this process indicating women's recognition that there would be some unknown aspects of the holiday (for a related discussion of clothing anxiety see Clarke & Miller, 2002). The packing process involved considerable work prior to actually packing clothes into the suitcase. Most women began with a set of items that could potentially be taken on holiday. This could take the form of a list or it could involve physically gathering clothes and other items together. This process allowed women to consider what was essential to take and whether there were any gaps in their planned outfits. Many had favourite holiday items that had been taken on previous holidays and some would definitely be taken again whereas others might be judged to have become too worn or dated. Four of the women also talked about borrowing clothes from friends or relatives who were not travelling with them which allowed them to extend their range of clothes and images. What characterized all of the packing interviews was that the final, selected set of clothes represented careful deliberation.

Alison: How do you plan what to pack and what to take?

Amy: I write a list actually. I start off with like purple kit, shorts, beach dress sarong. Vests multiplied by the number and then the colours. Then I tot up and see how many outfits I will do. I go to the extreme of having every toiletry written down, and as I put it in the case I tick it off because I am so scared of forgetting something that it does not go in the case.

Some clothes would have what one woman termed 'a reserve status'. These clothes might be taken, for example, if there was room in the suitcase or if women decided they needed a larger number of particular items, like shorts. This compromise between 'definite' and 'reserve' clothes potentially explains why women didn't entirely avoid taking clothes that they didn't wear. Most knew about

the stereotype of women over-packing and to some extent felt they conformed to it. However, they all reported they weren't 'as bad' as they used to be. For example, one woman felt that she'd reduced the amounts of shoes that she packed to six pairs, which she described as 'a bare minimum'. This example also illustrates that for many of our participants there were particular types of clothing items they felt unable to rationalize. Shoes, T-shirts and evening wear were reported in this category. The majority of women also reported over-packing toiletries, beauty and sun products.

Taking too many clothes and toiletries offered many women reassurance in the less well-known context of holiday. By taking more than was strictly necessary they ensured that they wouldn't run out of clothing (or products) and, importantly, this would allow them the scope to respond to uncertain events on holiday. Therefore, part of their packing decisions involved using their everyday knowledge about their clothes to select a sufficient range that would allow their appearance to correspond to a variety of situations. As one woman's narrative illustrates having a choice of clothes is essential:

Sharon: But night times I don't think you can ever (take too many clothes). I have, in the past, gone down to the bar in dressy things and people are in shorts and flip flops so you can feel a bit over-dressed. These dresses I tend to think that I will not end up wearing them.

Although over-packing accounts were often articulated in terms of 'weakness' most women seemed to adopt rational strategies that responded to the known and unknown aspects of holiday.

The discourses in this theme illustrate the ways everyday knowledge about how the clothes can and will be used allows women to prepare for their holiday. Furthermore, both shopping and packing discourses illustrate the ways in which their knowledge is sustained in the non-ordinary context of the holiday. Its application provides women with confidence about their appearance which, in turn, allows them to enjoy their participation in the extraordinary.

Keeping the boundaries blurred

The previous two themes have located the ways that women frame discourses about their clothing relationships in terms of their emphasis on either the non-everyday or everyday realms although, as we have noted, both realms are interdependent. In this sense, our themes reveal that the boundaries do overlap and they raise questions about when and where the non-everyday begins. This final theme has been included to illustrate what we feel to be the least distinct example of the boundary between the two. When we look at participants' accounts of their spending on holiday clothes, we see the ways the boundaries between everyday and non-everyday seem to be deliberately obscured. This is in contrast to other aspects of holiday expenditure where clear boundaries were evident.

During the interviews we asked women to estimate how much they had spent on holiday clothes. None of them had kept a record of this spending and they calculated the cost by looking at their items. The total that fifteen of the twenty women arrived at was £150 to £200 pounds.

Mel: I have no idea, £200.

Debbie: Probably about £100. I have had other things too, new bikinis, couple of dresses, maybe a bit over.

Lauren: This holiday, probably about £150. No, more than that because I had sort of clothes from other holidays and from before Christmas but they are in the wash.

Sharon: No I forgot about this... That was my bit of extravagance, that cost £65. So, when I said that I had only spent £80 pounds...

The interesting aspect lay in the vagueness of these estimates that sharply contrasted with women's knowledge about other costs for the holiday. Women knew the cost of the holiday and how much spending money they were taking, including how much they could spend on their credit cards, an amount all participants who took part in the follow up interview had kept to.

Sharon and Debbie illustrate the point that about half of the women initially under-estimated their purchases and during the course of the interview they would 'find' items that they'd forgotten to include in their initial totals. The five women who reported spending less than this amount did so either because this was their second holiday that year (and they had nearly new items from their previous trip) or they planned to buy clothes on that trip. We did feel that there was some under-calculation in women's estimates partly because they didn't include items such as underwear and some clothes were problematic to categorize. For example, clothes that had been recently purchased primarily for wearing 'at home' but which would be taken on holiday. All women agreed that if holiday spending included toiletries then the spending total would increase substantially!

It was interesting, and indeed resonant with our own behaviour, that clothes spending was not recorded and not fully acknowledged. Again there was a contrast with the women's reports of how they had precisely calculated the impact of the cost of the holiday and carefully saved spending money (often in a separate bank account). For example, half of the women reported that they had been 'staying in' before the holiday in order to save toward their spending money. Also, most women indicated that buying new clothes for home generally required careful budgeting and yet they still did not have a clear idea of their expenditure on clothes purchased for the holiday.

It appears to us that accounting for the cost of clothes was a consistently fuzzy area within women's everyday budgeting and their holiday budget. That is, women were likely to be unclear about, and to underestimate, their spending on clothes. Some women suggested that they routinely and deliberately maintained ambiguity around the cost of clothes and other items. Clothes would be temporarily 'hidden' in wardrobes or their reported cost (to significant others) would be lower than the actual price. This seemed to be an example of a tactical practice and was directed toward partners, or parents in the case of younger women who lived at home. For example, it was used to avoid accusations such as 'He says I've already got too many clothes' and, by implication, that the women were simply irrational consumers. Another tactic was to emphasize the distinctive non-everydayness of the holiday, such as the climate, so that spending on clothes became a necessity. An example of which is Karen's rationale for buying a suit.

Karen: For me now, yes I prefer to be cool and comfortable... I would never take a pair of jeans on holiday they are too heavy. I will take this neutral coloured linen suit. There is no weight in it. It is dead fine. I wish I could wear it more here but it is too cold.

This theme has illustrated that it is very difficult at times to see the distinction between ordinary and the extraordinary. In this context the non-everyday becomes masked and obscured within the everyday. For example, our participants didn't count expenditure on some items that could be dual-categorised as home and holiday wear. However, we would argue that it is worth considering the possibility that the women deliberately made these boundaries fuzzy. For most women there seemed to be what McRobbie terms 'guilty pleasures' about buying clothes (McRobbie, 1997 p.75). Our interpretation of this term recognizes the paradoxical positioning of women as both responsible and irrational consumers and the tactical responses adopted by women are consistent with this paradox (see also Miller, 1998). We would argue that women's complex patterns of accounting for their expenditure reflect their often subversive movement between these positions.

Conclusions

Although our exploration of women's holiday clothing relationships has made us realize the interdependence of the everyday and non-everyday, we want to emphasize that participants in our study had a strong, over-riding sense that their holiday experience was very distinctive from their everyday. Holidays were eagerly anticipated and very positively regarded because they were seen as being beyond the everyday. One woman neatly summed up this viewpoint by using the term 'Planet Holiday' to describe the experience. Participants regarded their clothes as an important part of constructing Planet Holiday because they represented both the promise and the actual transformation of their lived experience. This gap therefore arises between the micro-level examination of women's particular practices, where boundaries are blurred, and the macro-level meaning they construct, where the boundaries are clear.

The two perspectives, however, are not irreconcilable and this takes us back to the starting point of this paper. We would argue that the non-everyday and the everyday are distinct modes of experience but also that they are interlinked. Our analysis of holiday clothes has shown how the everyday has the power to influence the non-everyday but also that the non-everyday has the power to transform the everyday since there is a reciprocal transformatory power. Planet Holiday is created through a set of fluid distinctions between the everyday and non-everyday that are locally achieved (see Guy and Banim, 2000). They are fluid because the bases for the distinctions are temporally located and may shift (or be actively shifted) as we saw most vividly in the discourses about shopping and tactics used around spending. At the time of writing this conclusion all three of us are about to go on holiday and we can readily see the ways in which we operate through these fluid distinctions. For example, our everyday routines accommodate preparations for our holiday such as visiting the shops during lunchtime to buy suncreams, shifting us into a non-everyday mode. As we go about our ordinary business we're also talking in ways that assume our holiday mode will be very different, 'Oooh, this time next week I'll be....', not even needing to complete this statement.

Examining women's holiday clothing contributes further evidence to support the claim that the everyday is a problematic topic and we concur with the theorists who argue that it is not easy to be definitive about exactly what constitutes the everyday (see e.g. Smith, 1988; Highmore, 2002). At the most straightforward level the three themes presented in the findings have made visible some aspects of the everyday and non-everyday that are not generally immediately evident. The data has revealed that activities and thinking around holiday clothes tell us as much about the everyday as they do about the non-everyday. Trying to definitively state that any particular activity (such as making the final clothing packing selection or trying out a new image on holiday) can be categorized as everyday or non-everyday seems to us to be fruitless task.

However, we do not wish to argue that the distinction between the two spheres is meaningless. Nor do we wish to argue that holidays represent false consciousness in relation to everyday life. Rather we want to return to the concept of reciprocal transformatory power and claim that it is the exchange itself that reveals that they are both authentic spheres of lived experience. To elaborate on this claim, while women's general (everyday/ordinary) ideas about their clothed appearance prevailed in the interviews, we did find considerable evidence of different ideas being developed in the context of holidays. Although they maintained their general opinions about colours, styles and rules about the kinds of clothes that worked for them they also considered and tried out new possibilities in their clothed images. Further, these new possibilities could then be brought home at the end of the holiday to become a new aspect of the everyday. Alternatively, some of these new possibilities were knowingly created just to be played with on holiday and women felt relieved to drop them on their return. Thus both spheres provided separate opportunities for authenticity and difference that would become more tangible and enduring as women moved between the two.

In a related vein, we found that women used the time and space they were afforded around their holiday not only to do different things but, more importantly, to do things differently (see Urry, 1990). So while it could be seen that women were involved in the gendered work of maintaining an attractive appearance, both on holiday and at home, the holiday context encouraged them to be more adventurous and take risks with their appearance. Many distinctions between home and everyday were subtle such as the luxury of having more time and not feeling guilty about trying on numerous outfits before deciding what to take on holiday or what to wear. Through their skilful negotiations across the everyday and non-everyday, women were able to achieve their overarching meaning that holidays are a distinctive and positive experience. Therefore, this study corroborates the assertion that women act in ways that demonstrate their agency in relation to the structures around them.

We have noted that the attraction and the challenge that holidays present is to become the better person who is not always realized in everyday life, and also to bring back as many of those better bits back into the everyday. Does this challenge ultimately reinforce the 'incompleteness which defines modern life' through the ways in which it can highlight what is lacking in our lived experience? (Simmel, 1991 p.96.) We would argue not. Again, because of the exchanges between the everyday and non-everyday, we can see that lived experience is not a static state. Dressing for holidays is not the only context in which women can realize agency and their self-presentation on holiday should not be thought of as more or less 'sincere' than the everyday. Planet Holiday may provide a spur to certain types of experimentation but these experimental images must have some continuity with the women's global self-image (see Guy and Banim, 2000, Tseelon, 1995). Even if clothed images created on holiday are only temporarily maintained, women may continue to feel the benefits from their experience of experimentation and this will inform the development of other images.

The women in this study were not escaping the everyday in its purest sense when they went on holiday but instead were able to use everyday skills, knowledge and activities to enhance the non-everyday. Perhaps the reason why we value holidays so much is that they offer the possibility of trying to create and maintain the non-everyday on a daily basis.

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Note

¹Two recent advertisements have featured women packing for travel. In an advertisement for a magazine, a woman travelling for a weekend break is dragging an enormous suitcase while saying to a friend that she's only taking the bare essentials. In the second instance, a television advert for face cream, the woman has a small luggage bag that is unable to contain all the planned items. She examines her clothes and seems to be unable to leave any of these behind but finds a multi-purpose skin cream that enables her to leave behind her bag of cosmetic products and solve her problem of excess packing.

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