

YOGA AND THE WARDROBE: CENTRE STAGE



A remote wardrobe study on yoga clothes during the COVID-19 pandemic

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Abstract

This thesis focuses specifically on yoga clothing to explore the wardrobes of individuals who practice yoga within Northern Europe. This study explores yoga as an embodied practice connected to dress, uncovering the relationship between clothing and the body based on online ethnographic research. Wardrobe studies were carried out remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic producing a new approach to the field through remote wardrobe studies. The theoretical perspective of Erving Goffman analyses the participants and their wardrobes through the lens of dramaturgy. This perspective allows for the investigation into the behaviour of individuals practising online and in-person yoga classes compared to yoga at home. Viewing social life as a theatre performance to explore individual's wardrobes and yoga clothing is a vital component of the study. The research demonstrates how individuals in a society constantly perform and how a wardrobe is an object that also performs. The findings suggest that yoga clothing, the body, and the wardrobe are intrinsically connected, providing rich information contributing to fashion studies.

Keywords

Remote wardrobe studies, yoga clothes, dramaturgy, Goffman, embodiment, ethnography, affect studies, front stage, backstage, performance

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Introduction

Let's begin in a lotus pose. Come on down to the ground. I invite you to close your eyes or soften your gaze. Draw the hands together, and let's take a couple of slow and controlled breaths in and out together. Tuck the chin and begin to sit up a little taller. Get heavy from the waist down. Soften the skin of the face. Shoulders are relaxed. And here we go. Please inhale with me for a count of six; one, two, three, four, five, six. And exhale for a count of six, five, four, three, two, one...

I am sitting on my pink yoga mat and matching yoga tights and t-shirt in my bedroom, eyes closed, listening to the soothing, gentle voice of my YouTube yoga teacher instructing me to breathe and relax. Finally landing a somewhat graceful Vrikshasana (tree pose), my thoughts are far from disappearing. *How long do I hold this pose?* or *What should I have for dinner?* are common thoughts that surface, demanding my attention. Reflecting on my thought process during a live group class and doing yoga at home by myself, I realised my thoughts change depending on the situation. In a group setting, I am concerned with how my body looks in my yoga clothes and what I look like to others while twisting, bending and stretching. While contemplating this subject, I wondered if other yoga students have had similar thoughts.

Additionally, as a yoga clothing and sportswear enthusiast, the continuous rise of athleisure over the years has caught my attention. A combination of the popularity of yoga clothing and how these clothes contribute to a yoga practice sparked my interest in diving into the world of wardrobe studies. With this thesis, I wish to contribute to fashion studies and wardrobe studies by exploring sportswear, specifically yoga clothes, in the wardrobe. This is a relevant topic to study due to the popularity of yoga clothing in mainstream fashion and the rising popularity of the yoga practice itself. Studying the relationship individuals have with their sports clothes is a subject currently left in the dark. I wish to shine light upon the cramped sports drawers of individuals to uncover the personal relationship created within the scope of physical activities and how this relationship varies in personal or social contexts.

An essential factor to consider is the time and place I have been conducting my research. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, I have not traditionally conducted interviews and fieldwork in person. The current situation, however, has not impeded my research. Adding to the methodology

of wardrobe studies, I have chosen to conduct remote wardrobe studies using an ethnographical approach through online observational fieldwork. Like millions of people worldwide, the pandemic has forced us to slow down and stay at home, altering our everyday lives. Many simple joys have been taken away, such as having lunch with friends, going to concerts or even going outside. This also includes doing sports activities such as yoga classes. As I am currently based in Stockholm, classes are actively running while abiding by appropriate rules and regulations. However, the atmosphere and energy of the room are not how they used to be pre-pandemic due to stress and limited contact between individuals. Seeking an alternative, online platforms for yoga classes have created a whole new environment. The coronavirus pandemic has created unprecedented societal conditions around the yoga class, which opens up a new dimension for research where uncharted territory can be explored.

Furthermore, as sports clothes such as yoga clothing are designed to become a second skin and enhance the body, I believe this clothing category can reveal important dynamics and more easily highlight the relationship between clothing and the body. Sports clothing also has the power to emphasize the performative aspect of individuals in a society where different roles are demanded to be performed on specific stages through the example of what self is present and what is worn at home alone versus online or live yoga class. This performative aspect is in a similar manner reflected onto the wardrobe where initially situated in a distinct private environment has been brought centre stage, evoking various emotions from the owners presented in the thesis.

Research Aims and Questions

This thesis aims to investigate yoga clothing in the wardrobe of individuals who practice yoga. Clothing and fashion are important signifiers of identity and social dynamics. Yoga is a physical and mental practice, much like the practice of getting dressed. Thoughts and decisions progress from the naked body to the clothed body. Exploring the relationship between yoga clothes and their owners can give us insight into the societal role of yoga clothing and dress in a wellness context. Furthermore, looking into a person's wardrobe can allow investigation into the aspect of yoga clothing and their embodied practice. Especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, yoga clothes

have become a part of our fashion culture soaring compared to previous years, making this a relevant topic to study. This thesis will ask the following questions:

- **How** do yoga clothes contribute to the wardrobe?

Yoga clothes and sportswear can take up a small or large part of a wardrobe. Comparing these clothes to the other garments within the wardrobe can accentuate their relationship with the owner. If the wardrobe is a biography of the owner, we can better determine how clothes for different occasions are chosen and embodied by seeing yoga clothing in such an environment. Each item of clothing has a particularly personal connection to the owner, be it sentimentality or practicality. These are essential factors to consider when putting yoga clothes into the overall perspective of the wardrobe.

- **How** are yoga clothes a part of an embodied practice?

The importance of seeing the body as a fleshy, phenomenological entity embedded within the micro-dynamics of society often tends to be taken for granted.¹ Clothing is very intimately related to the body as it moulds and moves with the body every day. Considering the nature of the yoga practice, connecting to the body is a crucial element wherein clothes affect the mood and experience of the wearer. In this thesis, I will consider the body as the active receiver and experiencer of the world, where clothes are inseparable from the equation.

- **How** does performativity play into yoga at home versus online yoga classes or in-person group yoga classes?²

Humans tend to act and think differently depending on where they are and in whose company. Dressing and formulating outfits is a very occasion-specific practice. The wearer creates a persona for each occasion, demanding a particular costume to conform to social standards and expectations. Exploring the contrast between the individual at home or in a social context can demonstrate the

¹ Joanne Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Modern Social Theory*, 2. ed (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015), 22.

² Note: I intend to use the term performativity in the manner of Goffman through his usage of social life as theater. Additionally, my definition of performativity is also inspired by Judith Butler's theory of performativity where social reality is not given but created. Social reality is enacted through both speech and nonverbal communication in order to define conventions and maintain identities.

effect of the personal and social morals that the wearer considers when picking their yoga clothes while also establishing their relationship to clothes in general.

Additionally, I wish to touch upon whether the dominance of yoga clothing in fashion has a similar effect on women's wardrobes and men's wardrobes. Many authors have written on fashion and the body arguing that women are more closely identified with their bodies and tend to monitor the appearance of their body more than men.³ I will touch upon this subject in this thesis as I did not have many male participants to engage in this topic deeply. However, I would like to mention this issue and challenge its validity.

I would also like to explore how yoga clothing in the wardrobe represents the individual personally and socially. Taking advantage of this change in normalcy, I will be exploring different yoga class environments by comparing home, online and in-person yoga experiences. These environments allow me to analyse personal and social spheres where the yoga clothing becomes embodied. From a sociological perspective, I will envision the yoga student as the star of their performance and follow their behaviour frontstage to backstage, exploring identity formation and reformation.

To answer these questions, I will be using a methodology adapted from previous wardrobe studies aided by my interpretation of remote wardrobe studies. The theoretical perspective derives from dramaturgy to explore the wardrobe, yoga clothing and an individual's behaviour when presented on different stages. This perspective observes the lived experience of human behaviour, taking into account cultural production and behavioural regularities.⁴

Previous Research

In fashion studies, authors such as Sophie Woodward (2005, 2007), Efrat Tsëelson (1995) and Philip Warkander (2013) have used a wardrobe study either as the focus of their work or a tool to enrich their research. In wardrobe studies looking at a specific clothing category such as sportswear has not yet been researched. Previous research on yoga clothes and athleisure wear in combination with materiality is also in its infancy. Furthermore, work on yoga clothing and the body within

³ This is in reference to work such as Joanne Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Modern Social Theory*, 2. ed (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015), 22.

⁴ Agnès Rocamora and Anneke Smelik, *Thinking Through Fashion: A Guide to Key Theorists* (I.B.Tauris: 2015) ,150.

fashion studies remains to be expanded, presenting an additional research gap. With my thesis, I will attempt to fill these research gaps by studying yoga clothing in the wardrobe and exploring the relationship between the clothing and owner during the pandemic.

To illustrate previous efforts on sports and yoga wear, I will begin with a brief historical background on the history of sportswear in mainstream fashion. Secondly, a short description of yoga clothing and sportswear in fashion studies will be discussed, followed by the literature review demonstrating previous work incorporating wardrobe studies as a method.

The Historical Relevance of Sportswear in Mainstream Fashion

Sports clothing has become popularized in mainstream and designer fashion developing into a massive business dominating footwear and clothing manufacturing and marketing.⁵ According to Jennifer Craik (2005), the development of sportswear and accessories can be explained through the rise of leisure time, the blurring of class and status and the decline of formality apparent in everyday life.⁶ Patricia Campbell Warner (2018) additionally argues that the development of sportswear in fashion grew from women's enthusiasm for sports in the nineteenth century.⁷ Beginning in the 1920's mass manufacturing become an essential factor in the evolution of sportswear, allowing the process of ready-to-wear items being made at low prices to become accessible to everyone.⁸ After the post-war period, sports clothing developed into specialist genres that lead to their commercialization growing into everyday fashion.⁹ From the 1930s to the 1960s, American sportswear was increasingly linked to modern active lifestyles, which quickly became the ideal lifestyle for women.¹⁰

⁵ Jennifer Craik, "Fashioning Sports Clothing as Lifestyle Couture", in *Uniforms Exposed: From Conformity to Transgression* (Oxford: Berg, 2005), 161-174.

⁶ Craik, "Fashioning Sports Clothing", 161-174.

⁷ Patricia Campbell Warner, "From Clothing for Sport to Sportswear and the American Style: The Movies Carried the Message, 1912-1940," *Costume* 47, no.1 (2018): 45-62.

⁸ Patricia Campbell Warner, "Sportswear" in *The Berg Companion to Fashion*, ed. Valerie Steele (Oxford: Bloomsbury Academic, 2010), 102-103.

⁹ Craik, "Fashioning Sports Clothing", 161-174.

¹⁰ Rebecca Arnold, "Modern Fashions for Modern Women: The Evolution of New York Sportswear in the 1930s", *Costume*, 41:1 2007, 111-125.

Jennifer Craik (2005) argues that sportswear and sports uniforms have become an essential part of fashion and the “epitome of everyday dress”.¹¹ The evolution of fabrics combined with the modern Olympic Games had advanced new sportswear materials that stretch and create a second-skin effect.¹² During the 1930’s spandex, nylon and polyester were produced, making “miracle fabrics” that could be washed and worn multiple times while keeping the integrity of the material in place.¹³ Using these fabrics, designers at the time, such as Coco Chanel and Claire McCardell, were important actors in the evolution of sports clothing by coupling functionality with aesthetic shapes and detailing.¹⁴ This continued over the years as the prominence of causal comfortable, but stylish sporty clothing became an essential feature for many designers in the 1960s.¹⁵ In the 1950s, sports clothing played an essential role within youth subcultures influenced by popular cultures, such as movies and music.¹⁶ Sportswear was known as the essence and foundation of an American Style that continued to evolve with the growing influence of American movies.¹⁷

Athletic footwear incrementally became part of a mainstream wardrobe towards the late 1970s, turning into a fashionable substitute for conventional shoes.¹⁸ The shift from specialist apparel to stylistic sports trends have become everyday fashion due to the prominence of gym culture.¹⁹ Physical activities such as yoga have gained much popularity coupled with the abundance of such specialized activewear. Originating in the late 1990s, yoga pants made of Lycra and nylon initiated their presence on the market as an extension of sportswear. Currently, in the 21st century, the yoga set, including a sports bra/tank top hybrid and high waisted yoga pants, has dominated the activewear and luxury athleisure scene. It is more popular during the coronavirus pandemic to wear tight-fitting leggings such as yoga pants and sports bras every day. 21st-century activewear plays an exciting role in mainstream culture by redefining gender descriptions and establishing the rise of fit femininity where popular ideas surrounding femininity are being re-examined.

¹¹ Jennifer Craik, "Sports Uniforms to Sportswear" in *Uniforms Exposed: From Conformity to Transgression* (Oxford: Berg, 2005), 139–160.

¹² Craik, “Fashioning Sports Clothing”, 161-174.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Patricia Campbell Warner, “From Clothing for Sport to Sportswear and the American Style: The Movies Carried the Message, 1912–1940,” *Costume* 47, no.1:(June 14, 2018), abstract.

¹⁸ See in particular Thomas Turner, "Athleisure, global production, and the postmodern sports shoe" in *The Sports Shoe: A History from Field to Fashion* (London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2019), 206–245.

¹⁹ Craik, "Fashioning Sports Clothing”,161–174.

Sportswear and Yoga Clothing

As previously mentioned, current work on yoga clothing in close relation to the body and situation in the wardrobe are non-existent. Previous research specifically on yoga clothing was difficult to find, apart from the study of metal yoga and embodiment and gentrification through yoga practice. A previous study written by Otto von Busch (2020) explored fashion as an embodied experience through the physical passage of affect in metal yoga.²⁰ The intra-action of music, body and dress in metal yoga revealed how fashion in this type of yoga is a rebellion against submissive routines and the celebration of individuals over collectives.²¹ Similarly to my findings, the author discusses the power of a garments capability to affect and be affected by the body.²² On the other hand, Leslie Kern (2012) has identified emotion and embodiment as binding sites for the study of gentrification as a social and economic process.²⁷ Kern argues that bodies form a symbolic terrain of social and spatial exclusion.²⁸ Through the example of yoga, personal reflections are contemplated as the practice calls for heightened awareness and explicit attention to the body and feelings.²⁹ Regarding athleisurewear, Jennifer Craik (2020) explores athleisure and the rapid cross over of specialized and customized sportswear innovations into everyday life and fashion in her piece “Feeling Premium”: Athleisure and the Material of Transformation.”³¹ In her article, Craik is interested in the material transformation of a highly codified clothing genre dominating clothing and fashion behaviour worldwide.³² She discusses the individualistic being in society, and one’s sense of self is linked to a dialectical relationship between production and consumption where achievement and success depend on the working body.³³ Specifically, within the subject of athleisure, a popular topic

²⁰ Otto von Busch, "The left-hand pose: Alchemic realism and the intra-action of music, body, and dress in metal yoga" in *Fashion and Materiality: Cultural Practices in Global Contexts* ed. Heike Jenss and Viola Hofmann (London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2020), 198–213.

²¹ von Busch, “The left-hand pose”, 198-213.

²² von Busch, “The left-hand pose”, 198-213.

²⁷ Leslie Kern, “Connecting embodiment, emotion and gentrification: An exploration through the practice of yoga in Toronto, Emotion, Space and Society” (2012), 27-35.

²⁸ Kern, “Connecting embodiment”, 27-25.

²⁹ Ibid.

³¹ Jennifer Craik. ““Feeling premium”: Athleisure and the material transformation of sportswear.” in *Fashion and Materiality: Cultural Practices in Global Contexts* ed. Heike Jenss and Viola Hofmann, (London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2020), 214–232.

³² Craik, “Feeling premium”, 214-232.

³³ Ibid.

to explore is sneakers where Yuniya Kawamura (2018) and Thomas Turner (2019) have done in-depth studies on sports shoes.

As demonstrated through the previous research, efforts towards yoga as an embodied practice connected to dress remains to be studied.

Previous Wardrobe Studies

Philip Warkander's doctoral thesis "This Is All Fake; This Is All Plastic, This Is Me: An ethnographic study of the interrelations between style, sexuality and gender in contemporary Stockholm"(2013) adopts three research methods: participant observations, semi-structured interviews and organic wardrobe studies. These were carried out over two years focusing on queer-orientated club scenes with a total of ten participants. Judith Butler's theory of performativity and Bruno Latour's actor-network theory analysed how styles are created and maintained through social interactions. Furthermore, the topics of sexuality, gender and identity were discussed through the concept of style.

An organic wardrobe study refers to letting the garments become the starting point of conversation on style and dress practices.³⁹ The participants would describe one of their favourite items, producing an organic wardrobe study through natural conversations. After each wardrobe study, Warkander would write a summary of the experience.⁴⁰ Organizing and sorting clothes reveal a great deal about how garments function concerning their wearer.⁴¹ Warkander refers to Sophie Woodward by referencing her view on the "sensual relationship" between the wearer and the garment, making it hard for the wearer to express with words how they feel about their clothes.⁴² Seeing objects being "used" by humans is vital in understanding a cultural form or set of practices.⁴³

The investigation was thematically organized around three different perspectives. Verbal communication, the spatial and temporal effects of sartorial practices and styles constituted through gestures, movements and orientation in space.⁴⁴ Ultimately, Warkander came to argue that style is

³⁹ Philip Warkander, "This Is All Fake, This Is All Plastic, This Is Me: A Study of the Interrelations between Style, Sexuality and Gender in Contemporary Stockholm" (Stockholm University, 2015), 61.

⁴⁰ Warkander, "This Is All Fake, This Is All Plastic, This Is Me",61.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Warkander, "This Is All Fake, This Is All Plastic, This Is Me",61.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 216.

highly performative.⁴⁵ It is organized through networks and is defined contextually by specific sets of constraints.⁴⁶ The performative acts associated with style are not the effect of an independent agency but are regulated through networks of events.⁴⁷ The human body is only one of the many actors where the notion of style shifts from the wearer to networks creating a more nuanced understanding of style production.⁴⁸ He described and evaluated the sartorial practices of style, including an organic wardrobe study to understand the participants' perspective. This example of an organic wardrobe study serves as inspiration for my analysis of yoga clothes in the wardrobes of individuals.

Theoretical Framework

As this thesis focuses on exploring the relationship individuals have with their yoga clothing within personal and social contexts, the theoretical framework will be framed by a dramaturgical model approach looking through the lens of life as a theatre performance. Dramaturgy in this context refers to the entire collective arts, procedures and techniques of the stage in theatre that make an artificial world seem real.⁷⁴ In combination with a set of skills derived from impression management, an audience can watch a performance and believe in its reality.⁷⁵ As opposed to traditional societies, it is within capitalist modernity that dramaturgical skills have become normalized and, in a sense, an essential precondition for an individual to be a self and adapt to additional roles.⁷⁶

Goffman: Impression Management and Dramaturgy

Sociologist Erving Goffman (1922-1982) was best known for his theories on symbolic interactionism, face-to-face interaction and rituals performed of social interaction.⁷⁷ Observing the lived experience and unmarked everyday behaviour in urban settings, he introduced the social

⁴⁵ Warkander, "This Is All Fake, This Is All Plastic, This Is Me", 261.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Dan Krier, "Sociological Theory: A Skeleton Key to Goffman's Presentation of Self in Everyday Life", YouTube video, 37:22, August 21, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wr5MM9_kd8E.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

ontology of the self, where the composition of selves, individuals, or personalities is deemed social.⁷⁸ The dramaturgical approach analysing everyday interactions shows how individuals adapt or change roles depending on the circumstance or the audience. When the performers are successful and believe in their acting, the audience will also believe in the validity of the performance. Early in life, individuals learn to create distinctive characters to satisfy particular audiences. Acting a certain way to fulfil social expectations is vital during these interactions. Following Goffman's theory of the self as a multiplicity, the performer's task is to animate multiple preconstructed selves. In the modern world, we are expected to perform various selves, whereby the existential selves are realised. Face-to-face interaction is an integral social manifestation dependant on the reaction of others. An example Goffman uses to illustrate his theory derives from ancient Greek masks.⁷⁹ These masks, used by performers, already had fixed emotions chosen for the performance, creating a symbolically potent form.⁸⁰ Similarly, the roles actors play in society are already preconstructed.

Goffman describes self-altering through three aspects: impression management, a dramaturgical approach, and facework. Impression management is based upon presenting the self to express certain information to impress specific audience members during social interactions. The dramaturgical approach centres social interactions around a front stage and backstage that contain different settings. The front stage includes props, signs and dramatic interaction in front of an audience, while the backstage is absent of an audience and allows the actor to drop their front. Lastly, facework coincides with describing the need to maintain a proper image in every situation.

Relating Goffman's work to fashion studies, he introduced a study of human behaviour that can be realistically applied to fashion and dress.⁸¹ He did not focus solely on the social structure or individual behaviour but based his work on cultural observation and behavioural regularities.⁸² Goffman's signature fieldwork style incorporated statistical data with anecdotal evidence and literary texts.⁸³ Blending micro methodological data with conceptual insights, his approach focused on the lived experience using large-scale social forces to investigate small-scale interactional

⁷⁸ Dan Krier, "Sociological Theory: A Skeleton Key to Goffman's Presentation of Self in Everyday Life", YouTube video, 37:22, August 21, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wr5MM9_kd8E.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Tseëlon Efrat, "Erving Goffman Social Science as an Art of Cultural Observation," in *Thinking through fashion, A Guide to Key Theorists*, ed. Agnès Rocamora and Anneke Smelik (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2016), 149-64.

⁸² Efrat, "Erving Goffman", 150.

⁸³ Ibid.

domains.⁸⁴ Everyday face-to-face interaction has become central to understanding social interaction on the mundane level of everyday life, an essential aspect of wardrobe studies.⁸⁵ Some unspoken codes and norms work in the foreground when we dress and undress.⁸⁶ There is the need to be individual and recognised while being based upon mutually binding codes of obligation to the self and others.⁸⁷ We learn from a young age that there are social norms that govern schools, homes or friendships. Every time we interact with people, we try to manage the impressions we make. Our impressions are always contained within different contexts or settings. In turn, moral systems designed to save face of individuals within society play into their experiences, interactions, and vocabulary.⁸⁸

The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (1959) is Goffman's most famous works when studying clothing and appearance.⁹⁰ He introduces the notion of performance and self-presentation, guiding his theatre analysis to describe meaningful human interaction.⁹¹ The individual "actor" enacts two communication processes: information given intentionally and information given unintentionally.⁹² The means of visual and material elements reinforce the actor's performance.⁹³ From this, normative expectations arise where the actor needs to be fitting and appropriate for different occasions. Normative behaviour distinguishes the individual from the social deviant.⁹⁴ Through clothes, body behavioural expectations and self-monitoring, cultural expectations can be fulfilled.⁹⁵ To meet cultural expectations is to avoid feelings of shame or embarrassment that creates a "spoiled identity".⁹⁶ Goffman refers to the spoiled identity of people who are excluded from social acceptance through bodily or mental stigma.⁹⁷ For this embarrassment to be felt, however, there needs to be an audience. Goffman articulates how the imagined audience is realistic enough to the actor to influence their self-representation.⁹⁸ This is an important aspect to consider

⁸⁴ Efrat, "Erving Goffman", 150.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 151.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 152.

⁹¹ Ibid,.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 152.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid, 153.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

when analysing how we get dressed in the privacy of our homes. Goffman's analogy of the social sphere as a theatre performance contains the front stage as a performance and the backstage as a place for preparations.⁹⁹ Instead of the front stage being a "fake" public mask and the backstage as the authentic self, Goffman believes both are authentic environments of the self as they are different kinds of stages that play to diverse audiences.¹⁰⁰ Goffman's theatrical metaphor allows us to question the idea of fixed identity, which is not individual but a social product where the actor is the performance, not the essence behind it.¹⁰¹

In this thesis, yoga clothes are looked at through their active presence within the wardrobes of individuals and their participation in yoga classes. From this, different settings/stages have been deliberated. The pandemic has affected how the front stage and the backstage are typically seen. Although the front and the backstage are different sides of the same stage, each represents a very different performance. An online, pre-recorded yoga class and in-person yoga classes are different stages, each with their respective backstage, including modes of preparation. Online yoga classes have become more common due to the current pandemic creating a new scene in which individuals and their yoga clothing are presented. There is a front and a backstage that occur when people wear their yoga clothes at home or in a social context. To expand upon this notion, I will use Goffman's theory of dramaturgy to describe the decisions made behind picking yoga clothes and how the wardrobe is presented as a whole. In my analysis, the front stage performance relates to practising yoga in front of a teacher or a group of people, as this is when social interaction occurs. However, the location in which backstage behaviour would traditionally occur differs as the home is now the location of front stage behaviour too through live-streamed or pre-recorded yoga classes affecting clothing and behavioural choices.

In the manner of Goffman, I combine observations and interviews to analyse cultural practices and products to study social meanings of fashion relating both to the individual and society.¹⁰² Goffman's focus on face-to-face interaction is a critical element of the front stage aspect of interacting in public outside of the house or through the screen.¹⁰³ Furthermore, another aspect of Goffman's work I have chosen to incorporate is the spoiled identity. When engaging in physical

⁹⁹ Efrat, "Erving Goffman", 154.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

activity, the chances of a “spoiled identity” are heightened as exercising might lead to excessive sweating, quite embarrassing to many. An additional risk for a spoiled identity in the yoga class stems from the body being exposed and forced into uncomfortable positions breaking the normative idea of how the body is seen. Following Goffman’s dramaturgical model, each stage represents the individual and not seen as false selves. This can better analyse a person's relationship with their clothes and body, incorporating their individual opinions and social expectations.

Although the main theoretical framework is centred upon Goffman’s dramaturgical model, I would like to address that my approach to critical reflections within the analysis is also informed by the writings of authors such as Russell W. Belk (1988), Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1976, 1981), Joanne Entwistle and Elizabeth Wilson (2001), Maura Banim and Ali Guy (2000), Gilles Deleuze (1991), Elizabeth Grosz (2013), Heike Jenns and Viola Hoffman (2020), Anthony Giddens (1991), Yuniya Kawamura (2018) and Eckersley and Duff (2020).

The Methods

The methodologies I use in this thesis are remote wardrobe studies incorporating the four-cornered closet model and affect studies.

What are Wardrobe Studies?

A wardrobe study is a methodological approach that allows for analysing the relationship between clothes and the wardrobe contributing to the materiality of clothes studies. It provides a better investigation of the connection between an individual’s experience with identity and their body through the medium of clothing.¹⁰⁴

Sophie Woodward’s PhD thesis “Getting Dressed: a study of women’s relationship to their clothing” (2005), which later turned into her book *Why Women Wear What They Wear* (2007), are seminal examples in the field of wardrobe studies. Woodward’s focus was to dive deep into the wardrobes of women creating intimate ethnographical fieldwork studying the wardrobes and minds of women in contemporary Britain.¹⁰⁵ The book discusses the internal dilemmas women face daily

¹⁰⁴ Ingun Grimstad Klepp and Mari Bjerck, “A Methodological Approach to the Materiality of Clothing: Wardrobe Studies”, in *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 17, no. 4 (2012), abstract.

¹⁰⁵ Sophie Woodward, “Getting Dressed: A Study of Women’s Relationship to Their Clothing” (PhD, University College London, 2005), 10.

through clothing when wondering “if this is me” when looking at their dressed body in the mirror.¹⁰⁶ The material culture approach in observing wardrobes is an intimate and hands-on method highlighting important information gathered by observing daily practices. Woodward’s work explores how getting dressed affects how participants see themselves and how they think the public views them. Woodward divided clothing into three categories “inactive”, “potential”, and “active”, where a majority of women used 37% of their wardrobe while 12% was kept of inactive items.¹⁰⁷ The women’s relationships to the clothes and with themselves could be further analysed through this wardrobe division. In this thesis, I will adapt and add to this approach, looking at the space in which yoga clothing occupies a wardrobe.

An essential aspect of wardrobe studies sees how clothing can intimately materialize questions of identity. Lurking in the background, the omnipresent images of fashionable bodies in the media are present when the women looked at their bodies dressed in their chosen outfits.¹⁰⁸ Popular media and culture “construct normative ideals of beauty and femininity”, impacting how women see the shape of their bodies.¹⁰⁹ One of the aims of her work was to look at how clothing externalizes the self.¹¹⁰ The imagined observer plays an integral part in the process of getting dressed. The prolonged gazing in the mirror connects to Daniel Miller’s explanation of objectification.¹¹¹ The subject tries to understand itself by seeing an externalized version of the self as an object and re-integrating this objectified self.¹¹² It was evident by the end of her study that the self-constructed through clothing is not universal but culturally specific.¹¹³ Woodward’s wardrobe study demonstrated how intimate ethnographical work could produce rich and captivating information beneficial to material culture and fashion studies.

¹⁰⁶ Sophie Woodward, *Why Women Wear What They Wear*, (New York: Berg, 2007), 1-8.

¹⁰⁷ Woodward, *Why Women Wear What They Wear*, 1-8.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ Sophie Woodward, “Getting Dressed”, 31.

¹¹¹ Reina Lewis, “Book Review: Sophie Woodward *Why Women Wear What They Wear*”, in *Cultural Sociology* 3, no. 2 (2009): 341–343.

¹¹² Lewis, “Book Review”, 342

¹¹³ Woodward, “Getting Dressed”, 12.

Adapting the Methodology

Wardrobe studies benefit from the personal contact the researcher has with the participant and their wardrobe.¹¹⁴ Physically looking and touching the clothes and observing the spatiality of the wardrobe in connection to other rooms of the house helps acquire as much information as possible. Unlike Woodward's study, however, my research has been conducted in the middle of a pandemic where social distancing is mandatory. Thus, I was required to create an alternative version of a traditional wardrobe study. My method revolves around a remote wardrobe study where contact and observational work was done through a computer screen.

As ethnographic fieldwork observations cannot be carried out traditionally, the combination of online interviews and observations try to provide a similar experience with new implementations. The online fieldwork includes participant observations, essential to wardrobe studies, done remotely via Zoom. Wardrobes are, in a sense, very closed: there are the borders of intimacy that one crosses once the doors are open. The act of being guided through one's home on the journey of being shown their house can also cross personal boundaries. As I will be observing utilizing a technological device, I am still, in a sense, an intruder within their private space. I will be using a laptop where I will be recording the audio and video of each study while also writing down notes. Inspired by Warkander's (2013) organic wardrobe study, I have used a similar method to let the participants freely discuss specific garments and sections of their wardrobes while including set questions to ask each participant.¹¹⁵

Furthermore, to give structure to my remote wardrobe studies, I have been inspired by Klepp and Bjerck's (2014) four-cornered closet framework that combines well-known methods, such as fieldwork, qualitative research interviews, inventories and laboratory testing.¹¹⁶ The four-cornered closet framework acts as a valuable blueprint for orienting the researcher, including recognizing what methods, disciplines, scope, and possible limitations could be presented in a study. Klepp and Bjerck (2014) give a clear example of how to use wardrobe studies as the methodology to highlight the materiality of clothing in their article "A Methodological Approach to the Materiality of Clothing: Wardrobe Studies." A wardrobe study is necessary to help answer

¹¹⁴ Klepp and Bjerck, "A Methodological Approach to the Materiality of Clothing: Wardrobe Studies" in *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 17 (4), 373-386.

¹¹⁵ Warkander, "This Is All Fake, This Is All Plastic, This Is Me", 50.

¹¹⁶ Klepp and Bjerck, "A Methodological Approach, 376.

questions related to why and how clothes are used every day.¹¹⁷ The authors illustrate how interviews in wardrobe studies help provide information and gain access to a person's knowledge, perceptions, discourses and experiences.¹¹⁸ Traditional practices such as audio recording, interview guides, and transcriptions are also presented in this method. Questions are focused upon the item as the informant has the freedom to explain concepts using their experiences and points of view.

Affect Studies

An important factor within wardrobe studies is to investigate the intimate relationship between an individual and their clothing. To create an embodied connection to clothing, it is essential to concentrate on how the clothes feel against the body and how they move along with it.¹¹⁹ The ability of clothing to change the body's appearance is a factor that also needs to be kept in mind as yoga clothing can change the body's appearance through the material, shape and design.¹²⁰ To further explore these topics, affect studies can be of advantage. The "feeling of being dressed" is an analysis created by Lucia Ruggerone (2017), focusing on sensory relationships between clothing and the body. In her article "The Feeling of Being Dressed: Affect Studies and the Clothed Body" (2017), she critically reviews a majority of sociological contributions of studies related to fashion and identity, arguing there needs to be a paradigm for "feelings" incorporated into the analysis.¹²¹ Ruggerone explains that previous research has mainly studied how style and originality are analysed, focusing on clothing as the vehicle of self-representation.¹²² However, what is missing are the extra-cognitive elements of the experience that are not reproducible in verbal or analytical forms.¹²³ The aspect of how senses, memory and feeling are not spoken but felt is very important in getting dressed. For this reason, it was necessary to ask the participants how the clothes felt and focus on questions that elicited emotional responses in my wardrobe studies. Concentrating on the dynamic or affect dimensions of clothing in my study can serve as a fruitful tool in deducting reoccurring themes and phenomena. Ruggerone is also inspired by Entwistle and Wilson (2001),

¹¹⁷ Klepp and Bjerck, "A Methodological Approach, 377.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 378.

¹¹⁹ Andrea Eckersley and Cameron Duff, "Bodies of Fashion and the Fashioning of Subjectivity" in *Body & Society* 26, no. 4 (2020): 35–61.

¹²⁰ Woodward, *Why Women Wear What They Wear*, 1-8.

¹²¹ Lucia Ruggerone, "The Feeling of Being Dressed: Affect Studies and the Clothed Body," *Fashion Theory* 21, no. 5 (2017): 573–93.

¹²² Ruggerone, "The Feeling of Being Dressed", 578.

¹²³ Ibid, 579.

where the materiality of clothing can only be understood as an embodied practice as clothes are inseparable from the body.¹²⁴ Additionally, “dress is the means through which identity and the body articulate”; thus, clothes are moved beyond textual analysis and are seen phenomenologically through the body.¹²⁵

Explicit and active materials require diverse creative methods to investigate their multi-sensory, embodied and visual aspects.¹²⁶ Objects are popularly seen as being self-evident thus taken for granted due to their stable “isness.”¹²⁷ However, the material things that constantly surround us weave the fabric of our daily environments where on close examination is complex and active within our experience.¹²⁸ The material, thing or object is never passive in the foreground, but the main actor connected intrinsically to various personal, social and existential relations.¹²⁹

Selecting the Participants

The selection process of the participants was an essential part of the remote wardrobe study process and will be further discussed in detail in the analysis portion of the thesis. The participants I had interviewed were individuals I have either worked or studied with, friends of friends or strangers I had reached out to and contacted over social media. Table 1 and 2 show the name, age, occupation and residency of the participants. Due to some of the participants only taking part in the interview and not the wardrobe study, I have created two tables. The questions asked during the wardrobe study were inspired by Woodward’s (2005) thesis and are the following:

- Where are the yoga clothes stored
- Which are worn the most
- Which are worn the least
- How are they looked after
- Which is a favourite item

¹²⁴ Ruggerone, "The Feeling of Being Dressed", 579.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Sophie Woodward, *Material Methods: Researching and Thinking with Things*, 1st edition (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2019), 12.

¹²⁷ Woodward, *Material Culture*, 32.

¹²⁸ Ibid, 21.

¹²⁹ Ibid, 17.

Name	Age	Occupation	Residence
Alex	32	Consultant Manager/Personal Trainer	Sweden
Tiffany	35	Retail/Student	Sweden
Odette	37	Retail/Student	Sweden
Scott	34	Investment Banker	Sweden
Anna	26	Retail	Sweden
Megan	25	E-Commerce Coordinator & Team Leader for Influencer Marketing	Sweden
Yasmin	32	Yoga Teacher	Germany
Macy	31	Yoga Teacher	Germany
Ivy	32	Retail	Sweden
Britney	26	Life Coach	England
Nicole	40	Yoga Teacher	Sweden

Table 1. Names and the occupation, age, and residency of participants interviewed during January and March 2021

Table 1 shows the participants who agreed to a semi-structured interview. A majority of the participants are included in Table 1; however, a few were reluctant to participate in the wardrobe study or did not give me a response. The interviews were done over Zoom and recorded (both audio and visually) with the consent of the participants from January to March. I had a guideline for each participant based upon yoga clothes, their yoga experience and anything else they felt like adding. The purpose of having a separate interview from my wardrobe study was to act as an introduction

and for the participants to feel more comfortable to progress onto the wardrobe study. Unfortunately, not all participants felt confident in proceeding. However, eight out of the eleven were happy to let me (virtually) into their wardrobes.

Name	Age	Occupation	Residence
Alex	32	Consultant Manager/Personal Trainer	Sweden
Tiffany	35	Retail/Student	Sweden
Odette	37	Retail/Student	Sweden
Scott	34	Investment Banker	Sweden
Anna	26	Retail	Sweden
Megan	25	E-Commerce Coordinator & Team Leader for Influencer Marketing	Sweden
Yasmin	32	Yoga Teacher	Germany
Nicole	40	Yoga Teacher	Sweden

Table 2. Names and the occupation, age and residency of participants for the wardrobe studies during January and March 2021

The wardrobe studies were done over Zoom and recorded with the consent of the participants due to COVID-19 restrictions. I would ask a set amount of questions while leaving freedom for the participant to lead the conversation. Before the investigation came to an end, I would also ask my participants how they felt during the experience of showing me their wardrobe and clothes. Mostly all of the interviews took place in Stockholm, except three interviews where the participants were

in Germany and one in England. Most of the participants practised yoga as a hobby, whilst others were yoga teachers. A large number of my participants were female, while only two were male. Ultimately, the women were more interested in being interviewed whilst the men were more hesitant as they learned they would be questioned on yoga, yoga clothes and their wardrobes. The men who agreed to participate in the interviews were fond of exercise and enjoyed practising yoga.

Ethnographical Limitations and Ethics

Ethnographic research is a useful qualitative method that allows researchers to observe and interact with a study's participants in their environments. Information is collected first-hand and can allow the researcher to discover rich material relating to particular cultures, behaviours and interactions. I am aware, however, that there are risks of researcher bias through interpretations and speculations. Subjective interpretation can be challenging to follow through and maintain a role that is distanced from the participants. As Warkander described in his study, the participants evolve into empirical material and are seen through the researcher's eyes, who has a specific way of seeing.¹³⁰ Especially when conducting wardrobe studies where in this case, proven to be a sensitive topic, needs mutual trust between the participant and the researcher. Furthermore, the researcher and the participant have different positions that pose as ethically sensitive as the researcher's role is to scrutinize the participants' activities.¹³¹ Thus, the studies were done in consideration of the limitations and ethical nature of ethnographic research.

¹³⁰ Warkander, "This Is All Fake, This Is All Plastic, This Is Me", 58.

¹³¹ Ibid.

Outline

This thesis aims to explore the nature of yoga clothing in the wardrobe during the COVID-19 pandemic. As wardrobe studies are generally conducted in person, I wish to add to the field by implementing remote wardrobe studies, investigating the wardrobe, the body and yoga clothing at a very distinct point in time. The analysis begins with an introductory chapter recounting the selection process and descriptions of the wardrobes of the participants. The first research question of how yoga clothing contributes to the wardrobe is explored within this chapter. The preface chapter will also touch upon the men's relationship to clothing and their bodies compared to the women. Chapter one focuses on adopting the method of wardrobe studies to analyse key concepts derived from the results of the studies involving the relationship of clothing to the body and senses. In this chapter, the second research question is explored through yoga clothing as part of an embodied practice. The position and contribution of yoga clothing to the wardrobe is also further discussed within this chapter. Lastly, chapter two implements the theory of dramaturgy to explore the wardrobes on a micro and macro level led by the participants' perspectives. This final chapter addresses the third research question on performativity through Goffman's dramaturgy theory on yoga at home versus an online or in-person group yoga class while illustrating the performative aspects of the wardrobe.

Preface

An Introduction: Into The Wardrobe

Before we leave our houses, we prepare in a private space to put together a self-ready for the outside world. Having seen most participants in a social context such as at work or school, another side of their personality was shown to me in their home, revealing a more vulnerable but relaxed persona. Through their wardrobes, I could also see their character reflected in the organization of the space and the clothes within. There is a system within the wardrobe as to how the clothes are stored, organized and kept.¹³² The wardrobe stores both metaphorical and literal material creating a biographical account through the assembly of items. Clothing becomes similar to a diary where feelings, memories and attachments are woven into the fabric of the items. In turn, the daily routine of getting dressed is a constant reminder of the passage of time. The practice element of the daily routine uncovers the routinized behaviour consisting of interconnected elements where objects are integral.¹³³ This is fundamental to the aspect of the social existence of the practice.¹³⁴ The role objects such as clothes play in getting dressed daily or for specific occasions uncovers different levels of consciousness regarding how one thinks about the body and how to present it.¹³⁵ Along the lines of Anthony Giddens's (1991) arguments, establishing and re-working oneself is essential in creating a stable self.¹³⁶ As the wardrobe is a continual biographical process, there is a fusing of the past self to the future self by keeping sentimental items living in co-existence with things of the present.¹³⁷

As I have previously mentioned, the normalities of our everyday experiences have been affected by the pandemic. Using remote wardrobe studies as my primary method has proven to be very successful despite the possible disadvantages. As I did not have a broad perspective of their room and other objects to distract me, I could better focus on the participant's emotions, gestures and clothing. While I could not physically touch or hold the items, I could still imagine what they

¹³² Klepp and Bjerck, "A Methodical Approach", 375.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Joanne Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress, and Modern Social Theory* (Cambridge : Malden, MA: Polity Press ; Blackwell, 2000), 50.

¹³⁶ Lewis, "Book Review", 341–343.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

would feel like based on the participants' description of their clothing. The mind's ability to imagine and create what we see into a thinkable reality was vital for me as a researcher. I was immersed in the interviews where I forgot about the screen distancing the participant and me. Like watching a movie or a virtual fashion show, we are drawn into what we see on our screens connecting emotionally and physically. From the perspective of Goffman's dramaturgy, I was able to position my role as a researcher viewing wardrobe studies as a performance as the backstage became the front stage. This further allowed me to discover themes and principles shown to me through the studies.

The Selection Process

The selection process was an essential element for actualizing the method and setting the stage. For this reason, it is best further explained in the analysis. This process involved contacting most participants who were not yoga teachers through messaging apps such as WhatsApp. While describing my thesis and presenting the methodology of wardrobe studies, I would ask if they practice yoga and whether they would be interested in doing an interview and wardrobe study. Many of these participants agreed and provided additional information, such as pictures after the study. Through word of mouth, I was given contacts that I wrote to either through email or Instagram. From those contacts, only one person responded agreeing to be interviewed Zoom; however, declining the wardrobe study.

Additionally, I emailed various yoga studios in Stockholm about my thesis and wardrobe study. Unfortunately, many either did not reply or declined. On the social media platform Instagram, I actively contacted many yoga teachers describing my thesis and asked if they would be interested in doing a wardrobe study based on their yoga clothing. Many messages I had sent went unopened by the receiver, while others told me they were not comfortable doing the study. The wardrobe is an intimate part of a person's home. As I have described previously, many people I had contacted through friends of friends or strangers on the internet told me they would "dread" if anyone saw inside their closet. I asked a colleague if I could do a wardrobe study of her closet; however, she wrote to me explaining that she does not have a collection of yoga clothes to show, and the rest of her wardrobe is "pretty much [a] filthy homeless home wear look ." The lighting and state of the home were other factors that played into whether the person felt comfortable letting me virtually

inside their home. Nevertheless, I managed to recruit eight participants that will now be introduced in the next section describing their characteristics and wardrobes.

Introducing The Men's Wardrobes

ALEX

Alex is a sporty and health-conscious person in his early thirties living in Stockholm. As I had known him previously, he felt comfortable showing me his bedroom and closet. There was no hesitation from Alex to participate in the study. His wardrobe, located in his bedroom, is black and medium-sized, with hanging space in the middle and two drawers on the bottom. The closet had his work clothes hanging, such as suits, blazers and shirts. Hoodies and other tops were also hanging, while his sports and yoga clothes occupied the lowest drawer. His collection of sports clothes also continued in a pile on the other side of the room next to his bed.

Alex works in a bank but aspires to be a personal trainer: I could see this reflected in his wardrobe. He was very knowledgeable of the different materials, styles and colours of the sports clothing he likes to wear. Wanting to turn his passion into his career, each sport or yoga piece had matching sets and colours that Alex would effortlessly put together. Many of the garments had specific uses for their performance and practicality and emphasised his muscles.

Alex does yoga around twice a week, going to group classes with his friends or with his mother. A white tank top and a loose pair of jogging pants are his basic yoga set. The main difference between his sports and yoga clothes is the fit. The sports clothes needed to be form fitting and have multiple matching options, while the yoga clothes needed to be loose and understated. Being comfortable and relaxed is how Alex wants to feel when doing yoga.

Working in a bank, Alex has many blazers and shirts that need to be hung. Clothes with materials that are deemed more delicate or used for specific occasions are usually seen as having more value, thus, should be hung. The act of hanging also demonstrates an aspect of pride for one's job occupation and to keep a professional image by preventing creases. Alex's work clothes, for now, are a priority, although he wishes he could prioritize his sports clothing in his closet. Hanging his sports and yoga clothes would give him more structure and the opportunity to showcase his collection. Matching outfits would also be a quicker and easier process.

Alex viewed the size of his wardrobe as an issue. Alex complained that he did not have enough space to store all his sports clothes. When I asked him which of his sports or yoga clothes he wears the most, he claims that all of them are frequently worn, and none need to be thrown out. Lack of space was a factor also discussed by many of the participants. While many also said they did not have enough space and had too many clothes, there were things that they would still like to buy and add to their wardrobes. The contradiction between the feeling of wanting to own more clothes and wanting to own less was evident. When I asked Alex about this, and if the clothes mattered to him when doing yoga, he said that the focus should only be on the practice. However, later, during the interview, he stated:

I really feel professional when I have real sports clothes. So the same goes for yoga clothes also. So if I wear yoga clothing, if I start practising yoga, like every day, I would sooner or later, like I would buy yoga clothes 100%. So I think it's combined with lifestyle also like I love to work out. I invest my money in these things.

Although many I interviewed mentioned that what one wears in a yoga class is not essential, Alex admitted that he would like to invest in more yoga clothes and accessories if he practised yoga more than twice a week. Through purchasing and owning a surplus of yoga gear, Alex can expect to perform the role of an individual who is established in the yoga practice. At the moment, Alex is expressing that he does not feel he needs to embody this role. However, in the future, if he wishes to take yoga seriously, he will further commit himself to the practice through clothing.

When it came to his clothing collection, it was clear that Alex was very aware of how his clothes made his body look. Especially for the gym, he knew which top and pants had to match and which colours would look best. As for his yoga outfit also knew which top and pair of pants would feel comfortable but still look attractive. He should have loose-fitting clothes for yoga, while for working out in the gym, he had shirts that enhance and support his body, clearly emphasising his muscles. As Russell W. Belk (1988) explains in his article about possession and the extended self, Alex's sports clothes contributed to his identity while also serving as an extension of himself. His tone of voice, facial expressions, and body gestures made it clear that he is highly passionate about exercising and all that it entails. Alex's collection of sports clothing gave him happiness and was more interesting to talk about compared to his work clothes. His sports clothes gave him feelings

of confidence, power and control in contrast to the rigidity and compliancy of his work clothing. The feeling and memories attached to his sports clothes uplifted Alex and exemplified his personality.

SCOTT

Scott is a friend of Alex, also working in a bank. It was challenging to convince the women, let alone the men, to allow me into their wardrobes. After asking around for a month, I had given up on searching for another male participant when Alex offered to ask a friend of his who he thought would be interested. Scott had no problem showing me his wardrobe and was more than happy to send me many pictures of his entire wardrobe and yoga clothes.

Scott's wardrobe was organized by everyday and work clothes, such as shirts and blazers hanging next to a section dedicated to baskets with folded items such as his sports and yoga clothes. A white tank top and loose red shorts were his favourite items to wear during practice. As he regularly does yoga, the clothes were easily accessible in a basket at mid-level in his wardrobe. Being into health and fitness, Scott was very aware of his body and how his clothes make him look and feel. Styles, colour combinations and materials were apparent in his wardrobe to improve his confidence and elevate his mood, such as the varying colourful linen and cotton shirts that are hung along with well-fitted blazers.



Figure 1 & 2. Scott's Wardrobe

Both Alex and Scott had similar wardrobe layouts where work and everyday clothes were hung while their sports and yoga clothes were placed in an easily accessible drawer. Their work-life demands they wear professional formal suits, neatly hung in the main section of the wardrobe. The sports and yoga clothes were always stored in a draw within the cupboard, showing how they are regularly used. Clothes that are hung are usually unique or essential items that demand to be appropriately stored due to their fabric or sentimentality. Both Alex and Scott wished they could hang their yoga and sports clothing, making for easier and quicker selection but also for the feeling of satisfaction to see these clothes hung along with their work clothes. For many individuals who find joy and happiness in working out or playing sports, clothing often plays an integral part in the experience. As the body drives these activities, the correct type of sports or yoga pants can determine the entire experience of the workout.

The male participants were very aware and in tune with their bodies; they were also very attached to their clothes. Alex stated:

It's more about the feeling it's not necessarily having Nike or... you know... it's the feeling when you put these clothes on. I feel it. I feel when it's like, when I see my body, like oh shit, my muscles look good. And because it sucks up all the sweat.

The material was vital, and picking what they know looks good and will be practical was crucial. Although Alex had said above that the brand is not necessarily important, both the female and male participants possess clothing from many well-known sportswear and yoga clothing brands. This could result from the trust the participants have in these brands to deliver good quality products with Dri Fit materials that compress and make the body look and feel good.

As I had both male and female participants, it was essential to address the similarities and differences between both sexes. Dress in everyday life is the outcome of social pressures where the dressed body is symbolic of the situation in which it is found.¹³⁸ The fashion system creates rules that weave between personal and public spheres, creating situations demanding different selves. Formal occasions especially add to emphasize gender norms.¹³⁹ The body, thus, can be seen as an

¹³⁸ Entwistle, "The Fashioned Body", 38.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

object shaped by culture.¹⁴⁰ Referring to Entwistle (2015), the differences between men and women concerning how closely they are in touch and relate to their bodies are discussed.¹⁴¹ The author explains how women monitor the body more than men and are more closely identified with their body.¹⁴² Women also have more strenuous routines and are under greater scrutiny when it comes to discourses of dress.¹⁴³ While there is a large percentage of women who have strenuous routines and feel they are under more scrutiny than men, it should not be ruled out that men are not in touch with their bodies and do not have routines getting dressed and undressed. The diffusion of social media has brought us the popularity of videos of both women and men in their daily routines, getting ready for the day or getting ready for bed. Online video platforms have demonstrated men also have rigorous beauty routines and create a multitude of videos on fashion and style.¹⁴⁴

The women in my study were very conscious of their bodies and felt intimately related to their clothing (the findings on the women's wardrobes will be discussed in the next section and upcoming chapters). Similarly, the male participants were also in touch with their bodies and were very aware of how they saw themselves and how others would perceive them. Comparing Alex's wardrobe to Scott's, it was clear that the feeling and enhancing qualities clothing has on the body were fundamental. When getting ready for work or for the gym, both men had set routines they followed. Furthermore, their clothes and wardrobe played an essential part in their lives which were organized into occasions and seasons much like the women. Although I had only two examples from a male point of view, when comparing their answers and reactions to the women participants, they did not seem any less in touch with their bodies or aware of how they look through the eyes of others.

Diving into the men's wardrobes has demonstrated their intimate relationship to their sports and yoga clothing. Sport and yoga play an important part in the lives of these participants, where their passion is materially expressed through their clothing. Especially when getting dressed to go to the gym or a yoga class, the men were hyper-aware of the clothing they wanted to wear and how these clothes would affect the appearance of their bodies. Caring about how one looks in the eyes

¹⁴⁰ Entwistle, "The Fashioned Body", 39.

¹⁴¹ Ibid,43.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Online platforms such as YouTube contain various videos on styling, beauty and fashion content made by both men and women.

of another is genderless. It is evident that both sexes are aware of their bodies and the specific effects of clothing.

Introducing The Women's Wardrobes

TIFFANY

Tiffany has a passionate love of fashion and is very connected to her clothing. Her wardrobe was a beautiful, and large dark wood cabinet in her bedroom organized depending on the material, function and season. Due to lack of space, many of the same types of clothing were placed over one another to keep the closet organized and clothes protected. In a room separate from her wardrobe, Tiffany's workout clothes that she uses for running and yoga were in a sports bag tucked away in a cupboard with jackets near the house entrance. The sports clothes were brand names and matching, however, as she sees their purpose as practical and not for aesthetics, they were separated from her everyday clothes in her main wardrobe.

YASMIN

Yasmin's wardrobe was divided between a chest of drawers and hanging on a clothing rack. Her yoga clothes were folded in a middle draw for easy access. As Yasmin is a yoga teacher, her yoga clothes are always readily available. On her clothing rack, outerwear and everyday clothes were hung. She was aware of her clothes, wanting a minimal wardrobe with sustainable clothing from smaller local shops.

ODETTE

Odette, similar to Tiffany, has a genuine love for clothing and fashion and views her clothing as an embodied self. As Odette lives with her husband, coats, shoes and intimates were stored in other rooms of the house. Her wardrobe was kept in a room dedicated to her immediate clothing and everyday wear. The closet was very tall, with shelves almost reaching the ceiling. All the shelves had a purpose, where the middle and lower shelves stored clothes that were used regularly. These clothes were organized by season, material and type. Her sports and yoga clothes were folded on the highest shelf in the wardrobe. As it has been harder to attend classes due to the pandemic,

Odette does yoga at home around twice a week. This would possibly explain the location of the yoga clothes in the wardrobe on the highest shelf.

ANNA

Anna had a large white wardrobe in her room next to her sewing station and organized in sections. On the right of the wardrobe were hanging clothes, while on the left, she had baskets that included her sports and yoga clothes. Anna works in retail and has studied fashion in Italy. Traces of this can be seen through her collection of handmade blouses and pants hanging in her wardrobe. Her sports and yoga clothes were kept together and folded in a draw on the left for easy access. Anna goes to yoga quite often, and the accessibility of her yoga clothes is reflected in her closet.

MEGAN



Figure 3 & 4. Megan's Wardrobe

Like the other participants, Megan had a main wardrobe (figure 4) with a majority of hanging space and another space with basket-like drawers that kept her sports and yoga clothes along with other

folded clothing. She also had a clothing rack (figure 3) that presented her everyday clothes, which were eye-catching, colourful and contained meaningful items. Due to the pandemic, Megan has been working at home and recounts that she mainly wears black items daily. The colourful clothes on her clothing rack are a glimpse of hope that she will soon be able to style outfits and wear colours once we return to regular socialization practices.

The introduction of the men's and women's wardrobes serves as a foundation for the upcoming chapters. The analysis will begin in the next chapter as a result of reflecting on the theoretical framework, applying the method and combining the participant's answers with my observations during the wardrobe studies.

Chapter 1

Peeling Back the Layers

Typically, getting dressed begins from the naked body to the clothed body, where layers of clothing are added depending on the season and climate. In a yoga practice, however, the opposite can occur. From what the participants have told me, they prefer to go to class either online, at home or in a group with layers of clothing on top of their yoga sets. The outermost layers include a hoodie, sweater or pullover, followed by a t-shirt, long-sleeve or singlet and lastly, a sports bra (for the women). While an apparent reason to wear many layers and take them off during class is heat being generated through physical activity, more symbolic, energetic and emotional responses can be added to the equation.

Arriving on the mat and beginning the practice is a special moment. At this point, the body and mind are still attached to previous thoughts and activities of the day, needing time to settle down. The mood of each individual varies from moment to moment, influencing their choice of layers. Many of the participants brought up this particular experience during their interviews. I concluded that the clothing they wore and took off reflected how they were feeling emotionally. Almost like an onion, the act of pulling back and removing layers was not solely due to the body warming up but occurred when emotional or guarded feelings were being shed. Anna best described this act of removing layers during practice:

I think also, it's nice to feel protected at the beginning of the class or something like that, because it's like, you feel... I feel more fragile. So I think the more confident I get, the warmer I become. The more pieces I take off during the class is kind of like because I feel like you're open for energy, and that kind of warms you up, you know, because it also takes like, energy to get comfortable with the people that are in the room and be vulnerable with the person that holds the class, you know, like stuff like that.

The outermost layer was often a hoodie or cosy sweater that enveloped and acted as a supportive and protective element on the body. This act is reminiscent of a child with a favourite blanket that

offers a feeling of security and familiarity. Commonly, when starting the practice, one can feel physically and emotionally closed. As Anna describes, she feels fragile at the beginning of class and is soothed by wearing something large and comfortable, acting almost like a comforting embrace. Like a snake that sheds layers of skin, the clothes that come off at various points in the practice symbolise a fresh start. Once the initial layer has been discarded, there will be thinner layers of clothing underneath, depending on the person and circumstance. The factors determining whether these layers of clothing will stay on throughout the session are determined by physical and emotional comfortability. The comfortability of being in their bodies, the surrounding environment, the other people practising in the class, the teacher and their mood are represented in layers. Returning to Goffman's theory of the self as a multiplicity, the layers of clothing that come off reveal different selves. At the beginning of the practice, the self is fragile; then, it slowly warms up to present itself more confidently and assertively. When it comes time to leave the mat, there is a new surge of energy in the body that was absent at the start of the practice.

Clothes serve to put a boundary between the self, other people and our environment. Many participants felt reluctant to remove their shirts (if they were men) or practice only in a sports bra and leggings (if they were women). Leaving at least one layer on top of the body provided the most comfort and sense of ease. The participants expressed how reaching the point to show skin was when they were fully warmed up physically and mentally and felt safe and less vulnerable within themselves and their surroundings. The layers of clothing create a physical division that one can grasp or feel against their bodies as a reminder that they are safe. Although each individual will differ as to how much skin they are comfortable showing, there is an undeniable quality to the right piece of clothing that can offer great emotional support. The yoga teachers were aware of what their students were wearing or not wearing and were careful not to invade their personal space when guiding them through different poses, avoiding touching their skin.



Figure 5. Bloomers Owned by Nicole

An example of the discomfort of showing skin can be demonstrated through an item of clothing owned by yoga teacher Nicole. She had quite a different yoga clothing item compared to all other participants. Her yoga ensemble on the top half was a t-shirt, something all participants had in their wardrobes; however, her shorts stood out. The yoga shorts in her collection, more commonly called bloomers (figure 5) and Iyengar shorts, are worn to practice Iyengar yoga.¹⁴⁵ The shorts sit mid-waist and have a broad waistband to give a fit that is neither too tight nor too loose. Coming up relatively high, they allow almost the whole leg to be exposed. The bloomer shorts are made of cotton with a wide band on the top of the thighs to keep the shorts close to the skin and stop underwear from showing to prevent accidental flashing during the class. Nicole recounted how these are not commonly worn in Sweden but are more prevalent in India. A small number of her students wear these shorts in class, whilst others do not feel comfortable. She believes a reason for this is that usually, with regular yoga pants, the lower half of the body is supported and covered entirely, providing a pleasant feeling on the body and making the legs look smooth. However, the

¹⁴⁵ Iyengar yoga is a type of yoga exercise concentrating on the body through asanas with a focus of the alignment of the body and mind

shorts reveal the legs, and unlike the leggings, they do not provide a “filter” effect, smoothing and enhancing the body.

In theory, there would be nothing wrong with the bloomers as they are secured around the thighs and allow the class to see the teacher’s legs. However, in varying situations, clothes can either make or break our experience emotionally. Like dressing for every day, special occasions or sports activities, yoga clothing is spatiotemporally affected and affects us when worn in social contexts. Bloomers, in general, are not the most attractive item to wear. It is common for us to link bloomers to 19th-century dress in the West, hidden under skirts. Once the shorts are worn, perhaps feelings of unease and self-consciousness are evoked in many cases.

Unravelling physically and emotionally were common experiences for the participants during their yoga sessions. All participants agreed they noticed a difference in a yoga class environment instead of a gym setting where the energy and atmosphere are more welcoming, inclusive and less competitive. There are qualities unique to yoga that arise during practice. Compared to other physical activities, yoga offers an opportunity to examine physical and emotional feelings that may be difficult for some individuals to confront. Inviting more awareness of the self and taking a moment to slow down and calm an active racing mind is challenging when many of us live a busy lifestyle where our attention is constantly demanded elsewhere. The intensive stretching, the synchronized breathing, and the micro-managing of each body part in various poses can be challenging. Clothing familiar to the senses through touch, smell, and sight can help protect and adjust in such unfamiliar situations.

It was necessary to keep in mind that yoga is a physical but also mental practice. There is an undeniable aspect of yoga that focuses on energy and spirituality. The body tends to store energy and emotions: different yoga poses and stretches can help to loosen and break up the tension in the body, causing different emotions to be released. Whether this is consciously picked up by the individual doing yoga or not, there is a definite shift in their mood from the beginning to the end of the practice. Effectively, this could enhance the emotional awareness the participants developed towards their clothing. The spiritual quality and self-awareness embedded in yoga encourage us to pay attention to things that we are not usually aware of, giving an extra layer of feeling and sensitivity to our surroundings and ourselves.

Yoga clothing and the body have an intimate relationship that enhances the senses and mimics the wearer's emotions. The action or process of putting or removing clothing constitutes

layers of “feeling.” This is a process that occurs daily, for the most part subconsciously. These layers cover to embrace the body or are shed depending on the individual's emotional state: emotions and sartorial practices in synergy form a fluid and dynamic relationship. The practise of yoga through a heightened awareness of our bodies and surroundings allows for the conscious realization of clothing as an embodied practice.

Seeing Things, Feelingly

In Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, Act IV, Scene VI, a blind character named Gloucester is asked a question: “How do you see the world?” he responds, answering, “I see it feelingly.”¹⁴⁶ Through William Shakespeare’s play, he has shown how you can only see things clearly if you can feel them emotionally. Seeing something “feelingly” is essential when studying clothing and the body. Through touch, we can better understand objects and gain information that sight can oversee. Our bodies are excellent translators of seeing things feelingly. If we cannot feel an object, we intuitively imagine how it feels. In a sense, clothes are to the body what music is to the ears. Music can evoke powerful emotions that are indescribable with words. To quote from the work of Jenns and Hoffman (2020), “fashion is not only a “draping over the skin” but also an embodied experience that energizes and empowers, which *moves* in a way similar to music.”¹⁴⁷ As our feelings are usually felt in the body, either in the chest or stomach area, translating these feelings into words is sometimes a challenge. Feeling clothes on the body spark various emotions that usually dictate our dress choices and how we treat our wardrobes.

Due to these feelings, the encounter between the human body and objects initiates either a positive or negative outcome.¹⁴⁸ Ruggerone (2016) theorizes that the feelings of pleasure or displeasure evoked from clothing allow us further to understand the extra-cognitive explanations of our clothing decisions.¹⁴⁹ The specific habits of coordinating fashion conjure memories, sensations, and desires transmitted between bodies in different spatiotemporal encounters, creating

¹⁴⁶ William Shakespeare and Cedric Watts, *King Lear*, Wordsworth Classics (Ware: Wordsworth Classics, 2000), 1-153.

¹⁴⁷ Heike Jenns and Viola Hofmann, "Materiality and embodiment," in *Fashion and Materiality: Cultural Practices in Global Contexts*(London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2020), 175–180.

¹⁴⁸ Ruggerone, "The Feeling of Being Dressed", 583.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

a distinctive subjectification depending on the meeting or occasion.¹⁵⁰ Furthermore, as authors Eckersley and Duff (2020) have discussed, habit and memory are crucial elements that influence getting dressed when seeing things feelingly before the encounters occur. In their article, the authors develop their analysis by way of Gilles Deleuze.¹⁵¹ To Deleuze (1991), habit constitutes the ways bodies dress and the habits that shape getting dressed and undressed.¹⁵² This activates memories that project the imagination, including subjectification.¹⁵³ An embodied relationship to clothing occurs relating to how the clothes feel against the body's skin and how it moves along with the body.¹⁵⁴ This also refers in terms of how clothing can affect the body's appearance.¹⁵⁵ As discussed in the previous section, yoga encourages one to become more in touch and aware of one's body, consequently becoming more aware of how clothing drapes or hugs the body.

Habit and memory of clothing combined with the felt encounter of fashion are discussed by Entwistle (2015), Granata (2017), Smelik (2015) and Young (2005).¹⁵⁶ Elizabeth Grosz (2013) describes habit as “the order by which life accommodates materiality with the material forces that regulate its environments.”¹⁵⁷ Authors Eckersley and Duff have also described fashioned bodies as “habituated bodies, bodies of habit, practice and repetition,” emphasizing the ways fashion materially affects the embodied subject.¹⁵⁸ The embodied subject is further affected by mobilizing habits and subjectivity, transforming what the clothed body does through its gestures, movements, and daily routines.¹⁵⁹

Emphasising habit, practice and effect to the analysis of fashion as everyday doing includes the courses of subjectification.¹⁶⁰ An individual's memories and subjective experience blend into an imagined future of the body. Following Goffman's discussion of the imagined audience, some situations are created from memories and future hypotheses of what it would feel like to wear an outfit and how it would be situated within a specific occasion. Remembering a successful or

¹⁵⁰ Andrea Eckersley and Cameron Duff, “Bodies of Fashion and the Fashioning of Subjectivity” in *Body & Society* 26, no. 4 (2020), 54.

¹⁵¹ Eckersley and Duff, “Bodies of Fashion and the Fashioning of Subjectivity”, abstract.

¹⁵² *Ibid*,55.

¹⁵³ *Ibid*.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid*,56.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*,37.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*,56.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*,36.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid*,43.

unsuccessful outfit helps us make our clothing decisions the next time we get dressed.¹⁶¹ Yuniya Kawamura (2018) states that all bodies engage in the habit and practice of getting clothed regardless of cultural and symbolic valences.¹⁶² I asked Anna her process when she gets dressed, and she had a very insightful long reply:

Some days, it goes quick. And I get dressed super-fast. And some days, it's a goddamn mess, I'll tell you. I feel like a meme screaming at my closet like I have nothing to wear. And then I have like 5000 pieces of clothing in my closet, you know. And everything I put on feels uncomfortable. And I might have worn that thing like 1000 times, but all of a sudden, it feels uncomfortable. And I don't know why nothing works. But I think that like for some people they put out the day before what they're going to wear and stuff like that. I personally cannot do that because my mood might have changed for the next day when I wake up in the morning. And I guess it also has a lot about like, how I feel in my body that day, how I feel when I look at myself in the mirror. Or if I feel tired I like to wear like clothes that are like a little bit of colour, maybe something that like, picks me up. I think that clothes can kind of change the mood of my day. I can try to manipulate my brain to feel a certain way that I didn't really feel. But of course, it has to be comfortable because otherwise, I will go around getting bothered the whole day about it. But I think that I like to play with colours. And maybe then I wear something that feels a little bit more daring. And then I pick something that makes me feel a little bit more comfortable. So I like to lay there in the middle. So I feel like I risked a little bit and then I have something that makes me feel a little bit safer. You know, I try to kind of find the balance. If I have a bad day that makes me feel like, you know, I pick a little bit of both. I think that colour always helps in that. Because you can wear a simple sweater that's comfortable, but if it's a certain colour, it's a little bit, you know, you feel a little bit cheeky.

Anna is very aware of the mood, memories and experiences linked to her clothing and realizes that they change in various moments. She cannot create an outfit the night before, knowing that she

¹⁶¹ Eckersley and Duff, "Bodies of Fashion and the Fashioning of Subjectivity", 35.

¹⁶² Ibid,36.

might not feel the same in her body or be in the same mood in the morning. It is not only clothing that influences how we think but also how our bodies fit into clothes. Ruggerone (2016) expands on Deleuzian theory by connecting the lived experience and the body's reaction to clothing and outfits. She described when her body was at fault for making a dress look less attractive, while a cheerful disposition, or affect, occurs when modifications in body weight make the dress look perfect.¹⁶³ The changes that occur in the body dictate the effect of clothing. Anna's example of her process of getting dressed describes how she puts on a piece of clothing that looked great the previous day, but for some reason, the next day, it does not feel nice on the body or look the same. She also described a similar process when she goes to the gym or yoga. Some days she feels she needs to have darker clothes when feeling a little more insecure about her body, and other days when she feels great in her body, she wants to experiment with colour. She needs to have her layers and a proper sports bra and underwear; if not, she will be focused on the uncomfortable feeling of the clothing throughout the whole practice.

The body and clothing form a relationship that constantly changes and evolves daily. Habits, memories and patterns are integrated into our daily routines of getting dressed and significantly expands to specific occasions such as getting ready for a yoga session. The body and clothing form a dynamic relationship where the clothing will alter the body, or in turn, the body will alter the clothing, eliciting varied emotional responses. The process of getting dressed may vary on the individual; however, in the case of the participant, getting dressed is a complex and emotional practice that orders us to see our clothing and bodies feelingly.

¹⁶³ Ruggerone, "The Feeling of Being Dressed", 583.

The Yoga Clothes



Figure 6. Scott's Yoga Clothing

After introducing the participants and discussing their feelings towards their wardrobes and yoga clothing, there are similarities between their clothing, bodies and clothing preferences. The materials and designs of the participants' yoga clothing were carefully chosen. Not solely for their aesthetics, but an essential factor was dependant on the resonance the clothing had to the body. Many would choose a specific yoga set or sportswear garment for their practice due to the Dri Fit material. When there is sweating involved, the participants wanted this factor to taken care of by wearing sweat-absorbing clothing. Sweating in the comfort of their own home caused less of an issue. When they do yoga at home, Tiffany and Nicole prefer cotton because it is breathable and comfortable. However, in a social setting, either online or in-person, the participants said they preferred Dri Fit technology. They felt it would lessen visible signs of sweat that lead to embarrassment.

A primary reason for choosing their yoga clothing was always comfort. Feeling comfortable while looking attractive or presentable was very important for the participants. Depending on their mood, they would opt for the complete yoga set with a matching yoga mat, such as Odette, who

described that she always likes to look good when doing yoga, making her feel good. Loose and baggy clothes feel frumpy and cumbersome to her, not resonating with her style and personality. The colours of the yoga clothes were also a crucial factor to consider. To Odette, the colours she wears during her yoga practice affects her mood and the session's outcome. She compares this feeling to when she wears a wrong accessory or clothing item that does not fit well or does not complement her look, bringing down her mood and not allowing her to be confident throughout her day. The colours of her yoga set also changed over the years showing how she has grown emotionally and her current stage in life. In the past, Odette preferred wearing contrasting colour combinations such as black leggings and red shirts. However, recently, she mentioned that her preferences and tastes had changed now that she is married and has a different profession. Odette prefers to adopt soft and calming colours such as lilacs, pinks, and baby blues. She sees these types of shades represent her aspirations for a balanced, calm and harmonised lifestyle.

The tightness of the yoga clothing was another heavily discussed factor. Some participants wanted to wear tight clothes because they felt they looked better or matched their personalities. In contrast, others preferred looser fits, as it was more comfortable to practice in and concealed their bodies' shape. When practising yoga, the emphasis is to reconnect to the body and feel the present moment continuously. Being hyper-aware of the body makes us also more aware of what is sitting on the body. The soft second skin material that yoga clothing is made of gives a seamless oneness with the body. It is felt immediately when the clothing is too tight, too loose or gives any discomfort. The participants unanimously agreed that a high level of comfort needed to be achieved in the fit of the yoga clothes. The feel and the appearance of the yoga clothing heightened bodily and mental awareness, accentuating the relationship between the garments and the wearer.



Figure 7. Megan's Yoga and Sports Clothes



Figure 8. Odette's Yoga Clothes

An interesting aspect to consider was the placement of the yoga clothing. The yoga clothes occupied a small to medium-sized space of the wardrobes. They were either crammed or folded in drawers, baskets (figure 7) or left in piles beside the bed. The position of the yoga clothing in the wardrobes often depended on how regularly the person practised yoga. The occupation of the yoga clothes in the wardrobe also reflected many of the participants' lifestyles and their views on the yoga lifestyle. For those who do yoga once or twice a week, like Odette, only a few yoga clothes were stored on the highest shelf in her wardrobe (figure 8). In Tiffany's example, her wardrobe was

full of beautiful and fabulous items that she cherished deeply. The yoga set did not make her seem necessarily attractive in any particular way and was used for practicality and getting the job done. That could explain why the clothes were shoved in a sports bag stored in a cupboard in the laundry. On the other hand, yoga teachers Nicole and Yasmin, who teach and practice yoga regularly, have their yoga clothing stored in easy and accessible places in their wardrobes.

The colours, materials and designs evoked critical sensibilities from the participants that describe yoga as an embodied practice connected to dress. As shown by the participants, the clothing elements reflected how they wished to feel during the practice and to what extent yoga occupied their lives. The occupation of yoga clothing in the wardrobe will be compared to the sentimental items owned by the participants in the next section to highlight their importance and significance within the wardrobe.

Sentimentality: The Favourite Items

In everyone's wardrobes, there are objects kept due to the feelings or memories they evoke. These items are usually attached to people or moments in the past that can be revisited by seeing, smelling and touching the object. Comparing sentimental pieces to other clothing items, such as yoga wear, can give insight into what an individual deems as essential in their wardrobe and make sense of the logic behind how they store their items. The participants showed much affection for the clothing in their closets, not only for particular garments but also for specific seasons or designers.

TIFFANY

Beginning with Tiffany, her wardrobe contained a collection of designer labels. In the back of her closet, stored safely under other designer blouses, is a Dolce & Gabbana blouse from their collection seven years ago. The beautiful blue and white blouse, reminiscent of the Mediterranean ocean, is a timeless piece that constantly attracts compliments whenever Tiffany wears it. On top of her Dolce & Gabbana blouse is a Burberry blouse with the traditional monogram in blue and white. The Burberry blouse is the supposed "new edition" meant to replace the Dolce & Gabbana blouse if the time comes. As this is a summer blouse and Tiffany's wardrobe is organized, keeping seasons in mind, it is currently stored at the back of the cupboard. She showed me her blouse and

how she styles it telling me about her summertime adventures. However, while looking at Tiffany's facial expressions when talking about the blouse, what I could see through my laptop screen made my heart sink. The nostalgic and bittersweet look she had on her face told me how much she missed the summer and safely going outside wearing all her beautiful clothes and getting dressed up. Clothes that are usually worn in the warmer months are, for the most part, associated with holidays reminding us of fond memories and give a sense of hope during the cold and darker months. When revisiting the contents of their wardrobes, I could see how the pandemic mixed with the current Swedish winter has taken a toll on many of the participants living in Sweden. Tiffany felt she had so many beautiful clothes that satisfied her sitting sadly in her closet, not being worn.

Returning to Tiffany's yoga and workout clothes, I could better understand why they were separated from her main wardrobe. To Tiffany, they were solely for practicality. As they do not make her feel or look beautiful, how they are stored is not as crucial as her luxury items stored with great care. Her yoga and sports clothes are used in an activity that is meant to shape and form the body. They need to be comfortable, breathable and aid in the performance of her workouts. Once the body is in its desired shape through the aid of her workout clothes, the items in her main wardrobe can be shown off.

ANNA

Some personal items were made by the participants or were attached to a specific memory. Anna enjoys making clothes and has various handmade blouses and trousers in her wardrobe. She showed me beautiful coloured blouses and well-tailored pants as some of her favourite and meaningful pieces. Anna described that she often has a hard time finding clothing, especially pants, that fit her tall and slender frame perfectly. Feeling self-conscious about her body, she discovered that she could take charge of the situation by making her clothing. As the pieces are handmade, this elevates their special and unique quality, giving Anna a feeling of empowerment and pride. However, one of the most sentimental pieces she did not make was a black Acne dress gifted from the brand. This was also the dress that she wore to her father's funeral. Although a sad memory, she smiled at the dress and told me how it made her feel better by wearing it, helping her cope with a challenging day. Anna's yoga wear, on the other hand, was excluded from her sentimentality list as her experiences of wearing yoga clothing were attached to previous feelings of fragility and served the purpose of a uniform rather than evoking fond sentiments.

ODETTE

Within Odette's wardrobe, her sentimental items consisted of leather jackets and skirts. These items have been with her for around fourteen years and fit her body perfectly as if custom made. All pieces are in excellent condition and make her look and feel her best. Still to this day, she has not been able to find items that look similar or create a similar feeling. Becoming an extension of her body and personality, they are irreplaceable pieces. This example shows how some clothes grow and age along with the person providing a sense of relief and stability in the fast and continually changing age of fashion that is often reflected in our wardrobes.

Referring back to Odette's yoga collection, she has had different colours and styles of yoga clothing over the years. However, similar to her timeless leather jackets and skirts wishes to collect classic and neutral shades. Her relationship with her yoga clothing is centred around looking and feeling good in an outfit that will carry her through the practice.

YASMIN AND NICOLE

The yoga teachers viewed pieces of their yoga clothing as sentimental. Yasmin, for example, chose a cosy jacket she wears out and to yoga as the first sentimental item. The jacket was purchased from a friend's clothing store and is seen as an essential piece as she loves to support small regional shops and prefers to buy from small business. From her yoga collection, a white tank top with a print of the Hindu God Ganesh was her second sentimental item; this is another piece made by a friend that has important memories attached. Although she has a couple of sentimental clothing items, Yasmin mentioned that she tends to place greater importance and sentimentality on jewellery pieces. It is expected that jewellery pieces, like clothing, are weighed with sentimentality holding an inexplicable power without words. Nicole, comparable to Yasmin, has sentimentally charged yoga clothes in her wardrobe. As the bloomers she wears are less common and more challenging to find than a pair of yoga leggings, many individuals choose to make their shorts. A few of her bloomers were made by mothers of friends, creating personal and one of a kind pieces that she cherishes.

ALEX AND SCOTT

Alex and Scott did not have particular sentimental items in their wardrobe. Alex mentioned that his summer clothing elicited sentimental feelings in addition to his sports gear by reminiscing over past vacations and summer heat. Like Yasmin, Alex and Scott felt items in their jewellery collection had more sentimental value than clothing items in their wardrobes.

Ultimately, familiar to all the participants were their facial expressions when looking at their favourite or sentimental items in their wardrobe. The tone of their voices changed, and a light shone from their eyes, their whole face emitting a glow that was not there previously. I immediately recognized the emotions they were feeling. Even though the screen, it was impossible to miss the bodily nuances that spoke for themselves, connecting myself to the participant through a mutual exchange of emotions. Exploring the favourite and sentimental items of the participants conveyed what they regarded as precious or extended versions of themselves. Most of these items were hung or neatly tucked away in their cupboards in a safe and caring manner. In comparison, their yoga clothes, which were not a part of their sentimental items, were for working out and being physically active. Their material can stand being scrunched or folded, washed several times and still hold its shape and look presentable. To many of the participants, yoga clothing in the wardrobe is usually highly regarded when one forms a collection or views them as a prized possession. The sentimental items in the wardrobe spark joy and evoke various emotions that are particular to the individual. Comparing the sentimental items to the yoga clothing in the participants' wardrobes has further clarified the occupation of yoga clothing in their wardrobes and the dominance of yoga in their lifestyle. Those with a yoga profession were intrinsically connected to their yoga clothing, falling into their sentimentality category.

Yoga Lifestyle and Sustainability

A Zen, flexible and organised individual were the most common adjectives the participants used to describe a person who has a “yoga lifestyle.” The activity of doing yoga was credited towards a particular type of person or group of people rather than the activity itself. According to the participants, the yoga lifestyle included an individual who was vegan or vegetarian, regularly meditates and has a “hippy” style. A majority of the participants also described how the clothing of the individual practising yoga showed their level and expertise in the field. For example, when asked about what others wear in their yoga classes, Megan responded:

I see more people wearing yoga clothes. Especially I think especially people who are practising for quite a long time.

Alex also had a similar perception towards the clothing and yoga lifestyle, describing he would have to invest in more yoga clothes and accessories if he wanted to take yoga seriously. Fitness culture has become a mainstream phenomenon where sports clothing and accessories owned demonstrate dedication and skill. Various yoga subcultures depend on the commitment to the practice and lifestyle. Subcultures are traditionally organised upon specific features such as clothing, appearance or adornment that create a distinctive exterior.¹⁶⁵ The subculture is either loosely or intrinsically bound in its collective identification and can be dominated by a particular gender, age group or social class.¹⁶⁶ The subculture will be distanced from the “mainstream” by opposing accepted or prescribed ideas or fashion.¹⁶⁷ The participants felt that in order to fulfil the social interaction of yoga either online or in-person to fit into a yoga subculture, the clothes were an essential factor in expressing experience and commitment to the yoga lifestyle. Outside of a specific yoga subculture are the fitness trend's materialisations through clothing, shopping, exercising, and dieting.¹⁶⁸ Seen in a theatrical metaphor, the actor in a yoga setting performs

¹⁶⁵ David Muggleton. "Subcultures" in *The Berg Companion to Fashion*, ed. Valerie Steele (Oxford: Bloomsbury Academic, 2010), 657-661.

¹⁶⁶ Muggleton, "Subcultures", 657-661.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

according to the stage set, especially in this case. Clothing and appearance are essential in successfully portraying the correct reality to the desired yoga audience.

During the wardrobe studies, the participants who were not yoga teachers believed yoga professionals would have a multitude of yoga clothing and accessories in their wardrobes. However, the yoga teacher participants were very adamant about having minimal wardrobes containing only the essentials. They were also very focused on having sustainable items and supporting small local businesses. Most of the participants apologised that their wardrobes were too messy and felt embarrassed if they owned too many clothing items. They assumed that they would be judged for not having an organised wardrobe with the right amount of clothes counted as sustainable. Banim and Ali (2001) focus on clothing items in wardrobes wanting to know why women held onto items of clothing they no longer wear. The items represented who they once were or who they once wanted to be. When asked if they had clothing they no longer wear, most of the participants would not specifically give me an answer, mentioning they use and enjoy a large majority of their wardrobes. On the other hand, many participants felt they needed to apologise for the amount of clothing they owned, not wanting to present a “shopaholic” image or be an unsustainable individual. To many, the hoarding of no longer worn clothes can be symbolic of excess consumption or shopping addiction.¹⁶⁹

Through the eyes of many of the participants, committing to a yoga lifestyle is to have a particular personality or characteristics alongside a serious collection of yoga clothing and accessories. There often is a need to fulfil the role of the performer in various ways that fit a normative and socially acceptable idealized image. The desire to control the impressions of others and the actor’s goal of maintaining a consistent performance in specific settings is analysed in the next chapter.

¹⁶⁹ Banim and Guy, "Discontinued Selves", 203-220.

Chapter 2

Esse est percipi¹⁷¹

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances,
Furthermore, one man in his time plays many parts.

William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

The famous Shakespeare quote above is from the monologue “All the world's a stage” in “As You Like It” Act II, Scene VII.¹⁷² Erving Goffman, similar to Shakespeare, viewed the social world as a stage in which all humans are actors. Our bodies are instruments of communication where the clothes we wear, our mannerisms, and our sense of self are fundamentally linked to society's basic social structures.¹⁷³ In the presence of others, we are constantly performing whether we are consciously aware or not that we are a multiplicity of selves. As we move through the world, we animate a system of selves reflexive of the social circumstances. During the coronavirus pandemic, it has been crucial to wear a mask as a means of protection in public. To Goffman, the idea of a performer wearing a mask is not because of its protective ability but to form the face underneath for specific social roles. Socialising online creates another layer of the front stage where face-to-face interactions require the same live performance from the actor. We are, in a sense, animals captured by society that make ourselves real in the world by animating doubles of social selves.¹⁷⁴ We have ourselves in pyjamas at home and another appropriately dressed to fit the role in Zoom calls or live classes. During the interview with Tiffany, she mentioned:

You just install the camera to how you want to look, which of course, you think is better during your yoga class. Like someone does this [positioning of the camera]

¹⁷¹ “To be is to be perceived” - George Berkeley (1685-1753)

¹⁷² William Shakespeare, H. J Oliver, and Katherine Duncan-Jones, *As You like It*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1978), 1-201.

¹⁷³ Dan Krier, "Sociological Theory: A Skeleton Key to Goffman's Presentation of Self in Everyday Life", YouTube video, 37:22, August 21, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wr5MM9_kd8E.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

to show off a good angle to someone else and keep yourself in [good] form. And then put nice clothes over your form.

As Tiffany described, you are in control of the camera angle, the lighting and wardrobe and what you choose to include or exclude from your surroundings. Goffman explains that fronts are selected and not created.¹⁷⁵ In this manner, a new region develops from online interactions as the actor can choose what background is visible and adjust their appearance. Online yoga is another stage for an actor to both perform and direct the performance. The *mise-en-scène* is essential in setting an online video as what is portrayed on screen is small and concise. The audience is required to focus on details that become more apparent in the setting. The setting of the performer involves the circumstance of staying in an isolated environment (as the house) that is usually kept private. In this case, the domain will be altered to suit the social expectations of the audience. The clothing and styling of the performer will also be adjusted accordingly.

Creating a consistent and positive view of ourselves to the world is needed to conform to social norms. The clothing we wear depends on how often we frequent society and which places we visit.¹⁷⁶ Acting differently in various situations to achieve personal goals can be seen during interviews where “dressing for success” is a way to create an image of ourselves consciously. Appearance, including clothing in Goffman's perspective, is a crucial element. An actor delivers their performance through their physical appearance and bodily expressions where being well-dressed is evidence of good taste and manners.¹⁷⁷ As in-person and online, our clothing changes depending on who is on the other side of the screen.

Sitting in front of a camera without the physicality of the audience gives an illusory feel to the experience of been seen online. This, in turn, lessens the burden we feel of the gaze of others when face-to-face. The actor feels more in control of what the audience sees and thus can produce a stable performance. Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1976, 1981) has explained how the body experiences the world and our relationship to the objects and space in which we live.¹⁷⁸ He calls

¹⁷⁵ Goffman, *The Presentation of the Self*, 17.

¹⁷⁶ "Appearance Management" in *Fashion Foundations: Early Writings on Fashion Dress* ed. Kim K. P. Johnson, Susan J. Torntore and Joanne B. Eicher (Berg, 2003), 85-88.

¹⁷⁷ "Appearance Management", 85-88.

¹⁷⁸ Joanne Entwistle, "Fashion and the Fleshy Body: Dress as Embodied Practice," in *Fashion Theory* 4, no. 3 (2000): 323-47.

this the “corporeal or postural schema.”¹⁷⁹ We grasp the external space, relationships and things actively through our embodied encounters. This area extends to our direct experience of the dressed body, implicit in understanding social rules and norms. Specific social occasions such as formal ceremonies, job interviews or, shopping expeditions demand different styles as objects of our consciousness spatially and temporally vary. Fitting into established norms of a situation demonstrates the body as an active participant produced through practices and mundane routines.

The corporeal or postural schema in specific social occasions was demonstrated through the interviews with the participants. The yoga teachers are aware of how they are dressed and hold themselves, perhaps even more so during a live class. Yoga teacher Yasmin has different classes that contain various students. She spoke of the difference between a yoga class for her regular yoga students versus yoga classes for business employees. Yasmin described that her yoga outfits would change depending on whom she is teaching. For example, when she practices for herself, she could wear sleepwear or “just whatever,” but she wants to look professional, comfortable, and “nice” when she teaches a class. Amongst her yoga clothing, she has colourful, basic and black yoga clothes to suit different occasions. When teaching company employees, she wears her black yoga outfit. It has a flattering shape with more formal qualities and can be paired with attractive bras in her collection. Although the bras are simple in the front, there are design elements in the back that give a sensual feeling. The black leggings also have details that are considered “sexy.” She recounted liking to feel “sexy” and feminine during these classes as they gave her a boost of confidence. For her regular yoga students or teaching maternity yoga, it was important that she still felt attractive and comfortable. This space, however, allowed her to experiment and play with colours and patterns that were not as welcomed in her more formal yoga classes. In her workshops and presentations, she tells her students to pay attention to what they are wearing, especially when they have a big day ahead or a demanding situation. She advises her students to feel as comfortable as they can while also wearing something that feels equally empowering, touching upon the notion of “power dressing.”

Nicole, also a yoga teacher, commented on looking “put together” while being comfortable during her classes online or in person. There are still social norms and rules that are followed when doing yoga online. Nicole described that she would never have unkempt clothes with holes or wear

¹⁷⁹ Entwistle, “Fashion and the Fleshy Body”, 334.

something that did not look presentable. Appropriate dress attire is still expected, even more so through the screen, such as looking presentable for the occasion and being punctual.

On the other hand, Megan has a specific way of picking her yoga clothes for an online or live yoga class. She explained that she does not feel comfortable wearing only a sports bra in class due to showing too much skin. While at home, she feels comfortable experimenting with clothing, sometimes only wearing a sports bra and leggings. In the privacy of her home, she is free from prying eyes and her role as a “performer.” Similarly, Tiffany stated towards the end of the wardrobe study:

I think the reason [for not caring about my sports clothes] is that I'm not going to a yoga course, so no one sees me. It doesn't make so much sense for me that I need to go. I just need to be comfortable, and I need to be warm. That's all. But for those who would attend the yoga course... Of course, I'm sure they have like how I have my blouses in order, they would also have [their yoga clothes] in order.

Tiffany only practices yoga at home in her backstage environment, where she is excluded from social expectations and interactions. The performer can relax and step out of character when backstage.¹⁸⁰ Similar to Alex, Tiffany believes she can only expect to perform the role of an individual who is established in the yoga practice if she has a prized collection of yoga clothing stored in the manner of her designer blouses. Although Tiffany does not have a high regard for her yoga clothing, they are costly and made by well-known sports brands. If another sees her in public in her yoga clothing, she can still fulfil her role as a yoga student and seem part of the fitness community.

Clothing is an essential contributor to identity and playing specific roles. Guy and Banim (2000) explored aspects of women’s identities through their everyday clothing and the meanings attached to their clothing. The results outlined three views of self: The Woman I Want To Be, The Woman I Fear To Be, and The Woman I Am Most Of The Time.¹⁸¹ To Alex, whose relationship to sports clothes would be under the category “The [Man] I Am Most Of The Time,” wears sports

¹⁸⁰ Goffman, *The Presentation*, 70.

¹⁸¹ Banim and Guy, "Discontinued Selves", 203-220.

clothes every day and feels like his usual self in this type of clothing. In the case of Tiffany and Odette, the relationship to their sports clothes falls under the “The Woman I Want To Be” category. Tiffany and Odette have specific and unique styles that suit their personalities, and this is reflected in their wardrobe and is tied to the women they are on a day-to-day basis. Compared to Tiffany’s sports and yoga clothes, as mentioned earlier, she uses these to become “The Woman [she wants] To Be” by wearing the clothes in activities that can help her achieve the desired body shape. On the other hand, Odette uses her yoga clothes to become “The Woman [she wants] To Be” by practising in beautiful yoga clothing that gives her the feeling of being an individual who is in balance and harmony with herself and her environment. The yoga clothes aid in the portrayal of the role they wish to perform.

In the words of Goffman, the world is truly a wedding.¹⁸² Different rooms or settings separate the reality performed, creating specific behaviours bounded by barriers to perception.¹⁸³ The front stage contains the performance the audience wishes to see, while the backstage is free from social norms or expectations. The environment of the wardrobe is usually not addressed to outsiders such as the audience. The home often represents the raw version of the self and is especially reflected within the wardrobe. As I had known most of the participants prior to conducting the wardrobe studies, those participants felt more at ease and understood that I would not judge their wardrobes; thus, I would not judge them personally. Although the front stage is not inauthentic and each stage reveals its truth of the individual, due to the nature of the backstage that reveals to us a more sensitive and intimate side of the individual, the gaze of others can prove uncomfortable.

In the instance of the front stage, much like the name suggests, a front is created. This includes physical characteristics, clothing and personal energy/demeanours to create a specific impression.¹⁸⁴ Specific images are created on social media platforms, including the yoga lifestyle and clothing. Although Goffman was not around in the age of social media, much of what is posted and seen on the internet is an example of the front stage. The procedure of posting pictures online is long and arduous for a majority of individuals where only the most attractive picture is selected. There are many qualities within a picture that assemble a particular front that we wish to express

¹⁸² Goffman, *The Presentation*, 23.

¹⁸³ *Ibid*, 66.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 7.

for a particular audience. Our constant awareness of the audience is evident in Anna's experience of comparing her body and yoga clothing to others:

I'm a person that's been like... I always have been very insecure about my body in general, and I can easily like, look at other girls and be like, oh my god, her body's amazing. She has so many muscles and like this, and you know, they can go and only wear a sports bra and a pair of shorts. I'm more of a cover-up person, I think. I started to get better at yoga and like trying to relax and trying to find that, like, you know, learn how to focus on myself and not others. I can also sit in a sports bra if I'm warm, or if I'm hot, you know, if I need to take things off. So I think, I just guess I stopped comparing myself to others and just be like, instead of focusing on things to hate, I find pretty things about others instead, like, oh, I really like that colour of her yoga set that might suit me, you know? Instead of focusing on the negative stuff. And I think that you can kind of find that, like, positive calmness with time in yoga, you know, you find that kind of acceptance of yourself.

In Anna's explanation, we can see the countless thoughts and contemplations she has concerning herself and how other's view her in a live yoga setting. Numerous participants expressed that there is less stress and competition in an online setting from the comfort of one's own home. Multiple tiny squares flood the screen creating an abstract view of the reality of the individuals presented in the class. The yoga student can change the view of the camera to suit the image they wish to portray. Online yoga creates another layer of the front stage, taking a setting that was originally backstage without social interaction into a social situation. Although the audience has a clearer view of the actor's behaviour and appearance in a live social setting, it is easier to avoid embarrassment online than in person. The physical presence of another individual in close proximity has a different effect on the body and, in turn, their performance. Reality, in a sense, is blurred through an online meeting such as Zoom, where the vibrancy of "real-life" has dulled. While the yoga teachers felt more aware of their presence on screen, other participants felt relief in online classes due to the surreal quality of online social interaction. The chances of feeling embarrassment that leads to a "spoiled identity" were lessened as the participants felt they had more control over the setting and could monitor their behaviour by viewing themselves on camera.

The Spoiled Identity

At the end of each wardrobe study, I would ask the participants how they felt during the experience. I would receive responses describing the experience as “fun” or how they enjoyed showing and talking about their clothing. Tiffany, on the other hand, had a different response:

Yeah, it is weird. I have never shown it to anyone, so yeah, it is strange. Yeah, I feel a little bit ashamed how I keep those clothes... that sport shit...

Tiffany’s response demonstrates how she felt embarrassed to show the condition in which she kept her sports clothes differing from what is stereotypically considered ideal. This quote shows how she feels towards her sports gear marking their unimportance compared to her main clothing collection in her wardrobe. Tiffany described that she wished I had warned her before agreeing to do the wardrobe study to organize and change the location of her sports clothing.

Preventative practices are a common corrective habit to avoid feelings of discomfort and embarrassment in order to protect one's projections.¹⁸⁵ Goffman alludes to the back region as a place where objects can be safely and successfully hidden from the audience that present an inconsistent image of the performer.¹⁸⁶ I was the intruder in Tiffany's space where she felt, as Goffman illustrates, torn between two possible realities lapsing in momentary confusion.¹⁸⁷ After the outcome of embarrassment, collusive communication rose between Tiffany and me. Like with many other participants, the backstage created an interaction containing an appropriate mix of formality and informality with a balance between distance and intimacy.¹⁸⁸ To suit the delicate environment and subject of the wardrobe studies, realigning actions was necessary to free both I and the participant. Tiffany’s example demonstrates how the formation of different stages and regions primarily stems from the need to avoid embarrassment. Furthermore, in many cases, a leading cause of embarrassment in a social setting is the biological self. The body has many bodily functions; we sweat, digest and eliminate waste. The biological functions of the human body tend to be juxtaposed to the cleanliness and purity standards expressed in performance through face-to-face interaction.¹⁸⁹ Yoga is a physical exercise that gives an intense workout, causing many

¹⁸⁵ Goffman, *The Presentation*, 69.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 86.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 120.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 73.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 73.

individuals to sweat profusely throughout the session. Sweating, in this instance, creates a problem for the existential self, who does not want to be embarrassed. Although a completely normal and natural consequence of physical exercise that is to be expected, Anna described her problems as someone who is overly sweaty:

I am a sweaty person. I am for sure. And it's always something I've been very insecure about. Honestly, like, I get very red in my face. I felt like I couldn't wear a lot of colours. So I preferred, in the beginning, to only wear black and stuff like that, because I felt like my sweat would like, expose me with all the colours. It made me feel uncomfortable. And I sweat a lot so it becomes a lot of sweat stains. I didn't want it to be seen.

The clothing in Anna's case is essential in portraying her existential self and not to be “exposed.” This actor avoids social embarrassment by wearing colours and fabrics that help to lessen the appearance of sweat. In these cases, the biological self cannot be helped, and clothing and other items cover the embarrassment. Anna only feels embarrassed when she sweats in public but does not worry about perspiring when she is at home Anna can exercise without the worry of embarrassment in her private environment.

Many individuals during the pandemic have been working from home. Consequently, the actor becomes confused as to how to perform their social roles by having an audience backstage. Their backstage setting, attire and behaviour need to change to suit their social performance. When Anna gets ready for her yoga lessons or gets dressed for when she plans to stay at home for the day, she recounts:

Honestly, right now I'm a lot in my sweatpants as well. I think variation is very important. For example, I can get too comfortable and lazy if I wear sweatpants or something too comfortable. I like to feel the difference of now it's time to relax and now it is time to do things. I put on sportswear because I am going to work out, or I'm putting on sweatpants because I am going to sit on the couch and watch a movie. If I am going out with friends, I'll put on a pair of jeans or a dressier pair of pants. I am putting this on because now it is time for this, you know, I feel like your clothes are kind of like a uniform depending on what you are going to do.

Especially as we are at home and can wear informal clothing, such as sweatpants, Anna said there was a problem with getting “too comfortable” or getting “too used to” wearing comfortable lounge clothes. From her point of view, this was associated with “lazy” and unproductive behaviour. Typically, being active and productive are morally sound virtues in society. To be wearing only casual loungewear for extended periods can be interpreted as lazy and unproductive. To avoid a “spoiled identity,” an image of productivity can be extended through the usage of clothing. The popularity of yoga clothes and sportswear during the pandemic imply personal activity and productivity levels have remained high despite being at home. Another role emerges from the backstage (the home) being brought forward, portraying their social role of an actor who is casual but productive. As we have been dressing differently in the pandemic, our behaviour as performers has been emphasised. Tiffany explained she does not wear all her outfits as she did pre-pandemic, confirming the notion that she no longer as often has to perform her social role in front of an audience that expects designer outfits. Similarly, Megan only wears black at home and not colour because her role as an actor in a social space does not exist in the home.

The spoiled identity through the example of yoga clothing within the closet of the participants shows how Goffman’s analogy is helpful to explore social productions and behavioural regularities. The location in which backstage behaviour would traditionally occur, such as the home, is now the location of front stage behaviour through classes or meetings online to live-streamed yoga classes affecting clothing and behavioural choices. Wardrobes in society are depicted as reflections of the existential self that need to display a particularly organized self. I believe this is often why many participants did not want to show me their wardrobes in case of being judged or revealing a spoiled identity.

The Laundry Basket

An area intimately connected to the wardrobe but not often discussed is the laundry room. In the studies, I asked how the participants washed their clothing and did their laundry. The responses entailed telling me the water temperature and how often they would wash their sports clothes and clothes in general. They found this subject to be awkward and arbitrary, being reluctant to show me their laundry baskets. Furthermore, they viewed the nature of my questioning as obvious and not needing elaboration. Evidence of dirty clothes thrown in a basket was not the image many

participants wanted to show. Connected to the wardrobe is the area for the clothes that are no longer presentable and need cleaning. The laundry room is another area that upsets and contradicts the actor's role where harmonizing with fundamentally discrepant roles proves difficult. The laundry basket and room represent another layer of the backstage. Referring to Tiffany's example, her sports clothing was placed in the laundry area located at the house entrance. The location of her sports gear emphasized her feelings towards their purpose. As they are used for activities that produce perspiration, in this manner of thinking, it is natural they are kept in a place that is specifically for dirty clothing. To Tiffany, nothing is glamorous about working out; thus, the yoga/sport clothing is deemed insignificant although expensive clothing items.

The Wardrobe as a Performer

Reality television productions such as Marie Kondo's "Tidying Up," or "Get Organized with the Home Edit," and other home improvement series expose the inside of the house, focusing on wardrobes eliciting certain expectations and rules that describe a space as aesthetically pleasing. The wardrobe is "socialised" and moulded to fit the expectation of society.¹⁹⁰ The Marie Kondo effect of wardrobes has invited and created a social space backstage usually absent of the gaze of others.¹⁹¹ There are no fronts that the actor can hide behind as their setting has become an extension of themselves. The home, including the wardrobe, are usually spaces closed off from the public. Goffman described the essential use of doors and locks to rooms within the backstage category as they are meant to be inaccessible to the audience. Once the doors of the wardrobe are opened before the eyes of strangers, it is very unsettling to the actor. There are many aspects to judge when looking at someone's wardrobe; if it is organised or what exactly is contained in the wardrobe. Furthermore, there was also a debate among the participants whether their wardrobe should be big or small, have an abundance of clothes or be minimalistic. Many described that they lack space but also wish for more. At the same time, they also want to buy less clothing while nevertheless longing to buy new items. When I asked Anna how she was feeling after the experience of me looking into her wardrobe, she immediately responded:

¹⁹⁰ Goffman, *The Presentation*, 22-23.

¹⁹¹ Marie Kondo is an author and the star of the Netflix show "Tidying Up with Marie Kondo" (2019). She is an expert of tidying the home and organising closets.

I mean, [they are just clothes], you know, and I feel like, it's important to share, that you're human, and it's just clothes. It's nothing that, in the end, defines you as a person. It's something you should never be ashamed of yourself for who you are. And if you are, then maybe, you should, you know, start thinking about maybe some things that you have to work on. But I believe that if we all share, like, our closets and show that like, you know, we are not perfect. Sometimes my closet looks perfect and super clean. And everything is so folded and nice. In some periods of my life, it looks like a mess, like now, for example. But I decided not to fix it. Because I don't think that this is who I am right now, you know, and that's fine. And if other people can relate to that and understand that they're good as they are, and they're not a mess because of that...And like these are the clothes that I like to wear, and I feel comfortable in them then somebody else also can relate to that.

Anna sees her wardrobe as a reflection of the various stages of her life. She feels the space lives and breathes with her day-to-day, reflecting her current reality and accurately reflecting the type of individual she wishes to present. Although Anna had a more positive response about her wardrobe, as it was previously discussed, many individuals were very hesitant to show me their wardrobes and apologized profusely for their current state. We animate a variety of social selves that are distinctive from each other and have distinctive appearances and manners.¹⁹² The existential self is the performer needing to maintain an “ideal” presentation of the self and the wardrobe. As mentioned in the previous section, the body's biological functions can interfere with the existential self and the wardrobe due to busy schedules. Either we are tired, or have other priorities that lead to disorganization usually presented in our wardrobes, such as Anna describes. Compared to the front stage that is very polished and carefully crafted, the backstage is usually its opposite. It is a place typically un-organised and accustomed to preparation. The wardrobe as a backstage reflection of who we are when no one is watching can be provoking. A polished and well-presented version of an individual is what is “ideally” expected within social contexts. If the actor has presented a

¹⁹² Dan Krier, "Sociological Theory: A Skeleton Key to Goffman's Presentation of Self in Everyday Life", YouTube video, 37:22, August 21, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wr5MM9_kd8E.

self that is different from what is reflected in their wardrobes, this can be interpreted as false to the audience.

The wardrobe contains clothing for distinctive roles and occasions. Showing the material possessions we use to animate our different selves exposes the various social roles we play. Until the wardrobe is curated in a way deemed appropriate, then it also avoids a spoiled identity. The wardrobe personifies the owner, thus evoking the need to harbour the sight of the contents within. Referring back to the analogy of the Greek masks, the wardrobe falls into a role that is already pre-made as to what the size should be, the contents and the organization in the moment of its performance when being viewed by others. For example, clothing that was not located in the wardrobe and piled next to the bed or crammed in a bag caused embarrassment and discomfort to the participants. On the other hand, Odette had various locations in the house where she and her husband's clothing is neatly kept. She did not have doors to cover her main wardrobe. As she knew her wardrobe would be on display, she had her seasonal clothing organized and neatly stored as her wardrobe was exposed and needed to be presented in an aesthetically pleasing way.

During the selection of the participants and in the results of the wardrobe studies, I have found that the wardrobe represents the lifestyle and personality of the owner. The wardrobe has a life of its own while simultaneously living and breathing with the owner. The wardrobe can be labelled as organized, messy, sustainable or unsustainable based on our preconceptions of the "ideal" wardrobe. It has been confirmed that the wardrobe is a personal and intimate part of the home and an extension of the owner. Almost all the participants agreed they felt their clothing to be an extended self. Fashion and clothing are embodied practices intrinsically tied to our everyday experiences. As the wardrobe is fundamentally involved in our sartorial practices, rich and vital information has been gathered through the exposure of this intimate and private sphere. Performing wardrobe studies when changes in social interaction are necessary, these changes have created new perspectives and challenged traditional stages. It has been discovered that the wardrobe becomes an object that needs to be performed due to the location in which backstage behaviour that is traditionally accustomed to the area must adopt front stage behaviour and expectations.

Conclusion

This thesis has been devoted to the exploration of yoga clothing through the means of remote wardrobe studies during the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has altered our everyday lives forcing us to reassess and view matters in a different light. The pandemic has also exemplified the popularity of athleisurewear and sports clothing immersing into everyday fashion. Through online observational fieldwork, I conducted remote wardrobe studies with participants from around Northern Europe. This thesis has investigated yoga clothing in the wardrobe of individuals who practice yoga. It has been confirmed how yoga, clothing and the body are intrinsically connected through observations collected from the participants. Looking into an individual's wardrobe and their yoga experience explored yoga clothing and the body as an embodied practice.

The preface chapter of my thesis answered my research question of how yoga clothing contributes to the wardrobe. The space the yoga clothing occupied allowed me to see the importance of various clothing in the participants' lives in comparison to their sports and yoga clothing and how this reflects their personalities and lifestyle. Furthermore, I was also able to touch upon the difference between the men and women's relationship to their bodies and their appearance to conclude that both were very aware of how they were viewed by others affecting their outfit choices. Although there was not a detailed, in-depth analysis as I only had two men in my study, I believe the findings are noteworthy and can inspire future investigations on the matter.

The first chapter of my thesis concentrated on exploring my second research question of how yoga clothes are part of an embodied practice. The clothes and the wardrobe become an embodiment of the owner where a relationship is developed over time and is determined and felt by the body in a spatiotemporal circumstance. The sentimental items of the participants confirm the attachment we develop for our material possessions through memories and sentiments and gives stance to the yoga clothes. It was discovered the yoga clothing becomes one with the body reflecting and expressing the mood of the participants. The effects of clothing can only be known by exploring their lived experience through the body. Clothing without the body is incomplete as when the two merge, a marriage between nature and culture is made where life for the object becomes possible. The clothing is animated in a yoga practice confirming the very intimate and personal relationship between clothing and the body. This was further exemplified by looking at the collection of clothing stored in the wardrobe, the nature of which contains a very intimate

setting. The yoga lifestyle and sustainability from the participant's point of view were also discussed in this chapter, demonstrating the significance of the wardrobe in these concepts.

The second chapter of my thesis answered how performativity (utilizing Goffman's perspective) plays into yoga at home versus online or in-person group yoga classes—using these as examples illustrated the world as a stage by showing how beings need to perform when an audience is present. Goffman's theory of dramaturgy was used to describe the decisions made behind picking yoga clothes and how the wardrobe is presented as a whole. This chapter further illuminated the relationship the participants had to their clothing and allowed deeper clarification of the spatiality of their sartorial practices. Yoga clothing has the power to emphasize the performative aspect of individuals in a society where different roles are demanded to be performed on specific stages through the example of what self is present and what is worn at home alone versus online or in-person yoga. This performative aspect is in a similar manner reflected onto the wardrobe where initially situated in a distinct private environment has been brought centre stage, evoking various emotions and responses from the participants presented in this thesis. Clothing plays an essential role and is intrinsically intertwined in the believability and success of an actor's performance. It was also demonstrated how the wardrobe is an extension of the owner and an object that performs.

The method of remote wardrobe studies allowed the uncovering of themes and findings presented by the participants. Conducting online ethnographical fieldwork enabled me to observe and understand the participants despite the current circumstances. Viewing the wardrobes online allowed me to access the participants' belongings in a way that heightened the experience. Although I could not physically hold the items, I could see their details and composition. Without the participants physically feeling my presence standing next to them while I analyse their wardrobes and clothing allowed for a more relaxed setting and more authentic responses. Furthermore, by incorporating affect studies through Lucia Ruggerone, it was necessary to keep in mind the dynamic dimensional effect of the clothing to investigate the clothes as an embodied aspect of the owners and their active presence in the wardrobe.

The theoretical perspective of Goffman's dramaturgy allowed me to position my role as a researcher viewing the wardrobe as a performance. This allowed me to grasp the themes and principles shown to me through the studies. The wardrobe and the space in which we live have become more exposed to the eyes of others during the pandemic. Through Goffman's reasoning of

humans as performers, the wardrobe has also been established as a performer needing to fulfil a particular role for the audience. Yoga at home has transformed into online yoga classes matching the visibility and social sphere of in-person yoga sessions. The participants had different reactions to their clothing and bodies when they were alone compared to when they were in the presence of others. Analysing the occupation of yoga clothing in the wardrobe has revealed elements of embodiment and performativity. Using an object such as a pair of yoga pants can show us how we relate to the clothing in our wardrobes and serve as an example to demonstrate that we are actors constantly performing. Through my study, I explored why the wardrobe is a private area and why clothing and where it is stored is also a sensitive topic. Goffman's analogy of life as theatre demonstrated how the exposure of oneself that is not in line with an expected social role causes disruption and embarrassment. Furthermore, in the time of a pandemic where traditional stages have been altered, it has allowed for the exploration of new territories evoking changes in attire and social interaction.

This thesis contributes to fashion studies and wardrobe studies by exploring sportswear, specifically yoga clothing, in the wardrobe. A light was shone upon the cramped sports drawers of individuals to uncover the personal relationship created within the scope of physical activities and how this relationship varies in personal and social contexts. My usage of a remote wardrobe study hopefully encourages efforts of exploration to be made on regular clothing such as sportswear and to understand further the importance of the wardrobe in material culture and fashion studies. My work has demonstrated the potential for digital and remote wardrobe studies while expanding research focused on sportswear such a yoga clothing in the wardrobe in relationship to the body. Yoga as an embodied practice connected to dress can inspire future research projects to focus on the relationship between clothing and the body to explore why and how clothing is used. The materiality of clothing can help us understand the micro-dynamics of quotidian life by developing future wardrobe studies concentrating on specific categories of everyday clothing. On a final note, research projects implementing the study of men's wardrobes and their relationship to their clothing can serve to enrich and expand the field.

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List of Illustrations

IMAGES

All pictures within the body of the thesis were provided by the participants

COVER IMAGE

Alo Yoga (@aloyoga). Instagram channel. Accessed May 24, 2021.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/CMcuS8xDEki/>

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