

# THE POWER OF APPEARANCE

Self-expression through clothing behind bars

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## Abstract

**Thesis Title:** THE POWER OF APPEARANCE - Self-expression through clothing behind bars

This paper investigates how the American contra Scandinavian prison system relate to prison clothing. Furthermore, it discusses the history of prison uniform and how prison uniform connects to identity. With the end goal of examining whether prison clothing contributes to the ever so nourished discourse, in which clothing is simply described as part of vanity. The research conducted is a direct result of my studies at both Lund University and UCLA. Combined with the mentorship of UCLA Prison Education Program and UCLA Art and Global Health Centre.

**Keywords:** Identity, Possessions, Self-expression, Incarceration, Individual, Prison-system, Clothing, UCLA, American, Scandinavian, Sweden, Norway, Denmark

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## Tabel of Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>3</b>
1.1 Theory .....	4
1.2 Methodology .....	5
1.3 Presentation of Informants .....	7
1.4 Purpose and Question Formulations .....	8
1.5 Material and Academical constraints .....	8
1.6 Previous Research and Current scientific basis.....	9
1.7 Disposition .....	11
<b>Research Analysis</b> .....	<b>11</b>
2.1 The American contra Scandinavian approach to prison life .....	12
2.2 Clothing behind bars .....	14
2.3 Uniform of an officer .....	14
2.4 Prison wear - Scandinavia .....	17
2.5 Prison wear - America .....	20
3. The evolution of prison uniform .....	23
4. Personal Observations - My encounter with the American prison system .....	25
4.1 Dress code inside- Women and staff.....	26
5. Possible effects of assigning prison wear.....	28
<b>Discussion</b> .....	<b>31</b>
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>37</b>
<b>Attachments &amp; Appendix</b> .....	<b>40</b>
<b>Sources</b> .....	<b>44</b>



## Introduction

I first encountered the American prison system via a collaboration between the UCLA Art and Global Health Centre and the UCLA Prison Education Program. At the time, I was a student at the World Arts and Cultures department, and I had just enrolled in my first ever class at UCLA. This being the Introduction to world arts and cultures. A class simultaneously thought inside a Californian federal prison. As part of the class, the outside students had the opportunity to meet the students on the inside. This intricate encounter not only brought me inside an all-female American federal prison. It also allowed me to learn aside my fellow incarcerated classmates and hear their testimonies of life behind bars. Their graceful and courageous contributions have been of immense personal value in order to further understand the American prison system. On December 8, 2021, I walked through the prison doors at the facility.

I still remember meeting my incarcerated classmates for the very first time. I'm a firm believer in transparency and will therefore be the first to admit that being brought up in Sweden had shaped and coloured my view of the prison system. Initially I was quite reserved. I wondered how I would ever be able to connect or contribute to the class. How would my fashion and fine art studies ever so remotely apply? Little did I know that I would soon learn that me and my classmates had more in common than I ever could have imagined. This became highly apparent during our in-person meeting inside the prison facility. Even though the women had the highest form of restrictions regarding their clothing. They had gone out of their way to "dress up" for our encounter. Whether it was through self-made makeup, braided hairstyles, or adaptations to their assigned clothing. The women had by their own means immersed themselves in self-expression. I couldn't help but wonder if I had just experienced the epiphany of vanity. Or if I had encountered the fundamental opposite.



## 1.1 Theory

This study is based on the theory of Russell. W Belk in which Belk states that our possessions are an extension of ourselves.<sup>1</sup> In *The position of the extended self*, Belk writes as follows.

A key to understanding what possessions mean is recognizing that, knowingly or unknowingly, intention-ally or unintentionally, we regard our possessions as parts of ourselves.<sup>2</sup>

Belk clearly states that our belongings are to be viewed as extensions of ourselves.<sup>3</sup> Meaning that we as humans view ourselves through our possessions.<sup>4</sup> This could for example be through the house we live in, through the cars we drive or through the clothing we choose to dress our bodies in.<sup>5</sup> Belk states that the idea of our belongings being an extension of our self's is commonly viewed as a "universal human belief".<sup>6</sup> Objects can, according to Belk, both literally and symbolically extend the human self.<sup>7</sup> For example, Belk states that owning material tools, can help humans master skills that they otherwise would be incapable of.<sup>8</sup> Allowing them to attach these skills to their personality.<sup>9</sup> Clothing or uniforms can either separate or create a sense of belonging. The items we possess can further convey that we are "something" or "someone".<sup>10</sup> Belk continues that our possessions are extensions of who we are and who we desire to be in the world.<sup>11</sup> Our possessions are tied to our identity as individuals.<sup>12</sup> To conclude, Belk states that our possessions reach beyond financial value and to a certain degree signalizes our core identity.<sup>13</sup> So, if this is in fact reality. What happens when the access to personal possessions is heavily restricted? When the power to self-express through, these items are taken away? Belk explains that since possessions are viewed as an extension of oneself. It is only natural that unintentional or unwanted loss of such possessions entails a lessening of oneself.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Belk, Russell, W. (1998) *Possessions and the Extended Self*. Journal of Consumer Research. p. 139-142.

<sup>2</sup> Belk (1998) p.142-143

<sup>3</sup> Belk (1998) p.139-143

<sup>4</sup> Belk (1998) p.139-143

<sup>5</sup> Belk (1998) p.139-143

<sup>6</sup> Belk (1998) p.144

<sup>7</sup> Belk (1998) p.145-146

<sup>8</sup> Belk (1998) p.140-146

<sup>9</sup> Belk (1998) p.145-147

<sup>10</sup> Belk (1998) p.144-146

<sup>11</sup> Belk (1998) p.143

<sup>12</sup> Belk (1998) p.143

<sup>13</sup> Belk (1998) p.139-143

<sup>14</sup> Belk (1998) p.139-143



In addition to Belk's theory of the extended self and unwanted loss of possessions. Jennifer Craik's theory of prison uniforms being a complex field of study has been applied within my research. In *Uniforms exposed from conformity to transgression* Craik states that the research on uniform seldom follows a linear path and is many times of duplex nature.<sup>15</sup> According to Craik, the garment is heavily associated with individual interaction and experiences.<sup>16</sup> Adding to this theory Craik also lists semiotics as an important factor for how assigned clothing is perceived and experienced.<sup>17</sup>

Furthermore, the theory of Yuniya Kawamura have been adapted. In which Kawamura heavily argues that fashion should be considered an academic discipline. In her book *Doing research on fashion and dress, an introduction to qualitative methods* Kawamura states that fashion is an interdisciplinary field that reaches beyond shallowness and includes various topics such as identity and self-expression.<sup>18</sup> Kawamura explains that once we understand and recognise that fashion studies is conducted in a far more complex way than simply through fashion magazines, we begin to enjoy its meaningful contributions.<sup>19</sup> Ultimately concluding that fashion and clothing is of a highly complex nature.

## 1.2 Methodology

The study has been conducted based on a qualitative method. In which interviews with 10 informants have been conducted. All either working within the American and Scandinavian prison system or formerly incarcerated. These individuals have firsthand experience tied to prison clothing. Their graceful contributions and willingness to share their stories are the true building blocks of this paper. Together my informants have served as a focus group in order to best answer my core questions. In a perfect world, where research was free to conduct. I would preferably have featured far more voices from behind bars. However, given the restrictions tied to conducting interviews and research behind bars. I consider myself lucky to be able to feature two voices within this paper. In addition to these voices, I have purposely filled my focus group with two contributions from individuals who have previous experience of incarceration. To

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<sup>15</sup> Craik, Jennifer. (2005) *Uniforms exposed from conformity to transgression*. Berg. New York. p.3–5

<sup>16</sup> Craik (2005) p.3–5

<sup>17</sup> Craik (2005) p.4–5

<sup>18</sup> Kawamura, Yuniya (2014) *Doing research on fashion and dress, an introduction to qualitative methods*. Bloomsbury Publishing Inc. London.p.10-11

<sup>19</sup> Kawamura (2014) p.14



ultimately complete my research with contributions from informants who shares the experience of working behind bars. Ultimately creating a diverse yet insightful and experienced focus group. Although similar questions have been asked or answered all around the group, the interview methods have sometimes differed. The information provided by my incarcerated informants, heavily rely on what they were allowed to share with me during our interaction on the 8 of December 2021. During which I personally conducted observations at an undisclosed Californian Federal Prison facility. I have done so with the empirical method of field notes and observation schedules. (See appendix 1-2). During my visit I was not allowed to freely ask questions. All material had to be preapproved by the prison. I was however allowed to observe and interact without asking personal questions. Meaning that everything my informants decided to share with me, became all the more essential to add to my field notes and observations. (See appendix 1-2)<sup>20</sup> In conclusion, the information provided on the 8 of December 2021 ley heavily on my own observations and the personal statements made by the informants. Meanwhile I was far freer in terms of asking questions and following a structured interview method during the rest my research. During these interviews were constructed with the help of Patrik Aspers *Etnografiska metoder- Att förstå och förklara samtiden.*<sup>21</sup> Nine out of 10 interviews were conducted in English and has therefor been transcribed in their entirety. (See attachment 2)<sup>22</sup> Apart from the interview with Karl, in which the Karl was asked the same questions as the rest of the informants. Although the questions were asked in Swedish. Karls answers were later transcribed and translated from Swedish to English.

To further add to the testimonies of my informants the Swedish public service documentary *Fängelseexperimentet Little Scandinavia* have been reviewed and analysed. Further featuring the voices of both members of staff and individuals directly affected by incarceration. All participants residing either within the Scandinavian or American prison system.

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<sup>20</sup> Appendix 1-2 page

<sup>21</sup> Aspers, Patrik. (2012) *Etnografiska metoder- Att förstå och förklara samtiden*. Talboks och Punktskrifts Biblioteket. [E-Book] Stockholm. p.139–158

<sup>22</sup> Attachment 2 page



### 1.3 Presentation of informants

All individuals mentioned by name within this paper, have granted their approval. To respect the privacy and honour the bravery of my formerly incarcerated and incarcerated informants. Their identity will maintain anonymous, and their experiences will be shared under pseudonyms.

#### Informants:

**Claudia Peña** - The Founding Co-Director of the Centre of Justice at UCLA

*Interview conducted 29 June 2023*

**Hans-Petter Jacobsen** - Prison Inspector Agder Prison Norway

*Interview conducted 21 July 2023*

**Ivar S. Jensen** - Prison Officer Bergen Prison Norway

*Interview conducted 21 July 2023*

**Rosie Rios** - Managing Director at UCLA Prison Education Program.

*Interview conducted 3 August 2023*

**Thorbjörn Åberg** - Senior Administrator Prison and Probation Service Norrköping Sweden

*Interview conducted 19 June 2023*

**Tina Paust Christensen** - HR consultant at the Prison and Probation Service of Hobro Denmark

Formerly incarcerated informants:

**Amanda**, 34, American prison system

*Interview conducted 8 May 2023*

**Karl**, 33, Scandinavian prison system

*Interview conducted 28 June 2023*

#### Incarcerated Informants:

**Michelle**, American prison system

*Interview conducted 8 December 2021*

**Sofia**, American prison system

*Interview conducted 8 December 2021*





## 1.4 Purpose and Question formulations

The purpose of this paper is to contribute to the already existing field of research, that investigates how humans relate to clothing and self-expression. By examining what happens when humans are restricted from actively choosing their own clothing, I hope to distinguish and describe the correlation between clothing and essential human needs. Such as desire. This is done with the hope and determination that we will one day witness the defeat of the ever so well-nourished discourse, where clothing is simply reduced to vanity and shallowness. Within this paper I aim to examine how the Scandinavian and American prison system relates to uniforms worn by prison staff and incarcerated individuals. I also aim to further describe the history of prison clothing. While also highlighting possible effects of assigned, restricted or freely adapted clothing behind bars. To do so I have adapted the following core questions.

1. How does the American contra Scandinavian prison system relate to prison clothing?
2. What are the possible effects of using prison clothing within the Scandinavian and American Prison system?
3. Is it possible to say that self-expression through clothing reaches beyond the borders of vanity?

## 1.5 Material and Academical constraints

Juliet Ash's book *Dress Behind Bars: Prison Clothing as Criminality* served an intricate roll for this paper. I have also used Jennifer Craik's *Uniform Exposed*. In addition to listed literature, the SVT documentary *Fängelseexperimentet Little Scandinavia* have been closely reviewed and analysed. The official webpages of each Scandinavian countries Prison and Probation Service, Harvard Political Review, and the official webpage of UCLA Prison Education Program, have been used as sources of information. Furthermore, the interviews conducted with my 10 informants have been of immense value.

Taking into consideration the framework, length, and scope of a bachelor's thesis. I have made the decision to focus solely on facilities within the American and Scandinavian prison system. When I use the term Scandinavia in this paper, I am referring to Norway, Denmark, and Sweden. I have purposely made this constraint as these are the same three Scandinavian countries featured in *Fängelseexperimentet Little Scandinavia*. It is essential to mention that although Scandinavia tends to be unanimous or share ideological viewpoints regarding



incarceration. Some aspects might still vary within the Scandinavian system, given the fact that Scandinavia consist of several detached countries. I'm reserving the right to underline that although this research may be applicable to various facilities within the American and Scandinavian prison system. It might not be true for all prison systems around the globe. However, the research might align and be applicable to other areas of society where unchosen restriction tied to clothing exists. I also would like to reserve the right to not disclose at what facility I conducted the personal observation for this paper. This decision is first and foremost made to maintain the privacy of my inside peers. In addition to the privacy aspect, I want to honour the delicate nature that abolition work entails. I also did have to sign a non-disclosure agreement before entering the facility. This prohibits me from discussing aspects that might harm the facility. To conclude, there are some constrains made, regarding the empirical material conducted from my personal observations. Since it is strictly forbidden to bring any sort of recording or electronical device inside. I have made an active choice to base my observations solely on personal notes and observation schedules.

## 1.6 Previous Research and Current scientific basis

Conducting research behind bars is associated with extreme and extensive paperwork. It is a heavy workload to take on. I can only imagine how many research initiatives that have been forced to end before they even begun, due to extensive bureaucracy. Maybe this is one of many reasons why the research on clothing and self-expression within the prison system is so heavily restricted. The field does however have crucial pioneers. One of these pioneers is Juliet Ash. Who discusses the limitations surrounding self-expression behind bars in her book *Dress Behind Bars: Prison Clothing as Criminality*. Ash describes the history and concept behind prison clothing. Ash also describes that prison uniform is separated from other type of institutional clothing or uniforms in general. Since "standardised clothing operates within the ideological parameters of formality in the social world. Prison clothing does not."<sup>23</sup> Prison wear is also one of the few existing garments that doesn't abide to the rules of design or consumption.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Ash, Juliet. (2009) *Dress Behind Bars*. Bloomsbury Publishing. Available at: <https://www.perlego.com/book/919462/dress-behind-bars-prison-clothing-as-criminality-pdf> (Accessed: 11 August 2023) Introduction Unravelling Prison Clothing section. Para. 3

<sup>24</sup> Ash (2009) Introduction Unravelling Prison Clothing section. Para. 3



It is relevant to mention that although self-expression through clothing tied to incarceration might be limited. The research field tied to self-expression through clothing in general, is sufficiently well nourished. Research conducted on life behind bars, not only serves as an academical field of study through sociology and abolition research. It also continues to both fascinate and repel, as a recurring phenomenon in pop culture.

Author and activist Angela Davis has heavily influenced the field of abolition work. The book *Abolition Democracy* is based on a collection of conducted interviews with Davis. Featuring her voice and opinions on abolition work and the American prison system. In *Abolition Democracy* it is stated that even though America is bound by law not to use torture.<sup>25</sup> Punitive measures are heavily adapted behind bars within the American prison system.<sup>26</sup> Often featuring dehumanizing and degrading approaches such as violence and brutality towards its incarcerated individuals.<sup>27</sup> Davis further describes how these approaches tends to be disguised under the slogan of “Public Safety”.<sup>28</sup> However Davis suggests that such measurements are instead often rooted in slavery and colonization.<sup>29</sup>

Mike Featherstone writes in *Lifestyle and consumer culture* that “One’s body, clothes, speech, leisure, pastimes, eating and drinking preferences, home, car, choice of holiday etc., are to be regarded as indicators of the individuality of taste and sense of style of the consumer/customer.”<sup>30</sup> Featherstone’s description is second by the philosopher Lars Fr. Svendsen. Svendsen also describes how humans have a natural desire towards self-expression in his book *Mode- En filosofisk Essä*.<sup>31</sup> Svendsen describes how humans have adapted a desire to achieve and express a higher sense of self.<sup>32</sup> This desire results in a need for individual self-expression. To ultimately differentiate from collectiveness<sup>33</sup> Svendsen’s portrayal is shared by George Simmel. However, Simmel describes in *Modets filosofi* that the concept of self-

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<sup>25</sup> Davis, Angela. (2019) *Abolition Democracy*. Seven Stories Press. New York. [E-book] p. 113

<sup>26</sup> Davis (2019) p.113

<sup>27</sup> Davis (2019) p.113

<sup>28</sup> Davis (2019) p.113

<sup>29</sup> Davis (2019) p.32-33

<sup>30</sup> Featherstone, Mike, (2000) *Lifestyle and Consumer Culture*, part of: *The Consumer Society Reader*, Martyn J. Lee. Malden: Blackwell Publishers. p. 92

<sup>31</sup> Svendsen, Lars Fr (2004). *Mode - En filosofisk Essä*. Nya Doxa. p. 139–141

<sup>32</sup> Svendsen (2004) p.139–141

<sup>33</sup> Svendsen (2004) p.139–141



expression bares dual meaning.<sup>34</sup> Self-expression indicates both a desire to belong and differentiate from societal collectiveness.<sup>35</sup>

## 1.7 Disposition

This paper is divided into 3 parts. In which 3 core questions are targeted. Through the initial part of the paper, I have conducted a compilation and report of the interviews conducted with my 10 informants. Within this segment, focus lay on investigating the history and possible effects of prison wear. I also examine how the Scandinavian and American prison system relates to prison wear. The words and opinions of my informants have been portrayed via quotes and statements. A lengthier part of Claudia Peña interview, in which Peña describes her own experience with assigned clothing, has been transcribed and presented in its entirety. This conscious stylistic choice has been made to showcase that the discourse surrounding assigned clothing is often complex and seldom linear. The initial segment is followed by a discussion tied to the testimonies of my informants. The discussion provides an analysis on how these testimonies relate to one another. The discussion also targets how the testimonies of my informants align with previous research on the topic of clothing and identity. Lastly, I have offered a reflection on what the testimonies of my informants, means for clothing as a concept and construction. Ultimately concluding whether it is possible to assign clothing with value that reaches beyond the borders of vanity.

## 2. Research Analysis

In the words of Herbert Spencer, often referred to as the man who coined Darwin's famous phrase "survival of the fittest":

*In order to understand either dress or fashion it is necessary to go back to their origins in the crude institutions of that first social order.* <sup>36</sup>

Spencer highlights that before one can understand the concept of prison wear, one must first recognise the systems assigning its clothing. It is therefore of value to not only understand the

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<sup>34</sup> Simmel, George (2012) *Modets filosofi. Part of Aesthesis Estetikens historia del 1*. Sara Danius, Cecilia Sjöholm and Sven-Olov Wallenstein. Stockholm. Thales. p. 510–520

<sup>35</sup> Simmel (2012) p.513

<sup>36</sup> Carter. Michael. (2003) *Fashion Classics from Carlyle to Barthes*. Berg. New York. p.25



Scandinavian and American prison system of today. It is also necessary to dive into the history of both systems. To further investigate how prison wear have been adapted over time.

## 2.1 The American Contra Scandinavian approach to prison life

During my research I have encountered two very different approaches to life behind bars. One being the American approach, where focus ley heavily on punitive measurements.<sup>37</sup> According to Harvard Political Review America incarcerate more people per capita than any other nation worldwide.<sup>38</sup> In the end of 2020 America had over 1.8 million individuals behind bars.<sup>39</sup> The country also battles some of the highest recidivism rates on the planet, and the statistics doesn't stop there. According to the SVT documentary *Fängelseexperimentet little Scandinavia*, the average lifespan of a correctional officer in America is below 60 years old, and the level of PTSD within the workforce is sufficiently high.<sup>40</sup> Showcasing both a physical and mental toll for both incarcerated individuals and staff. To further understand the American prison system and its fundamental concept behind assigning incarcerated individuals prison uniforms. I conducted an interview with the Founding Co-Director of the Centre of Justice at UCLA, Miss Claudia Peña. Peña not only Co- Founded the Centre of Justice at UCLA. She has first-hand experience in how the American Prison system operates today, via her work as a professor both on the outside as well as on the inside of various prison facilities in America. When asked to describe the American prison system and its effects on personal identity. Peña states as follows.

*One of the purposes with the prison system in the United States is to completely dehumanize people who are incarcerated. One step to dehumanizing folks is by taking away personal identity. There are so many aspects of personal identity that are removed. For example, the way people are referred to is often by their number. Sometimes it's by their last name with very little regard for first names. Individualized items are limited, the kind of things that you can keep with you or the kind of things that you can use to decorate your cell, or your living aria can be very limited. And of course, because, most people who are incarcerated, in a prison in*

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<sup>37</sup> Lindh, Tomas. Stark, Johan. (Directors). (2023). *Fängelseexperimentet-Little Scandinavia*. Episode: 1 [The prison experiment-Little Scandinavia]. [Documentary]. SVT. *Fängelseexperimentet Little Scandinavia* | SVT Play).

<sup>38</sup> Benecchi, Liz. Harvard Political Review. (2023) Recidivism Imprisons American Progress. <https://harvardpolitics.com/recidivism-american-progress/>

<sup>39</sup> Harvard Political Review. (2023)

<sup>40</sup> *Fängelseexperimentet Little Scandinavia* (2023). Episode 1.



*the United States have to wear a uniform, there is very little flexibility towards individual expression.*<sup>41</sup>

-Claudia Peña

Peña's portrayal of the American prison system is shared by Rosie Rios, Managing Director of UCLA Prison Education Program. When asked about the American prison system and how it relates to personal identity. Rios conveys.

*Some people say the system is broken but I know that it is doing exactly what it was designed to do. It is based on punishment and not rehabilitation or transformation. When people go through the system they are affected mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.*<sup>42</sup>

-Rosie Rios

Rios touches upon a phrase that is heavily associated with the American prison system. This being that the system is broken. Rios actively disagrees with this statement. She instead suggests that the American system is serving its purpose to break down individual identity to the fullest.

The second approach presented, has been the Scandinavian approach. Through which the incarceration itself is viewed as the core punishment.<sup>43</sup> Meaning that even though an individual might be serving a sentence, the individual doesn't necessarily lose their human rights.<sup>44</sup> The punishment is the separation from everyday life on the outside.<sup>45</sup> Within this approach the term "The Normalcy Aspect" is often used.<sup>46</sup> A principle in which rehabilitation and re-socialising efforts are adapted to life behind bars.<sup>47</sup> Contrary to America, Scandinavia sees some of the lowest recidivism rates in the world. According to the Kriminalomsorgen (Eng.transl. The Prison and Probation Service of Norway) Norway sees a steady recidivism rate of around 20

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<sup>41</sup> Interview Peña, Claudia-29 June 2023

<sup>42</sup> Interview Rios, Rosie- 3 August 2023

<sup>43</sup> Fängelseexperimentet Little Scandinavia (2023). Episode 1.

<sup>44</sup> Fängelseexperimentet Little Scandinavia (2023). Episode 1.

<sup>45</sup> Fängelseexperimentet Little Scandinavia (2023). Episode 1.

<sup>46</sup> Fängelseexperimentet Little Scandinavia (2023). Episode 1.

<sup>47</sup> Fängelseexperimentet Little Scandinavia (2023). Episode 1.





percent within 2 years from prison release.<sup>48</sup> Meanwhile according to Harvard Political Review, America sees around 50 percent of inmates reincarcerated within a similar timeframe.<sup>49</sup>

## 2.2 Clothing behind bars

In the documentary *Fängelsexperimentet Little Scandinavia*, a documentary in three-parts, produced by the Swedish public service network SVT. The warden and correctional officers of SCI Chester Prison are invited to Scandinavia. To observe the Scandinavian penal model. These observations are conducted as part of a collaboration between SCI Chester, Drexel University and University of Oslo.<sup>50</sup> To further investigate if the Scandinavian approach could be applicable to the American Prison system.<sup>51</sup>

## 2.3 Uniform of an officer

In the first episode of *Fängelsexperimentet Little Scandinavia* the warden and correctional officers of SCI Chester arrive at KRUS (Eng transl. The Norwegian College and Education Centre of Prison and Probation Services).<sup>52</sup> During this episode both Norwegian and SCI Chester correctional officers are wearing their assigned uniform.<sup>53</sup>



Figure 1. SCI Chester & Swedish Officers

The uniforms slightly vary in terms of colour. The Norwegian uniform features black and blue colours.<sup>54</sup> This colour palate is widely adapted throughout the Scandinavian prison system. Sweden and Denmark use similar colours for



Figure 2. Emblem of Pennsylvania

<sup>48</sup> Kristoffersen, Ragnar. (2022) Correctional Statistics of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden 2016-2020. [PDF]Kriminalomsorgen.file:///C:/Users/osusa/Downloads/Nordic+Statistics+2016\_2020\_final%20(2).pdf

<sup>49</sup>Harvard Political Review. (2023)

<sup>50</sup> Fängelsexperimentet Little Scandinavia (2023). Episode 1.

<sup>51</sup> Fängelsexperimentet Little Scandinavia (2023). Episode 1.

<sup>52</sup> Fängelsexperimentet Little Scandinavia (2023). Episode 1.

<sup>53</sup> Fängelsexperimentet Little Scandinavia (2023). Episode 1.

<sup>54</sup> Fängelsexperimentet Little Scandinavia (2023). Episode 1.



their assigned uniform (see figure 1, 6 & 7).<sup>55</sup> Meanwhile the American uniform of SCI Chester has adapted military colours such as khaki and black (see figure 1)<sup>56</sup> Yet while comparing the Scandinavian uniform to the SCI Chester uniform, more similar attributes than distinctive differences can be found. Unanimous attributes being button up shirts, either long sleeved or short sleeved. Paired with the button up shirt, is a set of durable long pants and close toe shoes. In some cases, officers have access to polo shirts. However, the button up shirt is what is most frequently featured within both systems in the SVT documentary.<sup>57</sup> Each officer's shirt has an embroidery patch showcasing the department, under which the officer serves.<sup>58</sup> In America, the embroidery varies from state to state. In the SVT documentary SCI Chesters officers can therefore be seen carrying the patch of Pennsylvania (see figure 2).<sup>59</sup> In Scandinavia the embroidery is exclusive for each Scandinavian country (see figure 3-5).<sup>60</sup> Norway and Denmark also use shoulder flaps, through which the officers job title is highlighted. According to Ivar S. Jensen, prison officer of Bergen Prison in Norway. Norwegian prison officers wear black shoulder patches with one gold star.<sup>61</sup> Senior officers are further awarded with gold stripes on their patches, in addition to their initial star.<sup>62</sup> Shoulder patches



Figure 3. Emblem of Norway



Figure 4. Emblem of Sweden



Figure 5 Emblem of Denmark

<sup>55</sup> Kriminalvården. (2022) *Kriminalvårdare från USA besöker Kumla*. <https://blogg.kriminalvarden.se/alla-inlagg/2022/maj/kriminalvardare-fran-usa-besoker-kumla/> (collected 2023-08-14)

Kriminalforsorgen. *Betjentuddannelsen*. (2023). <https://www.kriminalforsorgen.dk/>

Kriminalomsorgen. *Albums*. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/kriminalomsorgen/albums/> (collected 2023-08-14)

<sup>56</sup> Kriminalvården. (2022)

<sup>57</sup> Fängelseexperimentet Little Scandinavia (2023). Episode 1-3.

<sup>58</sup> Fängelseexperimentet Little Scandinavia (2023). Episode 1.

<sup>59</sup> Pennsylvania Department of Corrections. *NEC's Smart Workspace provides instantaneous communication for safety and security*. Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (PADOC): Case Studies | NEC (Collected 2023-08-15)

<sup>60</sup> Kriminalvården. (2022) Kriminalforsorgen (2023) Kriminalomsorgen (2023)

<sup>61</sup> Interview Jensen. S, Ivar- 21 July 2023

<sup>62</sup> Interview Jensen - 21 July 2023





of Norwegian prison inspectors also features gold stripes, but instead of the one star, patches are embellished with three.<sup>63</sup> Meanwhile in Denmark the shoulder flaps of a prison officer are embellished with two stars and a crown.<sup>64</sup> On the SCI Chester uniform the American flag has been attached to the shirt of the uniform.<sup>65</sup> Indicating that the officers serve the country. Jennifer Craik describes in *Uniforms exposed from conformity to transgression* that badges and embroideries are adapted to embody the “rank, function and power” that an individual possesses.<sup>66</sup> Craik highlights that this type of uniform [in which status is portrayed via badges etc] is a radical way of insinuating the expected behaviour of the individual wearing the uniform.<sup>67</sup> Wearing this type of uniform also insinuates the position that the bearers hold in relation to others around them.<sup>68</sup> Craik’s description is shared by Angela Davis. In *Abolition Democracy* Davis raises concern about how the clothing of staff within law enforcement could be of a problematic nature. According to Davis, the garment is charged with such authority, that it places the guards in a state of detachment from incarcerated individuals.<sup>69</sup> Davis uses the example of strip searches conducted within the American prison system. She further argues that if similar actions were to take place while a guard was wearing personal clothing. It would at best be described as sexual coercion.<sup>70</sup> Ultimately highlighting that the garment is a product of its assigned system.<sup>71</sup>

Figure 6. Danish officer in uniform



Figure 7. Norwegian officers in uniform

<sup>63</sup> Interview Jensen - 21 July 2023

<sup>64</sup> Justitsministeriet (2023) Cirkulære om uniformering af Kriminalforsorgens uniformerede personale (uniformscirkulæret) (Til kriminalforsorgsområderne). [PDF] Kriminalforsorgen. file:///C:/Users/osusa/Downloads/C20180955509.pdf

<sup>65</sup> Fängelseexperimentet Little Scandinavia (2023). Episode 1-3

<sup>66</sup> Craik p.5

<sup>67</sup> Craik p.5

<sup>68</sup> Craik p. 4-5

<sup>69</sup> Davis (2019) p.58

<sup>70</sup> Davis (2019) p.58

<sup>71</sup> Davis (2019) p.58



It's not only physical aspects, such as colours, symbols and badges that unifies or separates the Scandinavian and American uniform. This is made clear during episode one of the SVT documentary. During this episode the officers of SCI Chester are visiting and working inside prisons in Scandinavia. When faced with the question of what core differences the correctional officers would attach to their American contra Scandinavian uniform. Correctional officer Tia Kennery from SCI Chester immediately answers.

*When I get ready in the morning for Chester and I put on my uniform, it puts me in authorial state. It puts me in a state where I go in and say this is what needs to be done! You better do this, you better do that!*<sup>72</sup>

-Tia Kennery

The statement of Kennery indicates that although the uniforms may share similar attributes, Kennery identifies differently while wearing the Scandinavian contra American uniform. Kennery associates her American uniform with authority. Meanwhile she describes her Scandinavian uniform as “more relaxed, more comfortable”.<sup>73</sup>

## 2.4 Prison wear - Scandinavia

Although the Scandinavian countries have adapted a similar approach to life behind bars, and generally apply similar strategies. Such as abiding by the “Normalcy Principle” and focusing on rehabilitation rather than further punishment.<sup>74</sup> Regulations and attitudes towards having incarcerated individuals wear a uniform, differ amongst the Scandinavian countries. According to the official webpage of the Swedish Prison and Probation Service (Aka. Kriminalvården), all individual who are incarcerated at Swedish prisons, must wear clothing assigned by Kriminalvården.<sup>75</sup> No personal items are allowed. Danish prison dress code on the other hand, appear much more lenient. During a scene in the SVT documentary, in which guards from SCI Chester visit the Danish prison facility Enner Mark. Inmate Mazdak can be seen wearing a T-shirt that does not appear to be part of a uniform.<sup>76</sup> The logo on Mazdaks T-shirt has been

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<sup>72</sup> Fängelseexperimentet Little Scandinavia (2023). Episode.1.

<sup>73</sup> Fängelseexperimentet Little Scandinavia (2023). Episode 1.

<sup>74</sup> Fängelseexperimentet Little Scandinavia (2023) Episode.1.

<sup>75</sup> Kriminalvården. 123 frågor. *Kriminalvården*. 2023. <https://www.kriminalvarden.se/om-kriminalvarden/123-fragor/> (collected 2023-07-20)

<sup>76</sup> Fängelseexperimentet Little Scandinavia (2023). Episode.1.



blurred out.<sup>77</sup> Leading me to believe that his t-shirt is in fact a personal item and that it has been censored for safety reasons. The following is confirmed, during an interview with Tina Paust Christensen, HR consultant at the Prison and Probation Service of Hobro Denmark.

*In Denmark we don't have prison clothes. So yes, it is quite correct that the Danish inmates wear their own clothes during their sentence.*<sup>78</sup>

-Tina Paust Christensen

Paust Christensen further explains that although incarcerated individuals at Danish prisons are allowed to wear their own personal items. There are still some internal rules to what an individual can wear while serving a sentence.

*It is slightly different how much clothing (how many pieces) the inmates are allowed to have in their accommodation (cell) during their sentence.*

*There are different internal rules in our institutions.*

*But they all have so much, that they easily can manage for a period of time, and at the same time, they also have access to washing machines and dryer.*

*The inmates are not allowed to wear clothes with back marks on. For example, gang affiliation (HA, Banditos etc.)*

*If they take it to detention centre or prison, it will be deposited and handed over upon release.*

-Tina Paust Christensen

At the Norwegian prison Ila, also featured in the SVT documentary, incarcerated individuals are seen wearing both prints and sports logos on their clothes (see figure 8).<sup>79</sup> Alluding to the fact that Norway aligns with Denmark in terms of allowing inmates to wear personal clothing. My suspicion is confirmed during an interview with Ivar S. Jensen, who states.

*We do not use prison clothing or uniforms for the inmates (only when required in the workshop). We do have some private clothing that we can give or lend out to inmates in some cases. But almost every inmate uses their own clothing.*<sup>80</sup>

-Ivar S. Jensen

While asked if Norwegian prisons have any regulations in terms of clothing worn while incarcerated. Jensen answers in a similar manner as Christiansen.

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<sup>77</sup> Interview Paust Christensen, Tina- 21 June 2023

<sup>78</sup> Interview Paust Christensen- 21 June 2023

<sup>79</sup> Kriminalomsorgen (2023)

<sup>80</sup> Interview Jensen- 21 June 2023.



*There are regulations on how much clothing they can have in their cell, and we take no responsibility for the value of the clothes. There are also regulations that prevents use of criminal symbols.<sup>81</sup>*

-Ivar S. Jensen

In addition to criminal symbols being prohibited within Norwegian prisons. Hans-Petter Jacobsen, Prison Inspector at Norwegian Agder Prison adds that all “clothing with images of drugs or other text and images that may be offensive or motorcycle clubs” are also forbidden within the Norwegian prison system.<sup>82</sup>

In conclusion two out of three Scandinavian countries featured in the SVT documentary allows inmates to wear personal clothing. With little restrictions tied to the items worn on the inside. While faced with the question of why Norwegian and Danish prisons allow individuals to wear personal clothing. Both countries refer to the Scandinavian concept of the “Normalcy Principle”. Highlighting that an individual’s clothing is part of that normalcy that the principle seeks to promote. The only Scandinavian country featured in the SVT documentary, denying access to personal clothing while incarcerated, is Sweden. It is however valuable to mention that although Sweden prohibits use of personal clothing. The Swedish Prison and Probation Service does provide a variety of items to choose from. In an interview conducted with Thorbjörn Åberg, Senior Administrator at the Prison and Probation Service of Norrköping, Sweden. Åberg provides the following list of clothing items provided during incarceration at Swedish prisons. (See figure 9)<sup>83</sup>



Figure 8. Personal clothing inside Norwegian prison

<sup>81</sup> Interview Jensen -21 June 2023.

<sup>82</sup> Interview Jacobsen, Hans-Petter-21 July 2023

<sup>83</sup> Interview Åberg, Thorbjörn- 19 June 2023



Chinos Shorts Sweatpants Sweatshirt T-shirt T-shirt long sleeve Polo shirt Tunic (Woman) Sleeveless top (Woman) Skirt Leggings Sport-shorts Sport T-shirt	Boxers Long underwear Underwear Bra Sport-bra Socks Caps Pyjamas Robes	Fleece jacket Winter jacket Summer jacket Warm hat Mittens scarfs
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Figure. 9 List of clothing provided within the Swedish prison

## 2.5 Prison wear – America

During episode two of *Fångelseexperimentet Little Scandinavia*, the viewer is introduced to life behind bars at SCI Chester. Unlike most Scandinavian countries, individuals incarcerated at SCI Chester seem to completely lack access to personal clothing. During a tour of their shared cell, Richard and Tavon are seen wearing their prison uniforms.<sup>84</sup> The uniform of an incarcerated individual at SCI Chester consists of a copper-brown plain set. Offered is also pants in the same copper-brown colour, paired with a white T-shirt or long sleeve.

(see figure 10 & 11).<sup>85</sup> Footwear consists of white sneakers.<sup>86</sup> There uniforms are clear of any symbols or badges, apart from the word DOC printed in large capitals on the back of some pieces of

Figure. 10 SCI Chester prison uniform



Figure. 11 SCI Chester prison uniform

<sup>84</sup> Fångelseexperimentet Little Scandinavia (2023). Episode 2.

<sup>85</sup> Fångelseexperimentet Little Scandinavia (2023) Episode 2

<sup>86</sup> Fångelseexperimentet Little Scandinavia (2023) Episode.2-3





clothing within the uniform (see figure).<sup>87</sup> DOC standing for “department of corrections”.<sup>88</sup> In *Dress Behind Bars: Prison Clothing as Criminality* Juliet Ash highlights that using the initials of an institution and applying such to prison uniform can be traced back to the 1800.<sup>89</sup> When a common measurement taken was to “brand” incarcerated individuals via their worn uniforms.<sup>90</sup> Ash describes that letters “BO” (The Board of Ordnance) and “HMP” (Her Majesty’s Prison) were adapted to prison wear within the British prisons system during the early 1800.<sup>91</sup> This was done to symbolize that inmates were “property of” a figure, system, or country in authority.<sup>92</sup> During my interview with Peña, Peña describes that the uniforms worn at SCI Chester rings true and represents the norm tied to prison wear within the American Prison System.<sup>93</sup> Peña also reflects upon the possible effects of assigning Incarcerated individuals a prison uniform.



Figure.12 Prison Uniform SCI Chester. DOC

**Ellen:** In what ways can you see restrictions within the clothing that incarcerated people are wearing? Is it the same for all types of facilities in America? Do you always need to wear a uniform, or can this vary from where you are placed?

**Claudia:** *My assumption is that in some of the transition spaces, there are a little more variety in what people could wear. We have prisons in southern California where people are still incarcerated but they are in the last year or*

<sup>87</sup> Fängelsexperimentet Little Scandinavia (2023) Episode.2

<sup>88</sup> Department of corrections Washington state. DOC Terminology and Acronyms. <https://doc.wa.gov/docs/doc-acronyms.pdf> (collected 2023-07-19)

<sup>89</sup> Ash (2009) Chap 1. Para. 9

<sup>90</sup> Ash (2009) Chap 1. Para. 9

<sup>91</sup> Ash (2009) Chap 1. Para. 9

<sup>92</sup> Ash (2009) Chap 1. Para. 9

<sup>93</sup> Interview Peña-29 June 2023



*two of their sentences and they have much more access to re-entry services. From there they would go into house arrest. So, in spaces like that there is a little more variety, like maybe two different colours that people can wear. But certainly, in every other, county jail, state facility or federal facility it is one uniform, same colour, worn all the way around.*

**Ellen:** Is that is from the day you arrive to the day you leave?

***Claudia:** Correct. There are some varieties in shoes. So, people who have access to money or their family can provide with more money. Folks inside often have to pay for what they are wearing. If you can't afford the nicer shoes through the commissary you have to wear the really cheap shoes. So, there is some individuality when it comes to shoes.*

**Ellen:** Ah! So, there is some space for individuality, but it is tied to personal finances?

***Claudia:** yes!*

**Ellen:** Interesting! So, when you are going into the facilities for work or education purposes, in what way is your own clothing restricted and could you tell us about the reasons behind those restrictions?

***Claudia:** Yes! Well, It's interesting its different from a woman's prison to a man's prison. Going into a man's prison there is a lot of concerns, a lot, a lot, a lot, a lot, from my perspective very extreme concern, uncalled for. That men would get sexually aroused by the presence of woman. So, the most restrictions are around the type of clothing that woman could wear. Nothing low cut, no short skirts, no skirts with slits, nothing sleeveless, nothing formfitting, nothing that shows the rear. Skirts have to come well below the knee, nothing see through, no transparent fabric. So, there is this ide that if men see woman dressed in some sort of sexy attire, that men will become uncontrollable. The way that they say it is that women are in risk of being sexually assaulted by the folks in prison. I can't think of one case where I've ever heard of that happening.*

***Claudia:** I did speak to an administrator from the California prison system, and they said that they recognize that their rules are really outdated. Like they were written in the seventies. When there was a much more conservative movement in these spaces.*

*I don't know if that means that they are going to change anything. But so, a lot of those rules are around woman somehow sexually arousing men. Otherwise beyond that, close toed shoes are really important to every single correctional facility just in case something happens. They want to make sure that people can make moves and their feet are protected if stuff falls. Heels are found upon in the prisons that I have gone into, but I do have colleagues mostly lawyers who see their clients and they still wear their heels.*

***Claudia** other restrictions, there is always a colour restriction. You can't wear any colour that is similar to what the people who are incarcerated are wearing, so that you don't get confused with someone who is incarcerated. If there is some sort of situation that goes off while you are there and people have to run in different directions, perhaps an escape is taking place while your there. Witch again I've never heard of one situation where there was an*



*escape taken place (while volunteers visiting). You don't want to be at risk by wearing the same colours as people who are incarcerated. Most facilities have rules against you wearing any sort of sporting attire whatever the local gang-colours are. Anything with a political message would not be allowed. And of course, these are all things they think would inspire some sort of action on behalf of people who are incarcerated. Gang colours might upset people and have them attack folks presumably. There are a lot of sporting teams that can cause division between groups.*<sup>94</sup>

### 3.The evolution of prison uniforms

The research on prison wear isn't linear. According to Craik, it seldom follows a chronological order, and the evolution of prison wear varies dramatically across the globe. Ash further adds that prison uniform differentiates from other areas of clothing. Ash states that "standardised clothing operates within the ideological parameters of formality in the social world."<sup>95</sup> Meanwhile prison wear does not.<sup>96</sup> Prison wear is there for one of few existing garments that doesn't abide to the rules of design or consumption.<sup>97</sup> There is however one aspect that unifies prison clothing according to Ash. This being the history of prison uniform. The garment has a background in serving as an embodiment of punishment, in order to shame, neglect and further deprive inmates of human amenities.<sup>98</sup> Such as comfort against the skin and self-expression of personal identity.<sup>99</sup> Ultimately resulting in lowering the self-esteem and self-worth amongst bearers.<sup>100</sup> Ash describes that modernisation attached to prison wear mostly applies to the western world.<sup>101</sup> Highlighting the fact that close to half of the worlds incarcerated individuals still faces similar neglect as during the early Nineteen century.<sup>102</sup>

However, prison wear has changed during the course of history. The garment has not always resembled what we see in movies and tv-series such as *Orange is the new black*. Ash describes that prison wear can be traced back to the mid-1700s, as part of a streamline in prison reform,

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<sup>94</sup> Interview Peña -29 June 2023

<sup>95</sup> Ash, Juliet. (2009) *Dress Behind Bars*. Bloomsbury Publishing. Available at: <https://www.perlego.com/book/919462/dress-behind-bars-prison-clothing-as-criminality-pdf> (Accessed: 11 August 2023) Introduction Unravelling Prison Clothing section. Para. 3

<sup>96</sup> Ash (2009) Introduction Unravelling Prison Clothing section. Para. 3

<sup>97</sup> Ash (2009) Introduction Unravelling Prison Clothing section. Para. 3

<sup>98</sup> Ash (2009) Introduction Unravelling Prison Clothing section. Para. 1

<sup>99</sup> Ash (2009) Chap 1. Para. 4-5

<sup>100</sup> Ash (2009) Introduction Unravelling Prison Clothing section. Para. 2

<sup>101</sup> Ash (2009) Introduction Unravelling Prison Clothing section. Para. 2

<sup>102</sup> Ash (2009) Introduction Unravelling Prison Clothing section. Para. 2





initiated by John Howard.<sup>103</sup> Howard conducted research across the globe, touching base in various European prison systems such as the British and the French.<sup>104</sup> In which he noticed mal neglect of prisoners.<sup>105</sup> According to Howard, such neglect was commonly influenced by class and socioeconomic aspects.<sup>106</sup> Leaving the poor in rags and the rich in much more comfort behind bars. Not often were poor inmates described as “half naked” or placed in a state where they were lacking access to clothing that would cover their bodies.<sup>107</sup> In 1784, Howard therefor imposed that class should be disregarded within the prison system.<sup>108</sup> Howard also suggested that “all prisoners, except debtors, be clothed on their admission with a prison uniform” and “that their own clothes be returned them when they are brought to trial, or are dismissed”.<sup>109</sup> Although Howard heavily imposed these changes and thus they were passed as binding. There was little to no practical implementation of the garment up until the late-1840s.<sup>110</sup>

The black and white striped garment, still to this day commonly used as a signifier of imprisonment within popular culture, can be traced back to the 1800s. Ash uses the phrase “Parti-coloured” clothing and refers to testimonies containing bright coloured clothing, inspired by medieval court-jesters and clowns, being adapted within both the American as well as the European prison system.<sup>111</sup> During the British colonization of Australia and Tasmania, in which convicted Europeans were commonly designated to serve their sentence in one of the two British colonies.<sup>112</sup> Broad arrows were inked on to prison wear as a method to enforce humiliation and served as a substitute for corporal punishment.<sup>113</sup> Using prison wear as a form of punishment still very much continues, on a global scale today.<sup>114</sup> In an ideal world, prison wear would only be used as a part of a complex system, in which humans are to be rehabilitated. However, according to Ash, this isn't the reality we are faced with.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>103</sup>Ash (2009) Chap 1. Para. 1

<sup>104</sup>Ash (2009) Chap 1. Para. 3-5

<sup>105</sup>Ash (2009) Chap 1. Para. 3-5

<sup>106</sup>Ash (2009) Chap 1. Para. 3-5

<sup>107</sup>Ash (2009) Chap 1. Para. 5

<sup>108</sup>Ash (2009) Chap 1. Para. 4

<sup>109</sup>Ash (2009) Chap 1. Para. 4

<sup>110</sup> Ash (2009) Chap 1. Para. 4

<sup>111</sup> Ash (2009) Chap 1. Para 10

<sup>112</sup> Ash (2009) Chap 1. Para. 9

<sup>113</sup> Ash (2009) Chap 1. Para 9

<sup>114</sup> Ash (2009) Chap 1. Para 3

<sup>115</sup> Ash (2009) Chap 1. Para 3



#### 4. My encounter with the American prison system

As part of my studies at the World Arts and Culture department at UCLA. I was offered the opportunity to meet with 15 women inside a Californian Federal prison. Before this visit, each participant that was going on the excursion had been handed written instructions on what was expected of us. Not only are there certain rules and regulations tied to what one can bring inside a prison facility. (See figure 14)<sup>116</sup> There are clear restrictions of what one can wear during visitation. (See figure 13 & 15)<sup>117</sup> Due to the delicate nature of the programme I was participating in. I found it highly important to be as respectful as possible of the guidelines presented to me. The day before, I spent more time than usual deciding on what to wear. Carefully making sure my clothes fit the instructions. I ended up deciding on a black long-sleeve top, black, loose but straight-leg pants,

white sneakers with no logos, and a grey knitted sweater. As it was cold outside during the morning, I decided to wear a denim jacket on top of my clothes. I however left it behind, before entering the facility, as I wasn't certain if that item would fit the criteria. "Better safe than sorry" I remember thinking to myself. The very first thing I noticed walking into the facility was the monochrome tones. It was like I had walked into a world where vibrant colours didn't exist.

**6. Dress code:** This will be discussed in more detail during the orientation. However, the following clothing items are generally not permitted, and you should not wear them:

- leotards
- spandex
- crop tops
- miniskirts
- halter tops
- bathing suits
- hats or caps
- backless tops
- open-toe shoes
- revealing shorts
- sleeveless garments
- low-cut blouses or dresses
- see-through garments of any type
- **skirts two inches or more above the knee**
- dresses or skirts with a high-cut split in the back, front, or side
- clothing with messages that may be interpreted as "politically provocative"

Figure.13. List of prohibited pieces of clothing

<sup>116</sup> Gere, David. (Personal Communication) [Email]  
7 December 2021

<sup>117</sup> Gere (Personal Communication) [Email]  
7 December 2021



After handing in our assigned paperwork, we were shown into a room, similar to a small auditorium, where the women were already gathered. Not sure what to expect, I shyly waited for a que to take a seat at one of the chairs placed in a circle.

**2. Materials:** Bring your notebook and a pen or pencil! You are allowed to bring in one writing utensil and non-metal notebook. This means no metal coil spiral notebooks or three ring binders.

**3. What NOT to Bring Inside the Facility** (but may be left on the bus): Laptop, mobile device, or any other electronic device of any kind (with the exception of medical apparatuses), large metallic jewelry, backpacks and book bags.

**4. Identification:** Please bring a government issued ID such as a state driver's license or ID card [or passport]. Your Bruin ID is not sufficient. Failure to bring valid identification will prevent you from participating in the orientation and the class. You will also have to wait on the bus for two hours.

Figure 14. List of prohibited items and belongings

- skirts two inches or more above the knee
- dresses or skirts with a high-cut split in the back, front, or side
- clothing with messages that may be interpreted as "politically provocative"
- sports logos or any signs or symbols that may be associated with gang affiliations
- clothing that looks like prison clothing (brown/ khaki or green military-type clothing)

Figure 15. Dress code to be granted entrance at the prison.

#### 4.1 Dress code inside- Women and staff

During my encounter with my fellow incarcerated peers. Both the women and staff were wearing their assigned uniform. Jennifer Craik describes in *Uniforms Exposed*, that uniforms convey a visual language and inhibits dual connotation.<sup>118</sup> On one hand, uniforms serve the purpose of order and control, on an individual as well as a collective level.<sup>119</sup> Law enforcement is one example of such uniform bearing occupancy. Where uniforms are used to signalise that an individual is part of a specific unit.<sup>120</sup> Ultimately showcasing status within hierarchies.<sup>121</sup> In alignment with Jennifer Craik's description, there was a clear distinction between what the guards and the women were wearing. The guards were all dressed in button up shirts, neatly tucked into wrinkle free pants. Some wearing a tie and the American flag had been attached to

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<sup>118</sup> Craik (2009) p.4  
<sup>119</sup> Craik (2009) p.4-5  
<sup>120</sup> Craik (2009) p.5  
<sup>121</sup> Craik (2009) p.5



the sleeves of the uniform. The all-around impression I was met with was, that the guards held a great deal of authority. According to Craik, authority is exactly what law enforcement uniforms are designed to convey. Craik continues to describe how attributes within law enforcement uniforms are highly specific and precalculated.<sup>122</sup> For example, the connotation of a tie indicates “neatness, constraint and public persona”.<sup>123</sup> Wearing a tie therefore is a way of mimicking favourable attributes via clothing. To ultimately, via visual language, communicate to the public that such characteristics are in fact part of the bearer’s identity.<sup>124</sup>

On the other side of the spectrum exist uniforms that are to emphasise punishment for mistakes, transgressions, or crimes.<sup>125</sup> In which individuals are forced to wear assigned garments.<sup>126</sup> Such as prison wear. My incarcerated peers were unanimously all dressed in this type of uniform. (See appendix) Some wearing jackets on top of their uniforms, some wearing only the matching set, containing brown pants and a same-coloured t-shirt. Footwear consisted of chunky boots all around. All though our visitation were strictly supervised by officers and the warden of the prison. There were moments of personal interaction with each other. During one of these interactions, I met Sofia and Michelle. [Sofias and Michelle’s names have been changed for privacy and ethical reasons] The excitement within the facility was highly apparent. We had all been waiting for this occasion. Time and time again, we had been forced to cancel our visitation due to Covid outbursts and bureaucracy. I still remember Sofias words “We dressed up for today!”.<sup>127</sup> Followed by Michelles explanation of how the women had used various goods from the prison commissary to create their worn makeup.<sup>128</sup> It wasn’t just Sofia and Michelle who had “dressed for the occasion”. Close to every single woman had found ways to self-express. Whether it was through the same self-made makeup, that Michelle had so carefully told me all about by now. Or through adjustments to their prison wear. The women had gone the extra mile. Some wearing the assigned jacket tied around their hips. Some rolling up the sleeves of the uniforms T-shirt. After closer review it occurred to me, the none of the women’s clothing

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<sup>122</sup> Craik (2009) p.8

<sup>123</sup> Craik (2009) p.8

<sup>124</sup> Craik (2009) p.8

<sup>125</sup> Craik (2009) p.4-5

<sup>126</sup> Craik (2009) p.4-5

<sup>127</sup> Interview Sofia- 8 December 2021.

<sup>128</sup> Interview Michelle-8 December 2021.



looked the same. Even though they were all physically wearing the same uniform. Ash describes that this is a common phenomenon while unwillingly being assigned to wear a uniform.

Poverty and institutional regulations do not prevent people from constructing identity in clothing. Dress traverses prison walls in both directions. Throughout prison history, and no more so than in the contemporary world, inmates are aware of fashions outside.<sup>129</sup>

-Juliet Ash

Ash further describes that prison clothing have always been adapted through history. To construct, express and maintain personal identity.<sup>130</sup> Ash's portrayal of assigned clothing behind bars is second by Craik, who emphasises that the topic of wearing a uniform is complex.<sup>131</sup> Opinions vary based on personal relationship and interaction with the garment.<sup>132</sup>

## 5. Possible effects of assigning prison wear

Claudia Peña describes that she can see both positive and negative aspects tied to assigned clothing. When asked to reflect upon the possible effects of assigning prison uniform, Peña paints a dual picture.

**Ellen:** When you are handed a pair of uniforms that you are supposed to wear how do you think that that effects an individual? Short-term or long-term effects? How do you believe this makes someone feel about themselves?

**Claudia:** *So, I have a few different answers. I want to start with something that my mom shared with me a long time ago which is that, when my family came to San Francisco from El Salvador they were really, really poor. There was eight children and my grandparents. My mum said that she always wished that the school that she went to in San Francisco had uniforms, because then it would be less easy to see the disparity between the super poor kids and the super-rich kids or the middleclass kids. That did something for me because I realised that sometimes equalizing something across the board really does, not completely eliminate, but at least minimize the disparity, right? Because I do think that often times it is access to resources that gives people the ability to really express! So, there is that.*

**Claudia:** *I know that because of my own upbringing and my own personal style that I don't think I could do anything that requires me to wear a uniform on a regular basis. Because it is so against my nature. As a very small child I was already expressing my individuality by what I was wearing. I was instant*

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<sup>129</sup> Ash (2009) Introduction Unravelling Prison Clothing section. Para. 3

<sup>130</sup> Ash (2009) Introduction Unravelling Prison Clothing section. Para. 3

<sup>131</sup> Craik (2009) p. 3-5

<sup>132</sup> Craik (2009) p. 3-5



*on dressing myself and I always had very colourful layered outfits. That didn't totally make sense to everybody else. So my own feeling is if I had to be forced into wearing a uniform on a regular basis to work let's say, it would probably depress me. It would probably suck the soul out of me a little bit.*

**Claudia:** *But for some people I think it's very liberating. To wear the same thing, over and over again. They don't have to think about it. The way they present themselves is not part of their individual expression. It makes them feel like they are part of a community. Part of a team. I know a lot of people who loves wearing uniforms on their sports teams. Everybody wearing the same thing. It makes everybody feel connected.*

**Claudia:** *It's really interesting, I've been in some cultures where everybody is wearing quote unquote the same thing, but if you look very closely it's not at all the same things. Like an outsider would think it's the same. Yet if you look closely, you can see the small, nuanced differences. Even in cultures like in the United States where we are hyper individualistic in a way, I think is actually harmful, and then there are countries who are hyper communally oriented that can also be harmful. Because people aren't allowed to individuate. So, I think there is a balance in there, that can be quite beautiful. Where you feel connected to the fabric but that you have your ability to make it your own. I have lived in different countries where there was a more conservative dress code, we were covering, long sleeves, or where I was wearing hijab and that is totally fine with me. Following customs, like having limits and having boundaries is fine with me so long as I can express within those boundaries. But being forced to wear, for example what the woman on the inside are forced to wear. Which is usually a brow shirt and brown pants, and either a set of boots or a set of sneakers. I think that I would end up becoming a smaller and smaller version of myself at some point.<sup>133</sup>*

While asked about the possible effects of assigning prison uniforms to incarcerated individuals.

A duplex image is painted. Rios explains how she believes that uniform can bear dual meaning.

*It is another way to dehumanize people. The uniforms strip people of their individuality and identity. A potential positive is that if people wear their own clothes perhaps you may be able to see a divide in class.<sup>134</sup>*

-Rosie Rios

During my interview with Amanda. Who have firsthand experience of wearing a prison uniform. The duplex picture of the garment remains.

*Having assigned clothing made me feel like just a number. No identity, no individuality, I'm nobody and I wasn't special. On the other hand, I feel like I was able to make closer*

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<sup>133</sup> Interview Peña -29 June 2023

<sup>134</sup> Interview Rios- 3 August 2023





*connections with people I normally wouldn't have talked to because we all had on the same clothes.*<sup>135</sup>

-Amanda

Amandas testimony reaches beyond the American system and can also be found within the Swedish prison system. Through the Swedish organisation KRIS, I came in contact with Karl. Karl has given me permission to share that he has experienced the Swedish prison system on multiple occasions. When asked about how Karl felt while wearing his assigned clothing during his incarceration. Karl expressed that it placed him in a mixed state.

*I had become used to it and I had become institutionalized. In a way it made me feel comfortable. It was hard on my kids. But it made my mum feel safe knowing I was in a safe environment. The hard thing about wearing those clothes in front of my kids was that it made me feel like I had betrayed them.*<sup>136</sup>

-Karl

Karl also shared that his assigned clothing further contributed to him experiencing feelings of being institutionally damaged.

*When you get caught and have to do time. Those are the clothes. Same goes for the slippers. You are given slippers inside. Today I can't walk without slipper at home. It hurts my feet when they touch the floor and it's really creepy.*<sup>137</sup>

-Karl

Denmark and Norway, who unlike Sweden promotes access to personal clothing behind bars. Are faced with a different experience. While asked whether allowing personal clothing while incarcerated, is believed to have a positive or negative affect on an individual. The answers of Jacobsen and Christensen are unanimous.

*Our experience is that they appreciate being able to wear their own clothes. The days become more normal when they can wear the clothes they are used to wearing when they are out.*<sup>138</sup>

-Hans-Petter Jacobsen, Bergen Norway

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<sup>135</sup> Interview Amanda- 15 May 2023

<sup>136</sup> Interview Karl-28 June 2023.

<sup>137</sup> Interview Karl-28 June 2023

<sup>138</sup> Interview Jacobsen, Hans-Petter-21 July 2023



*It's a part of the normalcy aspect (resocializing efforts) It's my experience, that the inmates are happy, that they can wear their own clothes.*

-Tina Paust Christensen, Hobro Denmark

The effects of having to wear a prison uniform is also discussed in the third episode of Fångelseexperimentet Little Scandinavia. The camera team visits Jeff, one of the previous inmates at SCI Chester upon release. Amongst the first listed aspects of what is different from his time in prison. Jeff mentions access to personal clothing.

*It's hard to believe that I can feel my clothes, and not having to put on prison brown anymore. I can put on what I want to put on. So unbelievable!<sup>139</sup>*

-Jeff

Jeff demonstrates how his freedom to wear whatever he wants, is something he reflects upon and doesn't take for granted. When showing his closet to the camera team. He picks up his favourite sports cap and waves it to the camera.

*In fact, I have to do this! You can't wear a cowboy's hat in prison fellas! But you all know that I love my boys! It's just hard to believe. I can't put it into any other words. We are somebody! just because we made a mistake, we are still human.<sup>140</sup>*

-Jeff

## Discussion

If there is one thing I have learnt throughout my encounters with the American and Scandinavian prison system, it is that prison wear can best be understood through its history. Heavily aligning with the thesis of Herbert Spencer. In which Spencer highlights, that before one can truly analyse the uniforms worn behind bars, one must first recognise the systems assigning them.<sup>141</sup> It is to this day still possible to detect traces of the early 1800s within both the American and Scandinavian prison system. Not only can usage of prison uniform in general, be traced back to prison reform applied during British colonial times and American slavery.<sup>142</sup> Traces from the early 1800s can also be detected via various letter combinations attached to

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<sup>139</sup> Fångelseexperimentet Little Scandinavia (2023) Episode.3.

<sup>140</sup> Fångelseexperimentet Little Scandinavia (2023) Episode.3.

<sup>141</sup> Carter (2003). p.25

<sup>142</sup> Ash (2009) Chap 1. Para. 9





modern-day prison wear. At SCI Chester, the letters DOC (Department of corrections) is featured on the incarcerated individuals clothing. Indicating that the individual wearing this logo, is somewhat serving and under the supervision of the Department of corrections. That the individual belongs to the DOC. This conforms with Ash's portrayal of institutions branding incarcerated individuals as "property of" during the 1800s.<sup>143</sup> Modern-day branding of incarcerated individuals are less apparent within the Scandinavian prison system. This leads me to one of the most significant observations conducted during my research. Although the officer's uniforms are of significant resemblance within both systems. The clothing worn by someone who is incarcerated tends to shift drastically. After analysing the Swedish SVT documentary *Fängelseexperimentet Little Scandinavia*, I noticed that incarcerated individuals in Scandinavia were often seen wearing personal clothing, even amid serving a sentence.<sup>144</sup> Meanwhile in America it was clear that each incarcerated individual had been assigned a prison uniform.<sup>145</sup> This was later confirmed during my interview with Claudia Peña. As Peña stated that stripping individuals of their personal belongings is normative within the American prison system.<sup>146</sup> Creating a clear divide between the American and Scandinavian system. However, it is noticeable that Sweden deviates from the Scandinavian norm of allowing personal clothing. Sweden, continues to assign incarcerated individuals with clothing from Kriminalvården (Eng. Transl. The Swedish Prison and Probation Service).<sup>147</sup> It is confirmed via images and posts on the official webpage of Kriminalvården, that prison wear within the Swedish prison system features similar letter combinations as America.<sup>148</sup> Although it remains unconfirmed to what degree. However, Sweden's continued use of clothing assigned by Kriminalvården, combined with the fact that these letter combinations are used to any degree. Indicates that traces of branding incarcerated individuals as "property of" isn't limited to the American prison system. Further confirming Ash's portrayal of how prison wear has both a history and future serving as an extension of punitive measurements.

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<sup>143</sup> Ash (2009) Chap 1. Para. 9

<sup>144</sup> Fängelseexperimentet (2023) Episode 1-3

<sup>145</sup> Fängelseexperimentet (2023) Episode 1-3

<sup>146</sup> Interview Peña-29 June 2023

<sup>147</sup> Interview Åberg-19 June 2023

<sup>148</sup> Kriminalvården. *Lönsam Kreativitet*. (2018) <https://blogg.kriminalvarden.se/alla-inlagg/2018/mars/lonsam-kreativitet/>



Unlike Peña's testimony of the American prison system, where options are kept to a minimal.<sup>149</sup> Thorbjörn Åberg, Senior Administrator at the Prison and Probation Service of Norrköping, states that Swedish Kriminalvården provides a wide range of clothing.<sup>150</sup> Although access to variety is provided within the Swedish prison system. Incarcerated individuals aren't automatically immune to the negative effects of being assigned clothing by an institution. Karl, formerly incarcerated within the Swedish prison system, highlights that although he did in fact have some control over his clothing while incarcerated. Wearing the clothing provided by the Swedish Prison and Probation Service nourished feelings that negatively impacted his identity.<sup>151</sup> Inflicting emotions of being institutionally damaged.<sup>152</sup> Karl also states that wearing the assigned clothing in front of his family, enforced shame and guilt. Karl's testimony of negative emotion tied to assigned clothing is shared by Amanda. Amanda whose experiences are rooted within the American prison system. States that wearing her assigned uniform made her feel like "just a number".<sup>153</sup> Both informants experiences conform with the theory of Juliet Ash. In which Ash states that enforcing clothing as part of the punishment, ultimately bare negative effect on the self-esteem and self-worth of an individual.<sup>154</sup> Amandas statement also confirms Russel Belk's theory of the extended self. In which Belk states that our possessions portray our identity.<sup>155</sup> Her statement also aligns with Belk's theory of how unwanted lessening of possessions corelates with lessening of personal identity.<sup>156</sup>

I would also like to argue that prison wear is a product that represents the system assigning the garment. This becomes clear through the many contrasts of the American and Scandinavian system. America, who according to both Peña and the SVT documentary, focuses on punitive measurements. Aligns with Ash's description of clothing being used as a way of ridiculing the incarcerated individual.<sup>157</sup> Confirming that the assigned clothing represents a form of further punishment beyond the incarceration itself. As Peña states, there are indications that the American prison system continues to enforce measurements that can be dated back to a far less

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<sup>149</sup> Interview- Peña 29 June 2023

<sup>150</sup> Interview Åberg- 19 June 2023

<sup>151</sup> Interview Karl-28 June 2023

<sup>152</sup> Interview Karl-28 June 2023

<sup>153</sup> Interview Amanda-15 May 2023

<sup>154</sup> Ash (2009) Introduction Unravelling Prison Clothing section. Para. 2

<sup>155</sup> Belk (1998) p. 139-142

<sup>156</sup> Belk (1998) p. 139-143

<sup>157</sup> Ash (2009) Chap 1. Para. 9



equal part of history. Still obliging to notions and ideas rooted in slavery.<sup>158</sup> This further aligns with Ash's portrayal of how prison can be traced back to colonial times and that such ideologies continue to be enforced to this day.<sup>159</sup> In contrast to the punitive measurements of the American prison system. The Scandinavian prison system focuses on a softer approach to prison life. According to *Fängelseexperimentet little Scandinavia* the main punishment should be the incarceration. Further punishment should not be enforced.<sup>160</sup> Scandinavia also strives to maintain normalcy during a sentence.<sup>161</sup> Ultimately recognising that assigned prison wear can be used as a form of further punishment and therefore its usage should be eliminated.

The testimonies of my former peers and incarcerated informants Sofia and Michelle, in which Michelle and Sofia explains how they had both dressed up and created their own makeup before our encounter. Strongly conforms to Ash's theory that "poverty and institutional regulations do not prevent people from constructing identity in clothing."<sup>162</sup> Concluding that even during the strictest form of assigned clothing, attempts to express individuality will still be made. To ultimately maintain or reclaim identity.<sup>163</sup> The testimony of Claudia Peña also fit the description of Ash. In which Peña states that although incarcerated individuals within the American prison system are highly restricted in terms of their clothing. They do still try to find ways to self-express.<sup>164</sup> Similar to Belk, Peña describes this desire to self-express as a human need.<sup>165</sup>

Although it's safe to say that there are clear contrasts between the Scandinavian and American prison system. Such as statistics, values, and attitudes. There are aspects that unifies. In both systems, incarcerated individuals must adhere to rules and regulations in terms of their clothing. Neither system offers complete freedom of self-expression, both collectively banishing clothing with gang affiliations and suggestive motives of drug use. However, in general, the Scandinavian system is more allowing, inflicting fewer restrictions than the American system. This is not only confirmed through the many restrictions tied to the prison uniforms used behind

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<sup>158</sup> Ash (2009) Chap 1. Para. 9

<sup>159</sup> Ash (2009) Chap 1. Para 3.

<sup>160</sup> *Fängelseexperimentet* (2023) Episode 1

<sup>161</sup> *Fängelseexperimentet* (2023) Episode 1

<sup>162</sup> Ash (2009) Introduction Unravelling Prison Clothing section. Para. 3

<sup>163</sup> Interview Peña -29 June 2023

<sup>164</sup> Interview Peña -29 June 2023

<sup>165</sup> Interview Peña -29 June 2023



bars within the American prison system. Clothing restrictions also apply to visitors and educators while going inside. During my interaction with my incarcerated peers, I was highly restricted in what I was allowed to wear. (See figure 13 & 15)<sup>166</sup> Indicating that my clothing could to some degree be of disturbance to the order behind bars. Not only did I feel insecure and fearful of the fact that my clothing could potentially risk the chance of visiting the women. My attire did contribute to me feeling like I was somehow losing parts of my otherwise energetic and outgoing personality. I became a shy toned-down version of myself. Confirming Belk's thesis of undesired lessening of possessions.<sup>167</sup> As well as the thesis of Yuniya Kwamura, where clothing is described as both interdisciplinary and complex<sup>168</sup>

It is furthermore unanimous for both systems to have prison staff wear uniform while working. The uniform worn in both systems heavily conforms with Craik's portrayal of uniforms worn within law enforcement. In which authority is painted as a central signifier of an officer's uniform.<sup>169</sup> Throughout *Fängelseexperimentet little Scandinavia* the dress code of Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, and American officers shares candid resemblance. Popular attributes consisting of ties, button up shirts, wrinkle free trousers, badges, and emblems.<sup>170</sup> These attributes are also recurring in images, conducted via the official webpages of each Scandinavian countries prison and probation service. (See figure 1, 6 & 7)<sup>171</sup> The attributes also align with my personal conducted field notes of the staffs clothing at the California federal prison. (See Appendix 1 & 2 page 42 & 43)<sup>172</sup>

On the topic of prison uniform of staff working behind bars. The theories of Belk and Spencer immediately resurfaces. Tia Kennery, who's experiences attached to the garment is featured in *Fängelseexperimentet little Scandinavia*, shares that she attaches different emotions to her Scandinavian contra American uniform. Highlighting that her assigned uniform bares separate meaning to her depending on what system she represents.<sup>173</sup> She also expresses a sense of who she becomes while wearing the uniform. Further confirming Belk's theory of the garment being

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<sup>166</sup> Fängelseexperimentet (2023) Episode 1–3

<sup>167</sup> Belk (1998) p139-143

<sup>168</sup> Kawamura (2014) p.10–11

<sup>169</sup> Craik (2009) p.4–8

<sup>170</sup> Fängelseexperimentet (2023) Episode 1–3

<sup>171</sup> Kriminalvården. (2022) Kriminalforsorgen (2023) Kriminalomsorgen (2023)

<sup>172</sup> Personal Field notes. (Conducted 2021-8-12) p.43-44.

<sup>173</sup> Fängelseexperimentet (2023) Episode 1



an extension of oneself.<sup>174</sup> Kennery's experience tied to her uniform also aligns with Spencer's theory of the importance of understanding the system assigning the garments. The fact that Kennery places her American uniform in an authorial and punitive category. Meanwhile she assigns her Scandinavian uniform a more relaxed sensation. Indicates that her experience is influenced by the ideologies and approaches adapted within the systems behind her assigned uniform. Ultimately conforming with both Belk's, Spencer's and Craik's portrayal of clothing and possessions. Furthermore, Angela Davis' description of staffs clothing being the only thing separating them from crimes of sexual nature. Indicates that Belk's theory of the extended self reaches beyond the borders of individuality. I would strongly argue that the statement of Davis isn't rooted in a desire to paint all members of staff within the American Prison system as potential sexual predators. It is rather a statement that aligns with Spencer's theory of understanding the systems behind the assigned uniform.<sup>175</sup> Indicating that Belk's theory of the extended self is not only applicable on an individual level. But also, to systems assigning clothing. Davis' description alludes to the fact that it is not the identity of the member of staff that is being extended while wearing prison uniform. It is the values of the system under which he or she serves.

Circling back to Karl and Amanda's statements. Both Karl and Amanda describe mixed feelings towards their assigned uniform. Ultimately confirming Craik's thesis, of uniform as a complex topic that is heavily tied to personal interaction with the garment.<sup>176</sup> This dual experience with assigned clothing is second by both Peña and Rios. Rios stating that having incarcerated individuals wear uniform can be viewed as a form of dehumanization.<sup>177</sup> Yet at the same time, it can also erase any traces of class or inequality.<sup>178</sup> Peña paints a similar picture. In which she highlights the beneficial effects of erasing class and inequality.<sup>179</sup> Unanimous for all informants tied to enforcement of prison uniform is that each informant has listed negative aspects attached to the garment. Stirring the motion of the pendulum towards prison uniforms as a problematic garment.

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<sup>174</sup> Fängelseexperimentet (2023) Episode 1

<sup>175</sup> Carter, Michael. (2003) p. 25

<sup>176</sup> Craik (2009) p. 3-5

<sup>177</sup> Interview Rios- 3 August 2023

<sup>178</sup> Interview Rios- 3 August 2023

<sup>179</sup> Interview Peña -29 June 2023



Within the Scandinavian prison system, the general impression of having access to personal clothing while incarcerated, is positive. Jacobsen describes a sense of normalcy tied to personal clothing and ultimately describes that this has a beneficial effect for the individual.<sup>180</sup> Jacobsen's testimony aligns with Christensen. In which Christensen highlights that in her experience, incarcerated individuals are glad to wear their own clothing.<sup>181</sup> Christensen also refers to the normalcy aspect while expressing the effects of personal clothing behind bars.<sup>182</sup>

The testimonies of positive effects of uniforms within the American prison system, tends to align with clothing that reaches beyond the bars of prison. Such as sportswear, religious clothing, or school uniforms.<sup>183</sup> Except for Rios statement about the possibilities of erasing traces of class and inequality.<sup>184</sup> This is second by Amanda, that describes how the garment did make her feel a connection towards others in the same situation.<sup>185</sup> This could be viewed as a positive effect of the garment, and ultimately conforms the statement of George Simmel. In which Simmel describes human desire and how this is part of an intricate system.<sup>186</sup> According to Simmel, humans not only desire to self-express and differentiate from the societal collectiveness.<sup>187</sup> At the same time humans also desire to seek belonging and alikeness.<sup>188</sup> Placing Simmel's theory upon life behind bars. It could be argued that the desire to fit in to the collective is a form of survival mechanism. Especially within the American prison system where focus tends to lay on punitive measurements.

## Conclusion

Throughout the course of my research, I have come to understand that in order to truly understand the concept of clothing. There is tremendous value to be found within dress history. In terms of prison clothing, there are clear indications of it being a product of the system assigning its garment. I have also, as previously stated, witnessed two undeniably different approaches to prison work and incarceration. In which the American focus tends to lay on

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<sup>180</sup> Interview Jacobsen-21 July 2023

<sup>181</sup> Interview Paust Cristensen-21 June 2023

<sup>182</sup> Interview Paust Cristensen-21 June 2023

<sup>183</sup> Interview Peña -29 June 2023

<sup>184</sup> Interview Rios- 3 August 2023

<sup>185</sup> Interview Amanda-8 May 2023

<sup>186</sup> Simmel (2012). p. 510–520

<sup>187</sup> Simmel (2012). p. 510–520

<sup>188</sup> Simmel (2012). p. 510–520



punitive measurements. Meanwhile Scandinavia strives towards rehabilitation. It therefore doesn't come as a complete surprise, that there is a difference of opinion in terms of assigning uniform within the two systems. However, it is of value to mention that although Norway does have some of the lowest recidivism rates seen across the globe. The Scandinavian prison system isn't in any way perfect. One factor that indicates that Scandinavia still have their work cut out for them in terms of the normalcy aspect. Is the fact that Sweden continues to enforce prison wear. Even though Craik, Davis, Ash, and Rios describe how the garment can be understood as a further punishment.<sup>189</sup> Ultimately setting the clock back towards a less equal time in history.

The ever so recurring theme throughout this research, has been that prison uniform is heavily associated with its history. Especially its history of being used as a form of punishment. Prison uniform is often described as a precautionary measurement. Yet according to Craik, Davis, Ash, and my informants Claudia Peña and Rosie Rios the garment is heavily rooted in dehumanisation and ridicule. This leads me to the core question of whether or not clothing reaches beyond the borders of vanity? In my opinion there is an argument to be made that if a topic can be viewed as both individualistic and collective at the same time. Furthermore, be described as dual and highly complex.<sup>190</sup> Serve as a form of further punishment.<sup>191</sup> As well as a disguise in order to detach from punitive measurements.<sup>192</sup> Inflict contradictory emotions such as normalcy and institutionalisation.<sup>193</sup> Yet at the very same time be described as a form of extension of identity.<sup>194</sup> Would vanity really and truly be the correct word to apply? The Cambridge Dictionary describes vanity as a "Noun" where "you are too interested in your appearance or achievements."<sup>195</sup> One could strongly and safely argue that since the garment has a history rooted in the opposite of nourishing once appearance. This being to ridicule and neglect personal identity. The discourse surrounding clothing as part of vanity and shallowness, faces an uphill battle. Because not only is prison wear, as stated by Ash, one of the few garments

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<sup>189</sup> Ash (2009) Chap.1.Para 4., Craik (2009) s.4-8, Davis (2019) s.113., Rios (2023)

<sup>190</sup> Kawamura (2014) p.10-11

<sup>191</sup> Ash (2009) Chap.1.Para 4.

<sup>192</sup> Davis (2019) p 113

<sup>193</sup> Interview Karl-28 June 2023

<sup>194</sup> Belk (1998) p.139-142

<sup>195</sup> Cambridge Dictionary. Vanity.<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/vanity> (collected 2023-08-14)





that doesn't apply to the rules of design or consumption.<sup>196</sup> Prison wear is also part of and understood via various societal systems. Such as the prison system. Ultimately forcing the discourse to acknowledge that the concept of clothing is in many ways interdisciplinary. To conclude. I have personally witnessed how clothing simply cannot be tied down to its fabric and seams. This has been made clear to me via the testimonies of my informants. I would like to argue that collectively they paint a far more complex picture. In which clothing often sparks dual emotions and is heavily linked to personal interactions.

I therefor remain highly sceptical towards the discourse describing clothes as part of vanity and shallowness. I would not only argue that the topic of prison wear directly places clothing beyond the borders of vanity. I would state that prison wear furthermore captures the essence of the fundamental opposite.

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<sup>196</sup> Ash (2009) Chap 1. Para 4.





Attachments & Appendix

(Attachment 1)

THE POWER OF APPEARANCE  
BACHELORS THESIS

Interview guide

Formerly Incarcerated Informants

**INFORMATION**

I want to take the time and officially THANK YOU for participating in my bachelors Thesis. The thesis is based on Russel W Belk's theory that what we wear is an extension of ourselves. Your contribution is what makes this possible! If it wasn't for your truthful answers and graceful sharing of your experiences, my thesis would be worth absolutely nothing! I am therefore forever grateful for your participation! I want you to know that it is extremely important for me that you feel comfortable throughout your participation! Please know that everything you do decide to share will in NO way be attached to your name. You will be featured in this paper under a different name to maintain anonymity. If you have any questions at all, don't hesitate to contact me on [ellen.oreilly96@gmail.com](mailto:ellen.oreilly96@gmail.com)

1. Kindly state your age
2. What gender do you identify as?
3. Have you during your lifetime experienced the effects of incarceration?
4. If yes, while incarcerated did your ability to choose your own clothing get restricted or taken away from you?
5. In what way was your ability to choose your own clothing restricted? (For example: were you forced to wear a prison uniform/did anyone assign you specific garments to wear?)
6. How did this make you feel?
7. Do you believe the restrictions regarding your clothes had a:
  - A. *Positive effect on you / your mindset?*
  - B. *Negative effect on you/ your mindset?*
8. In what way do you believe your assigned clothing while incarcerated affected the way yourself and/or others viewed you?



**(Attachment 2)**

**Interview guide - Informants**

1. How would you describe the prison system today and how it affects an individual's identity.
2. In what way/s are you restricted in terms of your own clothing while going inside of the facilities?
3. In what way does your own clothing play into your/the inmates experience during a visit to the facilities?
4. In your experience can you distinguish positive or negative effects of restricting and individuals' ability to self-express through clothing?
5. The research on prison uniform is very restricted. Yet one of the most common statements is that the uniform has been adapted to fit the inmates needs and to prevent degrading of the individual in the uniform. Do you agree/disagree with this statement?
6. How do you view the concept of having incarcerated individuals wear prison uniforms? Could you list Positive or negative aspects?
7. Could you see any differences in the value of self-expression between the sexes? Female male, trans ECT?
8. How would you describe the effects of incarceration tied to an individual's personality/identity?



FIELD NOTES (Appendix 1)

<p><b>Location: Federal Prison</b></p>		<p><i>Date- 8 Dec 2021</i></p>
<p><b>Restrictions tied to personal clothing</b></p>	<p><b>Restrictions tied to the women's clothing.</b></p>	<p><b>Restrictions tied to staffs clothing</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Leotards</li> <li>· Spandex</li> <li>· Crop tops · miniskirts</li> <li>· Halter tops</li> <li>· Bathing suits</li> <li>· Hats or caps</li> <li>· Backless tops</li> <li>· Open-toe shoes</li> <li>· Revealing shorts</li> <li>· Sleeveless garments</li> <li>· low-cut blouses or dresses</li> <li>· see-through garments of any type</li> <li>· Skirts two inches or more above the knee</li> <li>· Dresses or skirts with a high-cut split in the back, front, or side</li> <li>· Clothing with messages that may be interpreted as "politically provocative".</li> <li>· sports logos or any signs or symbols that may be associated with gang affiliations</li> <li>· Clothing that looks like prison clothing (brown/ khaki or green military-type clothing)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· No personal clothing items from the outside</li> <li>· All women must wear the assigned uniform.</li> <li>· colour-wise only brown nuanced clothing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· wearing assigned work uniforms</li> <li>· Personal clothing is not worn by any member of staff.</li> <li>·</li> </ul>
<p><b>Personal clothing worn</b></p>	<p><b>clothing worn by the woman</b></p>	<p><b>The clothing worn by staff</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Black loose pants</li> <li>· Closed toe shoes (sneakers)</li> <li>· Black long sleeve top</li> <li>· Gray knitted pullover</li> <li>· Denim jacket with metal · buttons (removed before · entering)</li> <li>· Facemask. (Safety precaution · due to covid)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Uniform containing: Brown pants, brown t-shirt, boots.</li> <li>· Some are wearing a brown jacket over their uniform.</li> <li>·</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Work uniform containing either long or short sleeve button up shirt. Matching pants.</li> <li>· Belt, keys, weapons.</li> <li>· Badges on sleeves</li> <li>· small American flag on uniform</li> </ul>
<p><b>Reflections - Personal Clothing</b></p>	<p><b>Reflections - clothing worn by the woman</b></p>	<p><b>Reflections - the clothing worn by guards</b></p>



(Appendix 2)

Personal clothing worn	clothing worn by the women	The clothing worn by staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Black loose pants</li> <li>· Closed toe shoes (sneakers)</li> <li>· Black long sleeve top</li> <li>· Gray knitted pullover</li> <li>· Denim jacket with metal buttons (removed before entering)</li> <li>· Facemask. (Safety precaution due to covid)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Uniform containing: Brown pants, brown t-shirt, boots.</li> <li>· Some are wearing a brown jacket over their uniform.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Work uniform containing either long or short sleeve button up shirt. Matching pants.</li> <li>· Belt, keys, weapons.</li> <li>· Badges on sleeves</li> <li>· small American flag on uniform</li> </ul>
<p><b>Reflections - Personal Clothing</b></p>	<p><b>Reflections - clothing worn by the women</b></p>	<p><b>Reflections - the clothing worn by guards</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· I feel very anonyms and "toned down."</li> <li>Like my personality is suppressed.</li> <li>· It's not my normal everyday style.</li> <li>· I am wearing loose pants and a loose black top; these are clothing items that I normally associate with "relaxation". Yet I don't feel relaxed. I feel the opposite.</li> <li>· I have put extra effort into my hair and makeup. My hair is in curls and my makeup has been carefully applied to not be considered "over the top".</li> <li>· I feel very self-aware regarding my own appearance. (I want to fit in as I don't want to risk breaking any rules)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· It is highly apparent that the woman has put in extra care regarding their hair and makeup.</li> <li>· Much of the woman are wearing either braids, ponytails, or other up dues.</li> <li>· several women express how they have dressed up for our encounter as they have been very excited for this day.</li> <li>· A group of women express that they have applied makeup. Makeup that they have created themselves from scratch.</li> <li>· I find it interesting that the women appear to have gone out of their ways to individualize and self-express. Even though they are so heavily restricted.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Authority</li> <li>(Eaven though the staff are wearing similar colours to the women. It is very apparent who bares authority. Not only by the weapons carried in the belts of staff. But the wrinkle free shirts, badges and American flag sends a clear message.)</li> <li>· Symbolism</li> <li>· Contrasts</li> </ul>



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