

A Redefining of Etiquette and Grooming

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ABSTRACT

Covid-19 and its effects to human behavior as well as etiquette and grooming have raised the need to review and evaluate the conventional and traditional ways of what formulates social graces, basic manner and common courtesies. Human interaction and human contact have been and will continue to be greatly affected, forcing a re-defining of the entire etiquette and grooming anatomy. This will therefore, bring in new concepts on how to interpret the behaviors of people interacting within proximity, in a distance or virtually. It will also highlight the pet eyes of such human interaction and actions. The paper predominantly uses a folk concept of intentionality as its theoretical framework, though it also engages other theories.

CONVENTIONAL DEFINITIONS: ETIQUETTE AND GROOMING

Etiquette

The Learner's Online Dictionary defines etiquette as the rules indicating the proper and polite way to behave [1]. Whereas the Merriam Webster Online Dictionary further expounds that by giving a brief history to the term etiquette,

One definition of the French word *étiquette* is "ticket" or "label attached to something for identification." In 16th-century Spain, the French word was borrowed (and altered to "etiqueta") to refer to the written protocols describing orders of precedence and behavior demanded of those who appeared in court. Eventually, "etiqueta" came to be applied to the court ceremonies themselves as well as the documents which outlined the requirements for them. Interestingly, this then led to French speakers of the time attributing the second sense of "proper behavior" to their "*étiquette*," and in the middle of the 18th century English speakers finally adopted both the word and the second meaning from the French. [2]

Peter Post of The Emily Post Institute, in his book titled, 'Essential Manners for Men: What to Do, When to Do It, and Why' defines Etiquette as, "a code of treating people with – and making choices based on – consideration, respect, and honesty". [3] This definition is enhanced by Deborah Smith Pegues, a Former Fortune 500 VP and a certified behavioral consultant specializing in understanding personalityemperaments who wrote, "the whole concept of etiquette is centered on three guiding principles: consideration, convenience, and common sense. Observing proper protocol should never make others feel inferior or uncomfortable in any way". [4] From the two, we find that etiquette revolves around consideration, common sense, respect, convenience and honesty, which are timeless guiding principles. Post adds, "when you apply these principles consistently, etiquette becomes a tool that lets you build betterrelationships and be more successful in every day aspect of your life". [5] Though, this establishes the fact that etiquette is not outdated, nor is it a new concept, it's not an obsolete tradition either. Therefore, we now need to understand etiquette more than ever before.

Grooming

Grooming simply means the habit of appearing clean and neat and looking presentable at all times. Examples include brushing hair, brushing your teeth and polishing your shoes. Pamela Eyring, the owner and

president of The Protocol School of Washington (PSOW), which provides professional business etiquette and international protocol training attests to this as she says, “In the business world, the top personal grooming issues that garner attention (and complaints) are hair (especially body hair), dental hygiene, scent, and hands and nails. Poor grooming detracts from what you have to say and can impede your ability to build relationships with others”.[\[6\]](#) Being poised and personal grooming (and hygiene) makes a huge impression especially as far as nonverbal messages in personal communication is concerned. 12 years ago, Nagesh Belludi quoted, Prof. Albert Mehrabian’s 7-38-55 Rule of Personal Communication 1970s study which suggested that we overwhelmingly deduce our feelings, attitudes, and beliefs about what someone says not by the actual words spoken, but by the speaker’s body language and tone of voice.[\[7\]](#) This study, though surrounded with claims that its arguments are oversimplified and carries subjective quantifications, is argued by Pawan Raj to still be helpful in our understanding that all forms of communication have implication.[\[8\]](#) Your appearance speaks a lot about your person.

Covid-19[\[9\]](#)

COVID-19 is a disease caused by a new strain of coronavirus. ‘CO’ stands for corona, ‘VI’ for virus, and ‘D’ for disease. Formerly, this disease was referred to as ‘2019 novel coronavirus’ or ‘2019-nCoV.’ The COVID-19 virus is a new virus linked to the same family of viruses as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and some types of common cold.

Older people, and those with underlying medical problems like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer are more likely to develop serious illness.

The best way to prevent and slow down transmission is be well informed about the COVID-19 virus, the disease it causes and how it spreads. One can protect themselves and others from infection by washing hands regularly or using an alcohol-based rub frequently as well as by not touching one’s face.

The COVID-19 virus spreads primarily through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose when an infected person coughs or sneezes, so it’s important that one also practice respiratory etiquette (for example, by coughing into a flexed elbow).

At this time, there are no specific vaccines or treatments for COVID-19. However, there are many ongoing clinical trials evaluating potential treatments. WHO will continue to provide updated information as soon as clinical findings become available.

BACKGROUND: ETIQUETTE, GROOMING AND COVID-19

Decorum, codes of behavior, grooming, courtesies and rules of etiquette transcends societies, cultures, traditions, races and ages. These form the basis of any culture and distinguishes individuals from others. This is indomitable as these rules, according to Carolyn McDowall, “have been honed over a very long period of time as society met morphed from bullying brash, uncouth and uncaring to being bold, beautiful, courteous and concerned”. [\[10\]](#) Much more than this, the advent of Covid-19 has further shaken conventional manners. Though etiquette rules and grooming principles will remain static many manners are bound to change. For instance, people, in societies and cultures, that use handshakes when meeting or greeting someone they would need to rethink the manner of “handshaking” while preserving the “etiquette” of greeting. In actual fact, in certain Asian communities like Japan both the etiquette and manner of greeting may have not been affected at all since their culture calls for bowing upon greeting or meeting someone. What is sure and what remains constant about manners is that they are intended to show respect for others. Post contends that it is the spirit behind what and how you do it that will be appreciated[\[11\]](#).

Covid-19 removed many professionals from the public eyes (business centers and offices) and made them to go into their private spaces. Most of those professionals are continuing to work from their own house, mostly

through virtual means. This beckons the rules of ‘home office etiquette’ and requires one to maintain “professionalism and a spirit of excellence intact”[\[12\]](#)lest one quickly lose their reputation. What has changed is the manners in doing business and not the business etiquette. In reality, many people have been working home for some years now.

METHODOLOGY

This paper uses a folk concept of internality as its theoretical framework. According to Malle, “Folk explanations of behavior guide people’s perceptions, attitudes, and actions towards each other; they affect Impressions, sway sympathies; and alter the paths of relations. By explaining behavior, people make sense of the social world, adapt to it, and shape it. Behavior explanations are thus themselves a social behavior that must be described and explained”[\[13\]](#). This theory arises from observations and testing that have been carried out repeatedly and they incorporate facts, predictions, laws, and tested assumptions that are widely accepted.[\[14\]](#)This means this paper will be engaging propositions and concepts that in their explanation of terms, actions and events predicts and presumes a general acceptance of what is etiquette and grooming universally. This broad application or generalization does not in any way negate the fixed principles, rules, theories, concepts and standard application of conventional and traditional etiquette and grooming. Rather it cements them. Malle alludes, “These disciplines suggest that people explain intentional behavior differently from unintentional behavior, and these different explanations have typically been called reason explanations and casual explanations respectively.[\[15\]](#)Reason explanation simply implies the way a person chooses to act in a certain way whereas casual explanation addresses what caused them to act in such a manner.

INTRODUCTION

Covid-19, a great equalizer[\[16\]](#) as many people are calling, it is non selective. It knows no race, tribe, clan, gender or ethnicity. It affects all the rich and the poor, those in the West and East as well as those in the North and South. It has ravaged the global North and the global South alike. Its effects range from physical sicknesses, mental and psychological health challenges, trade, economic and financial devastation, disproportionately affecting individuals. The virus has brought in a crucial need to examine the norms and practices of human interaction in times of crisis.

1. Markkula, et al; observe that,

The general study of how humans interact and communicate with each other is a large and multifaceted intellectual endeavour, dating back millennia and spanning a wide range of academic disciplines, including philosophy, sociology, and anthropology (Bowles and Gintis 2003; Eco 1986; Gatewood 1985; Goffman 1961), linguistics (Austin 1962; Searle 1975), psychology and human factors (Zalesny, Salas, and Prince 1995; Klein, Wiggins, and Dominguez 2010), cognitive neuroscience and biology (Bshary and Bergmüller 2008; Pezzulo, Donnarumma, and Dindo 2013), as well as artificial intelligence and robotics (Mavridis 2015; Hill, Ford, and Farreras 2015), and more.[\[17\]](#)

Covid-19 has challenged the entire practice and perspective on human interaction in the areas of etiquette and grooming. Life is turned into a new mode; nothing is as normal and nothing left to chance. Borders are closed, planes grounded, local travel restricted and people shutdown in their homes (some in mandatory) “Stay Homes”, others voluntarily, and some “in self quarantine as others are quarantined in health facilities. There also has been a re-writing of social common courtesies and what used to be basic manners. People no longer kiss, hug and embrace, even the common handshakes have been written off. Social distancing has been introduced to a new level, two meters or six feet apart is now the new norm. Hands are now being sanitized and washed more on a daily basis. Hygiene and cleanliness are becoming a social norm.

Toilet and bathroom etiquette are being observed with much intensity. No one wants to use any unclean space:

people are sanitizing door knobs, door handles, sinks, elevators, phones, keys, train and bus handles, gates and doors, windows and even seats in public places.

Everyone is now a suspect and everyone is a threat. Public and private offices have revised their visiting schedules and are also screening and scrutinizing individuals who are allowed access into their offices, grocery stores now limit the number customers per given buying period and queues are now standardized to maintain social distance. Public markets are closed down as anything deemed non-essential is currently not operational. According to the HR association WorldatWork's survey results published on April 9th, 2020, "The majority (65%) of the 1,510 employers said their organizations do not plan to offer incentives or bonuses such as 'hazard' or 'battle' pay to workers required to work on-site during Covid-19 pandemic".[\[18\]](#) Many have cowed into a defensive and protective mood. They are in their protective state as evidenced by the rise of the use of both masks and gloves. Others have even gone an extra mile – they wear protective overalls, boots, goggles and hats in public spheres.

Any items that are suspected to be infected are being immediately incinerated. Spaces that are deemed infected, are disinfected and washed and brushed thoroughly. Used masks and gloves – and other clothing are being disposed in a very thoughtful manner. Nothing is left to chance.

A new era has come; new rules have been written. The manners have been redefined. Courtesies are no longer as common as we know them. Is this a start of a new "Etiquette and Grooming" script? Are we writing a new "chapter" and telling a new story in our "Etiquette and Grooming world"? What story is Covid-19 telling? Soon, when the dust is settled – a revised script will be on the shelf.

The Famous Handshakes are temporarily put on hold: A re-evaluation of our greeting culture!

All Etiquette specialist and experts, agree to one thing in common, that there is a lot of influence exerted in a proper handshake[\[19\]](#). Different cultures have different ways of greeting, some that involve handshakes and others not. Haley Danielle Holland writes, "Handshakes are generally the most common form of greeting; however Chinese handshakes are not nearly as aggressive as an American handshake ("Export, Innovate, Invest -The Canadian Trade Commissioner Service"). Strength in a handshake can be seen as professional and confident in the United States however in China, it would be preserved as overbearing".[\[20\]](#) Russell Huesbsch adds, "Handshakes are a standard greeting, and create one of the first impressions you make on a stranger"[\[21\]](#), handshakes help create the first ripple in communication. Russell further quotes Kevin Eikenberry an expert team organizer of the Kevin Eikenberry Group to support his point, "Beyond the physical greeting, handshakes start a relationship with another person and subtly give off a signal that you are pleased to meet him".[\[22\]](#) This stretches further into the business and corporate world as well.

A myriad of businesses have a culture that supports and endorses handshakes as a foundational form of greeting. Nonetheless, handshakes are done differently and they are culture based. Post argues that there are only three types of handshakes with only one that is acceptable.[\[23\]](#) He disqualifies both the bone-crusher handshake and the limp-wrist handshake as he approves the firm handshake (Grip firmly and warmly, without squeezing hard). Two or three pumps are all that's needed -so don't prolong the event by holding on longer than is necessary). In this case proper etiquette advises that one has to understudy the culture and tradition that they are faced with to be able to practice and express common courtesy in a professional setting.

For cultures that practices handshakes, the recent World Health Organization guidelines[\[24\]](#) have, not just shaken their hands off but the whole cultural and traditional fiber that holds their greeting practices in place. Just out of the blues and in an instant, people who have embraced a lifelong and longstanding culture of Handshakes are being told to refrain from doing what is ingrained in them. They are being told to keep space between them. Though proper etiquette has always encouraged people to maintain a distance and not invade other people's personal spaces, by allowing a gap of 1 to 1.25 meters (3 ft to 4ft) between the greeters) as they shake hands, it is now impossible to do that at a distance of 2 meters (6ft).

The most common and acceptable way of greeting that showed that someone was poised and well-groomed was that as soon as they stepped into someone else's or when you are introduced to someone, they offered their hand by extending it toward the other person. Technically, your initial stretching of the hand was meant to invoke the other person's response by then stretching theirs in return. Therefore, as advised by the Etiquette Scholar, "you would simply extend your hand halfway to the other person with your right thumb (for right-handed people) pointed upwards and your four fingers pressed together" [25]. Having gained their attention and access to their hand one would lean slightly toward the other person and make eye contact. This is done while maintaining a grip, mirrored by the other person's grip. Nonetheless, according to business etiquette expert Lydia Ramsey, grips are also cultural, the French, for instance, use a light grip and a single pump [26].

All these rules have been temporarily put on hold so as to curb the spread of the Corona virus. In the early days of the discovery of Covid-19, some regulations suggested a replacement of handshakes by introducing the fist bumps, elbow to elbow greetings, feet shakes, bum greetings and lastly bows or waves (the last two have remained as the only acceptable means of greetings as the rest have been phased out). In this era, if one is to perform a handshake, they have to immediately wash their hands or wipe themselves with alcohol wipes or sanitizers. This goes against the etiquette rules, which state that it is bad etiquette to wipe your hands in front of your greeter after your greetings / right after contact with them. Lila MacLellan, reporter of Quartz at Work guides, "Good etiquette can still play a role in how you comply with the new hygiene rules". [27]

BCC Work-life wrote about what Public health experts are currently pushing – a re-examination of the ritual of handshakes. It brings in views from two experts, one being Dr. Fauci, head of the United States' National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. He is quoted saying to the Wall Street Journal, "I don't think we should ever shake hands ever again, to be honest with you". [28] BBC also quoted Infectious Disease expert of Mayo Clinic, one of the largest medical research institutions in the United States of America, Gregory Poland saying, "When you extend your hand, you are extending a bioweapon". [29] Gregory Poland's argument is that handshaking is an outmoded custom and it has no place in a culture that believes in a germ theory. Anything that requires proximity and physical contact, is detrimental to health in the meantime as Covid-19 is said to be both airborne and spreads through saliva droplets.

People whose handshakes are being rejected or repelled are left feeling chastised inevitably stigmatizing the handshaking greeting itself. Is this the dying or the end of the global Etiquette of handshakes? I believe the answer is no. It will be sometime before we go back to the handshakes greeting norm...but this socially and culturally deep-rooted practice will be extremely hard to rid ourselves of. Therefore, in the meantime, it is recommended to try and borrow greetings styles from other cultures. The Japanese bow would readily a first learning point. It's pros and cons – quickly informs the new discourse in Etiquette.

Social Distancing: A new norm.

Covid-19 has brought in a new perspective in the etiquette and grooming narrative. A new norm called social distancing has been activated.

Social distancing is not as new as we would want to think of it. It has been used in many cultures and traditions for different purposes. It has been used for moral, ethical, medical, taboo, ritual and religio-spiritual purposes. However, it is important to correctly define social distancing in the context of Covid-19. Who on April, 17th, 2020, in its Question and Answer section addressing the question, 'What is the difference between self-isolation, self-quarantine and distancing?' both defines and distinguishes social distancing from self-isolation and self-quarantine as follows;

Quarantine means restricting activities or separating people who are not ill themselves but may have been exposed to COVID-19. The goal is to prevent spread of the disease at the time when people just develop symptoms. b) Isolation means separating people who are ill with symptoms of COVID-19 and may be

infectious to prevent the spread of the disease. c) Physical distancing means being physically apart. WHO recommends keeping at least 1-metre distance from others. This is a general measure that everyone should take even if they are well with no known exposure to COVID-19.[\[30\]](#)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), stated that social distancing is also called ‘physical distancing’ and defined it as, “keeping space between yourself and other people outside of your home”.[\[31\]](#) These methods are used to reduce frequency and closeness of contact between people in order to decrease the risk of transmission of diseases. Social distancing would immediately mean that no hugs, embraces, kisses and touch; including avoiding sitting, standing and walking together within a space of less than 2 meters (6ft). Nonetheless, one is able to continue doing all these with only their immediate household members (spouses, parents, children and siblings and anyone who lives with you on a more permanent basis in the same house). That means those people should practice social distancing with the strictest of all measures outside their homes so as not to spread the virus to other family members. This is important because CDC states, “Recent studies indicate that people who are infected but do not have symptoms likely also play a role in the spread of COVID-19”.[\[32\]](#)

Social distancing is also introducing another issue – one that is financial: a cashless transactional system. Most institutions including banks are not giving out or receiving cash at the moment, they are encouraging online or electronic banking.

Retail outlets are not allowing people to shop in large numbers as usual. There is a huge restriction in terms of the number of customers inside the shop per given period of time. Additionally, once the shop is considered full (maximum number inside), people have to queue/stand in a line outside maintaining 2 meters apart. This is the trend in any public sphere at the moment. WHO says, “When grocery shopping, keep at least 1-metre distance from others and avoid touching your eyes, mouth and nose. If possible, sanitize the handles of shopping trolleys or baskets before shopping. Once home, wash your hands thoroughly and also after handling and storing your purchased products”.[\[33\]](#)

Religious institutions: in countries that are still allowing in-person meetings are doing so with a restricted number of attendees; churches, mosques, temples, synagogues and other places of worship are all sitting either in clusters of only related family members or 2 meters apart if not related. It’s a new phenomenon altogether, though. G. Markkula, et al, predict that in the future it would create space-sharing conflicts as rules have to be strictly observed[\[34\]](#). This will also bring out a need to study further human interactive behavior based on space-sharing conflicts.

Workplaces being closed for those deemed as non-essential is a phenomenon that is rendering many unemployed. On May 5th, 2020, Airbnb Co-Founder and CEO Brian Chesky, wrote to his employees an emotional letter that stated, “For a company like us whose mission is centered around belonging, this is incredibly difficult to confront, and it will be even harder for those who have to leave Airbnb,”[\[35\]](#) He went further to say, “Out of our 7,500 Airbnb employees, nearly 1,900 teammates will have to leave Airbnb, comprising around 25% of our company. Since we cannot afford to do everything that we used to, these cuts had to be mapped to a more focused business”.[\[36\]](#) Brian’s letter speaks to the etiquette of business communication. Though, does not in any way avoid the bad news many jobs lost, Meredith Bodgas commends the thoughtfulness and emotion put into it, stating it’s “resulting in letters that not only comfort the newly unemployed but also inspire readers to be more compassionate in their professional lives”[\[37\]](#). Bodgas further urge that Airbnb CEO’s letter of Employees About Layoffs Should Be How Every Company Handles COVID Cutbacks.

Most learning institutions are currently closed, rendering a rise of the online learning. This is currently an effective method in controlling spread of infections from child to child but others have argued that its

effectiveness depends on the contacts children maintain outside of school[38]. This has challenged the conventional ways of doing school, bringing about a situation that will see a difficulty in returning to normalcy.

Public transportation including airplanes, trains, trams, buses and taxis are all being strict in the way they are handling their passengers. The reason more stringent measures, such as complete boarder closures, are being put into travelling now is that studies showed “airport screening was found to be ineffective in preventing viral transmission during the 2003 SARS outbreak in Canada and USA”[39]. Thus, observing stricter measures is thought to be effective as many people may not show symptoms during the early stages of the infection. They have instituted measures that are seeing and would continue to see a change in how traveling will be now and in the future. Brian Chesky predicts,

Travel in this new world will look different, and we need to evolve Airbnb accordingly. People will want options that are closer to home, safer, and more affordable. But people will also yearn for something that feels like it’s been taken away from them — human connection. When we started Airbnb, it was about belonging and connection. This crisis has sharpened our focus to get back to our roots, back to the basics, back to what is truly special about Airbnb — everyday people who host their homes and offer experiences. [40]

Most commuter operators are not allowing more than two people to sit in each row next to each other. According to BBC, “Passengers using public transport should stay 2m (6ft) apart and wear face coverings, under government guidelines”[41], a thing a respondent to BBC Matt Hickson said, “It is next to impossible to social distance on the Tube”[42]. On top of that no one is allowed to travel without a mask. These are interesting times in terms of what we have always known to be the etiquette of social distancing. Socially polished upsurges self-assurance and puts one at a social and professional advantage being poised while observing social distancing.

The Mask Etiquette: Demystifying the hypocrisy of masks

Masks, (objects that cover the face for variety of reasons) have a history that pre-dates 7000 B.C., that is almost 9000 years today[43]. Paul S. Wingert defines masks as, ‘a form of disguise or concealment usually worn over or in front of the face to hide the identity of a person and by its own features to establish another being’.[44] In narrating the history of the mask the Merriam-Webster On-line Dictionary writes that the Greek word ‘hypokrites’,[45] from which we get the English word hypocrite, means ‘an actor’ or ‘a stage player’ referencing the actors in ancient Greek theatre who wore large masks to mark which character they were playing, and as they interpreted the story from underneath their masks. Hence, the word hypocrite, would mean ‘any person who was wearing a figurative mask and pretending to be someone or something they were not. By extension ‘masks’ and ‘hypokrites’ are synonymous. This is why in Africa and the Caribbean islands masks are used for ritual masquerades in both entertainment and spiritual ceremonies.

However, masks, and what they mean, have evolved with time and their purpose too has evolved. Modernization and globalization have both played a role in this evolution influencing their appearance, shapes and styles. Fashion was not spared in the greater construct of masks. Over the years, masks made of wood, bones, feather, clay and leather, have been used for disguise, protection, entertainment, ceremonies and/or for ritual practices. In inevitably, masks are a traditional, cultural, professional, ritual, religious, entertainment and fashionable statement.

According to the History of the Greek Theatre, “Greek theatre masks were designed so that the spectators could see the expressions of the actors more clearly, therefore building their understanding of the story. Greek masks had largemouth holes so that the actors could effectively project their voice through the mask”.[46] The Greek Theatre masks carried two main themes, comedy and tragedy.

The materials, purposes and shapes of masks, altogether affected the way the masks were made and who used them. The ritualists, hunters, warriors, olden days gladiators, soldiers, performers, theatrics, fashionistas, sport people, police men and women, movie actors, scientists, medical personal, industrial workers, engineers, miners, and any one handling dust, chemicals or food have worn masks. With that, it would seem like everyone has had a need for a mask for one reason or another in their individual life times, with many of the (modern) reasons being for medical, protective or occupational purposes.

Types of masks

There are several types of masks and these include: Medical masks: for oxygen supply, surgical masks. The surgical masks like the N95 worn by doctors are not meant to protect the doctors themselves but the patient from infections during the course if the surgery. This is very crucial especially for the health professionals who treat Covid-19 positive patients without wearing a mask for protection; it is dangerous as they can easily catch the virus. Therefore, when people wear these surgical masks it just gives them a false sense of reassurance (as it doesn't offer enough protection from viruses). It is better to actually use cloth masks or the N3 masks. Gas mask protects from dangerous gases. Shield masks on helmets; Welding masks that protect eyes and face of the welder form bright light and flying sparks and finally, winter masks to protect from the cold, and frost bites. All these serve different purposes.

On the other hand, masks which have been used for good purposes in almost every field of life has not spared itself of some negative uses. Masks have been used for criminal, immoral and unethical purposes as well. For instance, bank robbers, kidnappers and hijacks have all been known to disguise their faces with the use of masks.

Masks can also be brought into the gender discussion. For instance, in the food industry masks are or were generally used to cover men's beards. Women do not or did not wear masks in the processing rooms. The reason for men wearing masks was to prevent their facial hair from contaminating the food. Women simply wore head caps, gloves and other protective clothing. Women in fashion and entertainment industries, wear masks as ornamentation.

Masks in 2020: A Response to Covid-19

For all we know about the history, purposes, styles, benefits, the good and bad of masks Covid-19 has re-introduced and re-written their story. Governments across the world are making it mandatory to wear masks in public places. In most parts of the world it is actually now a crime to be seen without a mask in public places. Amir Ismael highlights, "CDC is now recommending that everyone wear cloth masks when leaving the house for essential trips to public places like grocery stores, pharmacies, or mandatory hospital and doctor visits. With some states requiring that everyone outside wear face coverings and certain businesses making them mandatory for entry or service, people are resorting to buying homemade masks, and Etsy has become a popular place to find them"[\[47\]](#). What used to be a taboo less than six months ago is now quickly becoming a new social norm.

You are actually seen to be well poised today by how you don your mask on. It is a form of pride and a way of life to have masks on. Masks have now become the new gold as evidenced by their scarcity worldwide, as Carly Sitzer note, "Right now, the brave doctors, nurses, and healthcare providers all over the country are experiencing a shortage of PPE – personal protective equipment aka the masks, gloves, goggles, and gowns that'll protect them as they're on the frontlines of the battle against the novel corona virus".[\[48\]](#) Because, of the scarcity of masks throughout the globe, many people have actually become mask makers overnight. This is giving back the rise of the mask fashion. Though, the masks are being specifically worn to prevent people from spreading and infecting others, or being infected with the Corona virus, largely the customization of

those masks is also cultural, traditional and a new fashion statement. This has also stimulated a lot of creativity that was dormant in people. Alicia Lee of CNN writes,

Now, across the globe, people are no longer just using masks as protective gear — they are using them to make statements about their personalities, their politics and their beliefs. Just as clothes can say a lot about a person, masks can too. Thousands of different patterns, colors, and styles have popped up on sites like Etsy, showcasing the increased interest in personalizing masks in the time of coronavirus. The demand for creative masks is so high, there's now even a company that has formed its entire business model around them.[\[49\]](#)

Many people are using resources readily available at their disposal: old socks, ragged clothes, fleece clothes, fleece blankets, African print materials, rubber bands and other ornamental pieces. Different styles and presentations are all on the streets, others in shops and stylists wearing them at work too. The medical N95 masks should be reserved for medical staff only and not for the general public. The cloth masks although not very effective when no filter is added, the option of adding filters is there, and is being used by those making homemade masks for sell, thus making them expensive.

Corona virus has, without doubt, stepped into the dressing etiquette world with a bang and with a difference. It seems it has also re-addressed the mask phobias that a number of people previously had. Now people can walk into places like banks, religious institutions, schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, just to name a few, without being judged. Rather, they are actually respected and give much more preferential treatment than those without masks. Surely Covid-19 has become a game changer in the “etiquette space”. It is also not proper for people wearing masks to take them off when they want to talk to people. It defeats the entire purpose.

Navigating Previous bans on masks and veils during Covid-19 pandemic

Masks used to a name tag for criminals and criminal activities. This led many people to bundle masks as illegal in public places as they posed a threat to human life: masks were being used for bank robberies, terrorism, abductions, kidnappings and other immoral activities. Though now there is now a re-examination of their current meaning. The present day situation states that wearing a mask has become the difference between getting infected or decreasing the chances of getting infected greatly (given there's a chance of also getting Covid-19 from contaminated surfaces).

In 2019 countries like Australia had banned masks and veils worn on religious grounds in public places. Philip Oltermann of the Guardian News reported, “Austrian MPs have approved a law aimed at banning the headscarf in primary schools, a measure proposed by the ruling rightwing government. The text refers to any “ideologically or religiously influenced clothing which is associated with the covering of the head”.[\[50\]](#) Two years prior, in August 2017, Radhika Sanghani of Telegraph, in her report he listed countries that had put both a partial ban and a national ban on women wearing veils in public. The list of those countries includes; Netherlands, Belgium, France, Austria, Switzerland, Spain, Italy, Turkey, Chad, Niger, Cameroon and Rep. Congo.[\[51\]](#) It is interesting how these bans will be handled in the face of Covid-19 as most countries are legitimatizing the wearing of face coverings and masks to protect themselves and others from the virus. This constitutes a legal dilemma on the etiquette of dressing.

Gloves in 2020 in reaction to Covid-19

The Britannica defines gloves as, “covering for the hand with separate sections for the fingers and thumb, sometimes extending over the wrist or part of the arm. Fingerless gloves, called mitts in colonial America, have five holes through which the fingers and thumb extend”.[\[52\]](#)

Gloves have a long history that goes back to the stone age, as ancient cave paintings depict. However, as history progress as Kristina Stankovski writes, “the nineteenth century saw the development of social codes that prescribed the types of gloves to be worn during particular day and evening engagements. To appear in public without gloves in situations that called for glove wearing was to invite censure or ridicule. Maintaining one’s gloves was also very important, as soiled gloves were reflective of poor etiquette”.[\[53\]](#) This etiquette was very strong as Kristina Stankovski further states, “As pale-colored gloves were popular at the time, people had to purchase their gloves in multiple quantities and carry spare pairs with them on outings should one pair become soiled”.[\[54\]](#) The use of gloves was therefore, a sign of elegance and a sign of affluence. This can still be seen in the royal traditions of the United Kingdom. The Queen of Britain is always seen donning her gloves. To show poise and exposure, many people wear gloves a sign of power and a conveyance of important social messages. This could be seen by the type of dressing that demands or requires the wearing of gloves. White tie events which are mainly State events for high profiles and dignitaries, ball dances, and royal weddings.

Gloves also are commonly worn in regions that are very cold. Apart from protection gloves have been developed for other special uses. The Britannica lists the types of gloves as follows:

Thin rubber or latex gloves are used by medical and laboratory personnel. Heavy rubber gloves are used by electrical workers. Asbestos gloves protect against burns, as do gloves of heavy, twisted loop pile similar to terry cloth. Canton flannel gloves treated with polyvinyl provide plastic-coated work gloves that are heat resistant, impermeable to most fluids, and proof against acids, alkalies, industrial oils, greases, and other chemicals. Lead-impregnated gloves may be used in order to shield the hands from X-rays.[\[55\]](#)

Nonetheless, gloves have seen a change in their original purposes over the centuries. Stankovski notes, “Within the contemporary fashion discourse gloves assume a limited role and function. Their status has been reduced to utility and they are worn only as means of protection”.[\[56\]](#) She even further suggested, “It is highly unlikely that gloves will ever assume the symbolic significance they once had in the past”.[\[57\]](#) However, due to Covid-19 the glove purposes have been redefined. Now people are wearing gloves everywhere to escape the contamination from the virus. It’s now a new norm. Unfortunately, gloves have also been misused and the etiquette thereof broken.

The CDC encourages that a person must “Perform hand hygiene before putting on gloves. Gloves should cover the cuff (wrist) of gown”.[\[58\]](#) The same CDC also advises that one should “ensure glove removal does not cause additional contamination of hands. Gloves can be removed using more than one technique (e.g., glove-in-glove or bird beak)”.[\[59\]](#)

Wearing and removing gloves is both a technic but also a sign of being groomed – showing an understanding of good Etiquette.

Shoes Etiquette

Asian communities like Thailand, Vietnam, Japan, Singapore and Korea are a good place to learn from when comes to shoes Etiquette and the fight to Covid-19. It is a predefined social norm to take off your shoes immediately you get indoors in Japan. Japan-guide.com in its article ‘In door manners’ writes,

A lot of rules regarding indoor manners in Japan are related to footwear. A clear line is traditionally drawn between inside and outside, and outdoor shoes and indoor slippers are handled accordingly. These rules not only apply to most Japanese homes, but also to many traditional ryokan, some restaurants and the indoor sections of many temples, castles and other historic buildings.[\[60\]](#)

When one is in Japan and visits someone’s house out door shoes must be left at the entrance and the slippers etiquette has to be strictly followed. In most cases the hosts provide slippers for their guests. But in other circumstances, one has to have his or her own socks on rendering to the fact that not wearing socks as well as entering someone’s house barefooted is considered being impolite. In some circumstances, one can go away with entering in doors with barefoot (though it’s usually for informal circumstances only).

Additionally, in Japan, one has to be well mannered enough to know that in as much as it is generally acceptable to wear slippers anywhere indoors, rooms with tatami floor requires that slippers are removed and left by the entrance of the tatami room. Further, most tourist in Japan make etiquette blunders as they don't realize that toilet slippers are different from the rest of the house use slippers. Toilets and bathroom use different sets of slippers. This is a very good culture especially during the Covid-19 pandemic period.

The Japanese shoes etiquette is something to emulate as Covid-19 has been found to stick to the shoe soles. This makes places like France and USA, whose cultures do not necessarily mind whether one removes their shoes or not upon entering indoor spaces, an easy target for the spread of the virus. This therefore calls for a quick and a major revamping of their shoes etiquette altogether.

Removing shoes when entering homes and sacred places of worship is also a part of the religious etiquette observed in Islam, Buddhism, Sikhism and Hinduism.^[61]

It is going to be a universal norm soon to take remove one's shoes upon entering houses and other indoor spaces. Charlie Carballo gives detailed suggestions on how to not embarrass someone with a no-shoe house rule aimed at taking care of the cleanliness of one's house and also for health reasons.^[62]

The Dressing Etiquette and Working from Home: The dangers of teasing the Online Colleagues with a pair of short trousers.

It is now common knowledge that due to the rules of social distancing most governments have ordered the closure of non-essential companies until the pandemic reaches manageable sizes.

Most people have therefore been advised to work from their homes, meaning that the world has changed – leaning towards saving work online and on common company servers as well as having virtual conferences as opposed to meeting in person. Nonetheless, though working from the privacy of their homes, it is still recommended that they do so as if they are still in their public offices. Pergues writes, “Business manners seem to have become a hot topic in recent years. Image consultants cite many instances of strained client relations, missed opportunities, and pure embarrassment caused by a lack of social and professional savvy in corporate representatives”.^[63] It is easy to lose one's manners, taste and professionalism when they imagine themselves to be invisible to the public eye. Pergues however argues, “Personality is the visible aspect of your character as it impresses others. Without a pleasing personality, achieving your personal and professional goals will be an uphill battle”.^[64] This means simple and basic grooming issues like taking a bath or shower, maintaining a clean shave, brushing your teeth and keeping one's hair neat are still an absolute necessity.

Religious and academic institutions too have since instituted virtual churches and school. This calls for the Online etiquette that many have not been exposed to. What to say and how to say it, what to wear and how to project oneself is another big issue to consider. Manners and professional polish are critical to your success in business^[65]. Your social skills which extends your home office and virtual life are contributory factors to your next promotion, an exposure to new opportunities and changes for your future hire. Because, social media is a common pool, your potential customers, company clients and partners may judge your firm by the manners you display on line.

Unfortunately, this shocking new experience to many, who are not used to working from home has caused them to go either blank with what to do or going completely out of line in trying to marry home office etiquette and virtual etiquette.

Social media posts from platforms like Instagram, Facebook and others have recorded many cases of professional parading themselves in various types of unprofessional dress which include wearing only their under wear with no trousers, or wearing short pants/trousers, no socks, or no shoes. Some are seen in

pajamas on the bottom half of the body and a very expensive tie and suit jacket on the top half. One must be dressed as if they are physically going to their office for a meeting online. For women; Pergues advises, “Refrain from wearing anything distracting, such as gaudy rings, clanging bracelets, swinging earrings, plunging necklines, etc.”.[66] The spectacle of many examples of this, showcases the unprofessionalism of some individuals. For the office workers who are failing to show restraint and proper form by posting their private lives on social media, such unprofessional and uncouth behavior expresses their level of hypocrisy to the world. It is a form of being discourteous to their fellow colleagues as well as a misunderstanding of the role they play in impacting a society that relies on their expertise.

Simple situations like being asked to reach for a document that would make one stand and walk from the desk may expose their impropriety, thereby demoralizing their colleagues. The danger is such that once colleagues perceive them to be unprofessional and devoid of a trained personality, their effectiveness (and respect) is greatly hampered. Every professional working virtually from the comfort of their home must always remember that their main “focus on helping the company to achieve its objectives while fulfilling your financial and career goals”.[67]

However, working from home comes with its own challenges. There is an issue of fusing work duties and family life as well as maintain a corporate polish and by default be expected to know all the etiquette rules. Pergues reminds us that, “Whether you are chairing or participating in a meeting in a social, religious, or professional setting, certain courtesies and protocols should be observed to assure the effectiveness of the outcome”.[68] Thus far, many people are being found wanting because those rules have not been embedded in their being.

Some people when they are on online meetings, they don’t follow the virtual etiquette rules. Many tend to drink and eat while they talk online. Be it virtual or audio, it is very uncouth and unprofessional. Some tend to mix family issues such as playing with their children and doing other house chores as part of their multi-tasking at home. This is a huge distraction to their colleagues on the other side of the line. Basic manners and common courtesies recommend that, at least one has to properly excuse oneself, from the rest of the team to take care of other issues. Dignity is very important. A lot will need to be done to achieve an all-inclusive professional home office etiquette polish.

Covid-19 and Good Hygiene Practices

Pre- Covid-19 etiquette rules were taken lightly as though they did not exist or were a thing of the past. Only a handful of people who chose to be distinct and selected lived by those rules. Many either looked at etiquette and grooming as archaic or for a certain class of people.

General cleanliness and basic hygiene were not common words anymore. However, with the entrance of Covid-19 hygiene is now a buzz word. Hands are now being sanitized and washed more on a daily basis. Hygiene and cleanliness are becoming a social norm with CDC, WHO, UNICEF and many other health organizations pushing for such changes. It’s also important to note, “if using hand sanitizer ensure that it contains at least 60% alcohol, ensure coverage on all parts of hands and rub hands together for 20-30seconds until hands feel dry. If hands are visibly dirty, always wash hands with soap and water”.[69] The 20-30 seconds rule seconds under running water still applies when washing hands with soap and water.

We can no longer continue to ignore the very basic form of hygiene, the washing of hands, it is now a must to wash hands after blowing your nose, sneeze or use the bathroom. Every time one leaves or returns to their house, handling contact lenses, preparing food, before eating and applying make-up, hands must be washed at all cost. Poland points out that high-touch surfaces like doorknobs and counters are habitually

smearred with fecal matter, and that improving bathroom etiquette might be a better long-term solution than ditching the handshake[70].

Toilet and bathroom etiquette are being observed with much intensity. No one wants to use any unclean space: people are sanitizing literally everything in both private and public places. Even beyond the toilet and bathrooms, spaces that are deemed infected, are disinfected and washed and brushed thoroughly. Mohamed of UNICEF, recommends, “the use of disinfectant product containing alcohol (of around 70 per cent) or bleach. Vinegar and other natural products are not recommended”[71]when cleaning high touch surfaces.

Handling and preparing food are another good hygienic practice that has seen a rise due to the dawn of Covid-19. This is a good practice though at the moment there is no evidence that Covid-19 can be transmitted through food. Barriola however writes, While at present there is no evidence of people catching the COVID-19 virus from food or food packaging, it may be possible that people can become infected by touching a surface or object contaminated by the virus and then touching their face. The greater risk comes from being in close contact with other people while outside food shopping or receiving a food delivery (as receiving any delivery in areas with local transmission). As always, good hygiene is important when handling food to prevent any food-borne illnesses.[72]

Apart from having good ventilation and having knowledge of precautionary measures to take when using cleaning products, following cleaning product instructions for safe and effective use, use of masks and gloves have been very instrumental in the fight against the Coronavirus.

Nothing is left to chance. Any items that are suspected to be infected are being immediately incinerated.

Disposing Used Masks and Gloves in a Sanitary Manner

With a lot of people who have never handled or been trained to use gloves, masks, wipes, and other personal protective equipment that requires a certain way to dispose after use finding themselves suddenly needing to use these items, many are being caught unawares. Some people, are exhibiting lack of etiquette and poise, by being litter bugs. This is however very dangerous in the season we are living in (there however has never been a time when anyone has been allowed to be a litter bug) because pathogen causing Covid-19 is said to have the capacity to survive for hours or even days on different surface. Observing good hygiene and proper sanitary measures when disposing these wastes is now crucial than ever before.

The Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA), and the National nonprofit Keep America Beautiful have both reported a substantial increase in improperly discarded used cleaning supplies, paper towels, tissues, protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves, sanitizing wipes, masks – a great cause for concern.[73]With many people using PPEs in the quest to fight coronavirus, the littering and trash disposal has also increased. David Biderman, SWANA executive director and CEO, said, “No one should be leaving used plastic gloves or masks on the ground, in a parking lot or tossing them into the bushes. Discarded contaminated PPE on the ground increases the risk of exposure to COVID-19 and has negative impacts on the environment.”[74]

John Fernandez writing for Baptist Health wrote, “The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reminds the public that the outside of gloves and masks can be contaminated. It recommends using one gloved hand to grab the palm of the other glove and peel it off. Then washing your hands thoroughly for at least 20 seconds”.[75]One should make sure not to touch their eyes, nose or mouth after removing both the mask and gloves. The norm is that immediately you take off both the masks and gloves, you dispose

them immediately, however people cannot afford the luxury of throwing away their masks and therefore resorting to homemade cotton masks and sadly others repeating the use of the same mask for long periods of time. Sitzer recommends, “After each wear, wash cloth masks in a washing machine before reuse. Hot water and regular laundry detergent should do the trick at cleaning these masks, and you can also add color-safe bleach as an extra precaution”^[76] whereas paper masks should be discarded after each use since they are not recyclable and not safe for reuse.

Used gloves and masks, after being safely removed, must be bagged first then disposed in trash or place that is conducive for safe disposal.

Mariecor Agravante^[77], has given some very safe and environmentally friendly ways on how to dispose of waste during the Covid-19 pandemic. He suggests that disinfectants, cleaning supplies and hand sanitizer’s packaging can be appropriately discarded in either recycle bins or trash cans, depending on the labels. Sponges and scouring pads should be thrown in the trash, of course taking caution based on the containers.

Specialty cleaners like oven cleaners need one to check for directions from the local waste management companies for advice on how to safely dispose of these items. Additionally, Agravante, he says according to Earth911, it is important to read the labels of cleaning items for specific disposal instructions. This is because, many antibacterial cleaning products contain triclosan, which could contribute to the antibiotic resistance of bacteria, so it should not be poured down your drain.

Agravante, went further to state ways in which one can dispose of wipes, toilet paper and other paper products, he argues,

“Despite marketing’s ploy to pass off the ever-popular wipe as ‘flushable,’ it isn’t. Many municipal plumbing systems were not designed to handle flushed wipes. While many people stocked up on wipes after the toilet paper supply ran dry, disinfectant wipes have also flown off the shelves. But Green Matters warns against flushing both ‘flushable’ and disinfectant wipes. “The only thing (besides bodily fluids) that you should be flushing down the toilet is all that toilet paper you stocked up on.”^[78]

Paper towels and other paper products are usually recyclable and therefore recycling bins so do, in disposing them. Beth I’w Wneudgyda adds, “Baby wipes, cosmetic wipes, bathroom cleaning wipes and moist toilet tissues are not recyclable and are not flushable, either, even though some labels say they are. They should always be placed in your rubbish bin.”^[79]

CONCLUSION

The principles that guide and govern etiquette and grooming are static. Nonetheless, manners and courtesies, inescapably change. They change with times and seasons. Covid-19 pandemic has introduced a new season, that demands change and a redefining of manners and courtesies. Post Covid-19 it is unavoidable that most things will not remain the same. What is really constant, is change itself in this season. This paper therefore prepares us for a new season as it apprehends any shocks that many arise with an immediate and instant changes that are Covid-19 instigated.

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