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Almond, K orcid.org/0000-0002-0311-106X and Evans, E orcid.org/0000-0002-3848-582X
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A Regional Study of Women's Emotional Attachments to the Consumption and Making of Ordinary Clothing, Drawing on Archives in Leeds, West Yorkshire, 1939-1979

By KEVIN ALMOND AND ELAINE EVANS

This research takes an interdisciplinary approach, investigating dress through the lens of regional social history by exploring women's emotional experiences related to making and consuming ordinary clothing in the period 1939-1979. A case study encouraged Yorkshire-based participants to reveal diverse stories associated with ordinary clothing. This brought the technical knowledge of making clothes and material-based research methodologies into dialogue with regional social history and helps us understand how ordinary people shaped the way women dressed. The research was funded by a grant from Leeds Museums and Galleries and University of Leeds Cultural Institute. It aimed to build a relationship between the users of the dress and textiles collection at Leeds Museums and Galleries and the Yorkshire Fashion Archive, housed at University of Leeds, which is a regionally focused collection of (mainly) twentieth-century garments and accessories (figures 1 and 2). The collaboration allowed the museum curators and academics to discover how ordinary clothes can be used to engage the community with dress collections to discover and document untold stories of material culture in practice.

Keywords: Yorkshire, dressmaking, consuming, women, ordinary clothing, emotional attachment



Figure 1. Images from the Yorkshire Fashion Archive

© Courtesy of Yorkshire Fashion Archive, University of Leeds.



Figure 2. Images from the Dress and Textiles Collection, Leeds Museums and

Galleries © Courtesy of Leeds Museums and Galleries.

INTRODUCTION

The research focusses upon women's emotional attachment to and experiences of making and consuming ordinary clothing in Yorkshire during the period 1939-1979. It was throughout this period that the scale of clothing manufacture was critical to the economic prosperity of the region. Ordinary clothing can be loosely defined as garments that are worn in the conventional undertakings of day-to-day life and for routine social activities. Generally they are an everyday selection of styles that are unremarkable or commonplace as opposed to those selected to be worn for special occasions or holidays. Although often created for general wear or functionality this type of clothing can be influenced by fashionable designs but do not necessarily conform to on-trend ideas.

The study is intentionally sited in contrast to the way that large museums, such as the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and the Costume Institute at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, have curated extravagant or luxurious exhibitions of designer fashion. Exhibitions such as *Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty* have become hugely popular in the last thirty years, but they overlook the experiences of ordinary consumers and their clothing, which form a significant part of many dress collections.¹ These garments are curated in less ostentatious, but equally informative, exhibitions that contribute to our historical understanding of clothing and fashion, particularly if viewed in context with regional social history. As the academics, Bethan Bide, Jade Halbert and Liz Tregenza explained, 'Thus, the history of fashion has often been that of the celebrity designers who dressed social elites, while the histories of everyday fashion and those who produced and consumed it have

been neglected'.² By focussing on Yorkshire women during the time frame 1939-1979, the research aims to uncover the stories behind ordinary dress and their significance to dress history through the emotional connections women had with making and purchasing their clothes.

The county of Yorkshire is the largest in England and is situated to the north of the country. It is divided into four separate sections identified as the North, South, East and West Riding. Due to its size, the county encompasses a wide expanse of rural and urban localities. There are five cities within the region: Bradford, York, Sheffield, Hull and Leeds. The county also combines vast areas of countryside that includes the acknowledged beauty of the Yorkshire Dales, the Pennine Hills and mountains and the Yorkshire coast. Spread amongst these are a large array of market and industrial towns as well as many villages. The map in figure 3 demonstrates where donations to the Yorkshire Fashion Archive, housed at University of Leeds have originated from within the county. The majority of donations are from the more densely populated West Yorkshire region although contributions have and continue to be received from the rural areas of Yorkshire.



Figure 3. Yorkshire Fashion Archive donor locations. © Base map © 2019 Google; Supplementary data © courtesy of Elaine Evans

The structure of the article takes a systematic approach and centres on the aims outlined in the grant awarded by Leeds Museums and Galleries and the Cultural Institute at University of Leeds.³ The literature review concentrates on records of clothing purchases, shopping, manufacture and home dressmaking during the period 1939-1979, when the clothing industry in Leeds and surrounding cities was at its peak. The methodology section describes the research approach. The findings section is split into three. The first section describes the background to the project and the planned activities. These consisted of a public workshop, in which selected garments from Leeds Museums and Galleries (LMG) and the Yorkshire Fashion Archive (YFA) were displayed (Figure 4).⁴ This allowed participants to explore the making and purchasing of ordinary clothing in the Yorkshire region. It also helped to build relationships between the two collections, engaging the public with tangible objects

from both archives and allowing curators to better understand the cultural context of these items. The participants were able to observe and examine garments in the relation to the theme and discussions in the workshop. Invitations were extended to groups such as LMG and YFA donors, University of Leeds International Textile Archive donors, The Costume Society and The Northern Society of Costume and Textiles.⁵ The focus of the workshops was to identify women's emotional attachment to clothing in Yorkshire and the conversations were recorded and transcribed. The themes explored were: shopping and retail, home dressmaking, shopping for supplies, commercial clothing manufacture in the region, education and skills, fashion and social mobility. The final section draws conclusions from this research. It considers the emotional relationships Yorkshire women developed in the making and consumption of ordinary clothing and how this shaped the way they dressed. The overriding aims of the study are:

- To explore Yorkshire women's ordinary clothing in the period 1939-1979 and ascertain how these items were made and consumed.
- To record and better understand the place clothing had in the lives of mid twentieth-century Yorkshire women, significantly contributing to gaps in the existing literature.
- To identify women's emotional attachments to the making and consumption of dress in Yorkshire 1939-1979.



Figure 4. Participants in the workshops analyse items of ordinary clothing and underwear from Yorkshire Fashion Archive and Leeds Museums and Galleries Collections (2019). © Photograph courtesy of Alice Humphrey.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of literature revealed a sparsity of work related to women's experiences of making and purchasing clothing in Yorkshire during the period 1939-1979. Within existing research there is a greater focus on menswear due to the documentation of the men's tailoring industry that was so prevalent throughout Yorkshire during the twentieth century. This focusses upon the manufacturing of tailored garments but

there is little written about men's experiences of design and consumption. Danielle Sprecher's PhD thesis explores the role of the Leeds tailors and focusses on the impact of this industry and the way that British men dressed during the period 1945-1980.⁶ Her article about the Demob suit for *Costume: The Journal of the Costume Society* to some extent considers men's feelings about wearing these suits.⁷ This builds on the research of historian Katrina Honeyman, who wrote extensively about the textile and fashion industries in Britain, specifically about gendered perspectives in industrial histories and the Leeds clothing industry in the period 1850-1990.⁸ Her work focusses on menswear due to the volume of tailored suits produced for the British and overseas markets however there is an acknowledgement that womenswear was also produced in lesser amounts in the Yorkshire region.⁹

There is limited literature related to the notion of Yorkshire clothing and style within the region, but one example is Mary M. Brooks' study on women's and children's clothing in the Wallis Archive at the York Castle Museum.¹⁰ In this research, Brooks stresses the importance of object-based research in dress history, specifically as a way of determining the differences in cut and construction between commercially manufactured and home-made garments. The study focuses on the twentieth century clothing in the collection, documenting the period between c.1910 and the 1970s. The author Catherine McDermott described British clothing in *Made in Britain* as 'Beyond fashion: an enduring image that dresses an attitude and a lifestyle, and that continues to combine quality and tradition with the contemporary and the new'.¹¹ This encapsulates many Yorkshire women's approach to clothing throughout 1939-1979. In the journal paper, *Made in Yorkshire: Harnessing the*

Zeitgeist, Kevin Almond wrote a pen portrait of Yorkshire clothing, exploring the merger of Yorkshire's traditional heritage in clothing and textiles and the way Yorkshire people chose to dress through an historical, social and visual consideration of clothing and production in the region.¹² Fashion journalist Colin McDowell was interviewed within the paper and he strongly felt the Yorkshire region had no profile as a fashion centre. He had observed Yorkshire fashion in the centres of Huddersfield, Leeds and Sheffield but rarely identified people he would term fashionable, instead he felt they wore versions of ordinary clothing.

General literature was considered related to making clothes, both at home and through the work of professional dressmakers.¹³ Elizabeth Robinson's PhD thesis *Women and Needlework in Britain, 1920 – 1970* examined 'five key aspects of women's engagement with needlework: definitions of "leisure" and "work"; motivations of thrift in peacetime and war; emotions; the modern and the traditional and finally, the gendering of needlework'.¹⁴ Historian Cheryl Buckley's study, *On the Margins: Theorizing the History and Significance of Making and Designing Clothes at Home*, considered two case studies of women who made clothing at home, to sell outside of the home: Mary Skelton (c.1897-1982) in Stockton, near Middlesbrough, UK and Betty Foster (b.1929) near Barnsley, Yorkshire.¹⁵ These detailed stories not usually told about ordinary clothes made by skilled needlewomen. Making and designing clothes at home was described as a form of design practice common to many women (Yorkshire women included). The way these clothes were worn revealed aspects of women's identities. Design historian Fiona Hackney's essay, *Making Modern Women, Stitch by Stitch: Dressmaking and Women's Magazines in*

Britain 1919-39 described the experiences of a dressmaker named 'Flo'. She mentions, 'Flo's knowledge and skills as a dressmaker enabled her to perform a transformation of style which she associated with social class. The clothes Flo made had meanings specific to her social environment, the road she lived in, the Saturday night dance she went to'.¹⁶

Dedicated literature related to the history of clothes shopping and consumption in Yorkshire during 1939-1979 is rare, although works exist that examine the wider genre in the UK with some reference to Yorkshire within the time period.¹⁷ An exhibition curated by Leeds Museums and Galleries, *Fast x Slow Fashion: Shopping For Clothes in Leeds 1720 - 2020* detailed clothing consumption within the city region, considering made to measure outlets and independent retailers as well as alternative ways of consuming clothing.¹⁸ The exhibition's focus on ordinary clothing consumption included: bespoke, ready to wear, second-hand clothing and re-made clothing. Reference to retail outlets within Yorkshire has been made in various books about fashion. For instance, author Marnie Fogg's work *Boutique* discusses the boutique culture that emerged in the early 1960s and highlights Yorkshire boutiques such as Pollyanna in Barnsley.¹⁹ The journalist, Alison Settle's work, *A Family of Shops: Marshall and Snelgrove*, details the history of the store, which was opened by a Yorkshire man, James Marshall (1805-1893) in London in 1837.²⁰ It had stores in the Yorkshire locations of Harrogate, Scarborough, Leeds, Bradford, York and Sheffield throughout 1939-1979 and was also mentioned by several workshop participants. Many descriptions of established and lesser known

Yorkshire shops and clothing consumption came from the recollections of the participants.

A wider literature review considered women's emotional connections to ordinary clothes through their experiences of making and consuming. Research has shown that emotion informs people's ability to process and contextualise information. For instance, clothing worn close to the body can be a lasting reminder of the physical presence of a loved one, or a former version of the self. Emotional connections to textile objects is considered by Dolan and Holloway as a relatively new development in the study of material culture, but one that is inherently important to women through the association between textiles and women's labour.²¹ There are also various online articles and blogs dedicated to emotional connections with clothing.²² These discuss issues ranging from marketing clothing through inspiring emotional connections with the consumer, to exploring relationships between moods and clothing and correlations between emotion and memory. This body of literature was explored and contextualised with the emotional connections Yorkshire women made with the making and purchasing of their clothing.

METHODOLOGY

The methodological approach was qualitative because it allows the researcher to reach the inner heart of the subject and establish themes in the data gathered, in order to reach conclusions.²³ In this context, the methodologies appropriated within the study are explained and justified. Archival research utilised both the collections of dress and textiles at LMG and the YFA to identify and study ordinary clothing. Although the

importance of other dress collections in Yorkshire, such as Bankfield Museum in Halifax and York Castle Museum were acknowledged, the emphasis on the two Leeds archives was a specification of the grant from Leeds Museums and Galleries and University of Leeds Cultural Institute. LMG Dress and Textiles Collection development policy declares, ‘A large part of the collection has a unique regional significance in that the items have been worn, bought or made in Leeds and the surrounding Yorkshire region’.²⁴ Their collection also holds a large body of material related to the tailoring industry in Leeds.²⁵ Although predominantly menswear, the collection includes some evidence of women’s tailoring from Yorkshire. The YFA was established by the fashion department at University of Leeds in the late 1990s and includes over 2000 items from locations across Yorkshire. Approximately 90% of the collection is womenswear, including: day wear, occasion wear and wedding dresses and provides a good representation of what Yorkshire women wore during the twentieth century. The collection allows the study of perfect or valuable clothing as well as items with visible signs of wear, which have been altered or mended. The archive also records contextual information from donors about where and when the clothing was made, purchased or worn. Currently the scope of the collection is heavily focussed on West Yorkshire, with a small representation of North, East and South Yorkshire. The donations are from urban and suburban areas, with good representation from large centres in West Yorkshire (Leeds, Bradford and Huddersfield) and a small number of donations from rural locations. It is notable that these centres were also the focus of Yorkshire’s textile and clothing industries, as opposed to South Yorkshire’s mining towns and North Yorkshire’s rugged farmland.

Object based research was important within the study because it facilitated the handling, observation and photography of artefacts within both archives.²⁶

Focus group research was utilised in the workshops funded by the research grant. Focus groups are sociable events, which lend themselves to public participation in the research process and engage participants with one another to evolve a discussion, rather than being a researcher-participant relationship. John W. Creswell suggests they are a method of collecting information about a shared or collective understanding as well as information from individuals.²⁷ The focus group participants revealed detailed personal narratives during the discussions, which were recorded, transcribed, and then analysed in combination with the data from object-based research from the archives. Although it is acknowledged there are challenges associated with recording multiple voices in a group setting, the purpose of this focus group was to gather narratives collectively rather than attributing specific information to individuals.

INITIAL FINDINGS

The project began with initial meetings between the academics from University of Leeds and the dress and textile curators at LMG. They organised the schedule of the public engagement workshop at Leeds Discovery Centre and also identified items in both collections that demonstrated how women experienced making and purchasing ordinary clothes in Yorkshire.²⁸ These were displayed at the workshop to form a discussion point for participants to explore connections with the technical knowledge of making processes and consumerism and how this linked to regional social history.

Eleven items were selected from YFA and seventeen items from LMG from the period 1939-1979. These included the mini dress made by donor, Susan Hoyle (dates unknown) from a Vogue pattern, *c.*1968 and the make-do and mend dress from 1945, as well as practical items such as the pinafore from *c.*1940 worn by many women to perform household duties (Figures 5, 6 and 7).²⁹ Several of the items had been altered or had signs of wear, such as staining or rips and in the case of the make-do and mend dress, were poorly manufactured. It had been made at home from a length of men's suiting and included fringing from an upholstery fabric. Some of the items had been manufactured in the Yorkshire region and all had been bought and worn in the region. The objects were photographed and prepared for display.



Figure 5. Mini dress made by donator, Susan Hoyle from a Vogue pattern, c 1968. ©

Courtesy of Photographer Michael Anderson and Leeds Museums and Galleries.

Accession number LEEAG.1980.0037.0002.



Figure 6. Make do and mend dress c. 1945. © Photograph courtesy of Yorkshire

Fashion Archive. Catalogue number LEEFA 1940-002



Figure 7. Pinafore c. 1940. Manufacturer unknown. © Photograph courtesy of Yorkshire Fashion Archive. Catalogue number LEEFA 1940-005.

The majority of items had been archived to include a short history of the owner or the garment. This information revealed the relationships the owners had with their clothing and two such histories are recorded here. The day dress had been owned by Mary Preston (1898-1984) and was donated by Mary's granddaughter (Figure 8). She lived in Bradley, North Yorkshire, had been widowed and did not participate in an active social life. The donor thought the dress would have been worn by Mary for day trips to Morecambe, weddings, christenings or events held at the village hall. Mary had worked for Grattan Catalogue PLC for many years and

according to her daughter was their longest standing agent, retiring shortly before her death in 1984, at age 86.³⁰ The summer dress from c.1952 is a home dress made version of the New Look style, introduced by Parisian designer Christian Dior (1905-1957) in 1947 (Figure 9). This style was adapted into the ordinary dress worn by many women in the late 1940s and early 1950s. It is made from green cotton with a blue paisley print and was donated by the mother of the original wearer, Rosetta Rowley from Bradford, who died from pneumonia aged 22. This implies it was hardly worn. Rosetta came from an impoverished family and her parents were out of work throughout the 1930s. She had a succession of jobs after leaving school aged 15, ranging from working in a factory and as a cinema usherette. An example of a garment from a Yorkshire based manufacturer is an interesting representation of women's clothing made within the region; the cotton floral print Droopy and Browns dress from 1978 had been donated by a woman called Polly (Figure 10). Droopy and Browns were situated in York, with clothes designed by Angela Holmes (1950-2000), who opened the first shop in 1973. Although the company made mid-market clothing in small runs, many of the designs were inspired by historic garments that did not conform to fashionable trends.



Figure 8. Day dress owned by Mary Preston. Manufacturer unknown c. 1952. Light blue rayon crepe printed with a stylised flower design. © Photograph courtesy of Leeds Museums and Galleries. Accession number LEEAG.2011.0396.0004



Figure 9. Home-made, New Look style dress owned by Rosetta Rowley, c.1952. ©

Photograph courtesy of Leeds Museums and Galleries. Accession number

LEEDM.E.1977.0024.0019.



Figure 10. Droopy and Browns dress from 1978. © © Photograph courtesy of Leeds Museums and Galleries. Accession number LEEAG.2014.0259.0014.

The call for participants in the workshops was jointly written by the academics and museum curators and was sent to the organiser's networks. We wanted to hear about stories and memories of women's clothing in Yorkshire from 1939 to 1979. The call asked, 'Do you have an interest in fashion and clothing? Were you involved in the Yorkshire clothes manufacturing industry? Are you a home dressmaker? Do you like to shop for fashion or have fond memories of shopping in Yorkshire?'³¹ There was a good response to the call and a shortlist of 26 participants was made. This was compiled to be diverse in its representation from different people within the region

and ranged from home dressmakers, donors to the YFA and academics, to people who had purchased or had an interest in clothing.

The public engagement workshop was held on 11th September 2019 at Leeds Discovery Centre. The exhibition of the garments and a short tour of the dress collection inspired the participants to consider both skilled and unskilled making techniques and how garments had been worn and in what circumstances in the 1939-1979 period (Figure 11). This was devised to jog participants' memories of making and buying clothing within the region. The group was split into two and facilitated by two people on each table with a series of prompts during the conversations that encouraged people to speak. The reminiscences and conversations flowed easily and were recorded then later transcribed.



Figure 11. Participants in the workshops at Leeds Discovery Centre (2019). ©

Photograph courtesy of Alice Humphrey.

FINDINGS FROM THE WORKSHOP FOCUS GROUPS

The findings from the focus groups are analysed under the different themes devised to act as conversation prompts by the workshop facilitators. Each workshop lasted for approximately an hour and a half and by scrutinising the transcripts it was possible to identify key points related to women's emotional experiences of ordinary clothing in Yorkshire, during the 1939-1979 timeframe. The quotes from the transcripts are kept

anonymous to reflect the group participation as opposed to the individual demographic of each individual.

Shopping and Retail

The prompts about shopping and retail were devised to identify participants' favourite places to buy clothing in Yorkshire, and what could be remembered about these experiences. Participants reflected on department stores, independent shops and dressmakers as well as favourite pieces of clothing purchased and why they were memorable. Many of the comments focussed on stores based in the cities within the region. Smaller shops and dressmakers were often in rural areas. One participant commented 'A lot of the small private dress shops were in villages and towns, they were a bit expensive for the ordinary working people. They were a bit more up-market and you couldn't afford to buy things. I didn't buy many because I am a home dressmaker so I made my own'.³² Those not located in cities tended to shop via mail order, 'My family didn't buy so much but I certainly bought a lot of things from mail order catalogues because it meant that you could pay 10 shillings a week and clothe yourself that way. And then of course at the other end a shop like Schofield's (in Leeds) would sell luxury garments such as fur, because I remember my grandma had fur coats. And in those days if your husband had a good job, in the winter you had a fur coat because that proved to everybody that you were doing fine'.³³

Memories of significant Yorkshire department stores and their value to the participants were discussed. One recalled, 'We lived in Pudsey [halfway between Leeds and Bradford], so we used to go to Bradford a lot and there were two large

stores there, Busby's and the quite posh one was Brown Muff's.³⁴ We used to go there to get some of our clothes because if you got a dress that was it for the year and was the only way you could afford to go. And they sold a very good range of different clothing there and they would sew your name on the label in the 1950s and things like that and wrap it all up beautifully'.³⁵ This comment stresses the satisfaction in the personal touch through the labelling and packaging of individual purchases. A greater level of discrete customer service was experienced in the many small dress shops within the region.

Home dressmaking/shopping for dressmaking supplies

During the discussion about shops, many participants remembered how economical it was to make clothes at home. This led to conversations about the activities involved in home dressmaking and where fabric was purchased. The street markets in Yorkshire towns like Dewsbury and Barnsley were a rich source for fabrics, patterns and haberdashery. Dewsbury market was noted in particular because there were quite a lot of traders who would go to the mills and collect end rolls of fabrics or things that were substandard. One commented, 'You could get things like Liberty tana lawn much cheaper'.³⁶ Barnsley market was important because the Marks and Spencer supplier S.R. Gents had been based in Barnsley and it was noted that people could purchase a lot of good quality unwanted fabric from the factory. One participant remembered that Sheffield was an important place to buy exciting fabric and in particular at the Cole Brothers store.³⁷ She commented, 'When I started to work, I worked opposite the market in Sheffield and there were lots of dress fabric stores

there so I used to go during the week and buy fabric and make my dress to go dancing on the Saturday'.³⁸ Patterns were either purchased or printed in magazines such as the French publication, *Elle*. They printed a very simple pattern that you could measure out and reproduce on brown paper. She further recalled, 'I think the first thing I made was a green pinafore dress and that was from an *Elle* pattern and it worked really well with fabric from Lewis's'.³⁹ The large Leeds department store Lewis's, as well as Schofield's, were noted as popular places to purchase fabric.⁴⁰

The conversations turned to the involvement Yorkshire women had in making clothing both for themselves and other people. Many recalled how they began to make their own clothes at the ages of twelve to fourteen and that many homes had a sewing machine. 'So, in the home I was in I was sort of making my own clothes when I was about fourteen, but my mother went to a dressmaker. There was a sewing machine in the house and I think a lot of people of my age would have a sewing machine in the house'.⁴¹ Even though participants recalled that many people did not have professional dressmaking skills it did not deter them from making clothes. Another remembered, 'Then you would have a go. So even if it may not be perfect, it might be a very nice fabric or a lovely colour or a nice trim, it would have something of value within it which you would like. I can't think of an equivalent now, can you?'

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Commercial clothing manufacture in the region

The participants were asked to recall memories of womenswear manufacturers in Yorkshire during 1939-1979. Many reflected on the Leeds clothing and tailoring

industry, which was significant until its decline at the end of the 1970s. 'I was very aware there were clothing manufacturers in Leeds and certainly knew all about Burton's because my father used to work there'.⁴³ Other significant companies noted included, The Maudella Pattern Company, which was founded by Maud Dunsford (1890-1947) in West Yorkshire in 1937. The patterns produced were basic womenswear styles and they were in business until the 1980s. The styles were not high fashion orientated but reflected some of the popular styles of the day. There were also recollections of businesses related to the Yorkshire textile industry, in particular the shoddy and mungo mills such as Machells in Dewsbury.⁴⁴ These mills used ground textile waste to produce recycled fabrics from which clothing was made. The womenswear manufacturer Elsie Whiteley (1903-1972), based in Halifax, was mentioned by several participants. This company began as a dressmaking business in the sitting room of Elsie's home. By the 1930s she had opened her own shop and up to her death, 'The meteoric rise of the Elsie Whiteley label saw the brand manufacture from six separate mills across Halifax and sell to over 1000 retailers across the UK including John Lewis, Fenwick and Selfridge's as well as having its own premises on Regent Street, London'.⁴⁵ Many Yorkshire women would have worn Elsie Whiteley clothes as they were a major supplier to Marks and Spencer and other high street stores. The clothes were well made, as one participant recalled, 'I moved to Halifax and they (Elsie Whiteley) were going into sharp decline but the factory shop was still operational. You could get some really nice blouses, that is what they specialised in but that was unusual, they had done a skirt to match that was really quite pretty. It

occurred to me that those who grew up in the West Riding, as I didn't, mightn't have had opportunity to go to factory shops?'⁴⁶

Clothing and social mobility

The conversations gravitated to class differentiation in the Yorkshire region and how women dressed to reflect social groups or dressed up to appear more affluent. The concept of hand-me-down clothing and garments bought from charity shops or jumble sales was discussed. One participant said, 'Well it was a way of having something different to wear because I think people were more hard up in those days and had fewer clothes and things were handed on. I remember wearing my aunt's old coat as a dressing gown because I couldn't afford to buy a new one'.⁴⁷ Purchasing second-hand clothing was noted as having some stigma attached. Participants were concerned about the background of these sort of clothes, had they belonged to a deceased person or someone who had been ill and were therefore unclean. One commented how purchasing second-hand clothing could sometimes constitute a horrible social lesson, 'I don't think my mother would ever have contemplated buying anything at the jumble sale because being descended from servants, cleanliness was next to Godliness and you could never be sure if you hadn't boiled them, disinfected them'.⁴⁸

There was some discussion about snobbery and class differentiation within shopping experiences in Yorkshire. One participant remarked, 'I'm often worried that if I touch a fancy dress in a store, I might get judged for not being able to afford that, you know? Somebody might look at me and think, she can't afford that. I don't know if anyone else has had that kind of moment where you think, you are looking at

me in this way'.⁴⁹ Another remembered being left outside the upmarket department store Marshall and Snelgrove on the freezing cold pavement with her sister, by a great aunt.⁵⁰ 'She would not take two children inside as she had been a servant all her life'.⁵¹ She thought her aunt had adopted the snobberies of her-former employers and this reinforced social stigma even in the shopping experience. One respondent, who had been brought up in Scarborough, North Yorkshire, remembered how her family worked as shop assistants in the store W. Rowntree in the town.⁵² The family's previous occupations had been as servants and she felt that working in shops allowed the family to graduate from being working class to lower middle class. She felt nervous crossing the threshold of the store and remembered going in her school uniform and feeling it was okay to go into Rowntree's because the uniform gave her some status. She said, 'I don't think that ever left me really with those shops'.⁵³

Gradual casualization of clothing 1939-1979

Within the discussions participants reflected on the fabrics used in clothing, comfort, formality of clothing for social events and work etc. Many thought women got to a point in middle age, where they started wearing a certain type of clothing. 'Today you see grandchildren going out with grandmothers and they are still looking at the same clothes and they are still wearing them. You don't get that divide now where younger people wear certain things and once you get to a certain age you go into a certain way of dressing which has gone now'.⁵⁴ Another participant remembered how shops such as Marks and Spencer began selling underwear.⁵⁵ Previously you would have gone to an underwear maker and been measured up for such items. These establishments

would have been small dressmakers, although some women were visited at home by larger companies such as the Spirella Corset Company who would measure them, make up the garments and deliver them.⁵⁶ ‘I remember going with my mum to Mrs. Mills in Bradford and this is into the early 1970s, and she would get all measured up for the girdle and her bras and her underskirts. And then we would buy them I suppose for a year or however long they would last and then you would go back again. It was quite fascinating watching it all’.⁵⁷

Some participants considered how popular culture influenced the way Yorkshire women dressed. One said, ‘I think we were very influenced, I was influenced by popular music, so when I look at the trouser suit I made, with a few obvious differences, I did look a bit like Ray Davies (b. 1944). I saw the Beatles, everybody, the Kinks, so their clothes were very much a big influence’.⁵⁸ The youth culture that predominated throughout the 1960s reflected how some women decided to purchase clothes. One recalled a grey flannel smock dress at the height of the smock dress fashions in 1965/66. It was inspired by the designer Mary Quant’s (b.1934) clothes and was grey, itchy and completely plain. When she took it home her parents were horrified and thought she looked like Orphan Annie.⁵⁹ To remedy this she recalled, ‘I got a remnant in some bright, not very tasteful patterned material and I made a collar and cuffs for it and I was allowed to wear it but that was my attempt to be, you know, in the forefront of fashion. It didn’t really work out’.⁶⁰

Some of the conversations reflected ideas relating to regional identity through the dress choices of the participants at a time of increasing mass-production and mass-consumption. There were notable local sites of production such as the link between

home-dressmaking and the availability of the offcuts from local textile industries, however some of the participants shopped in national chain stores not necessarily regional to Yorkshire. Shopping purchases also related to the demographics, life trajectories and changing economic status of some the focus group such as the participant from Scarborough, whose family moved from working as servants to what she considered to be the middle class occupation of shop worker.

As the workshops ended, participants were asked to record their final thoughts on post-it notes. This feedback was invaluable in summarising what had been discussed and learnt throughout the day as well as giving people a chance to reflect on their experiences and emotions related to women's clothing from 1939-1979. One participant said, 'Really enjoyed today and I've learnt and remembered a lot. You set up a relaxed atmosphere so by the time of the discussions we were all well primed to talk and open up'.⁶¹ Another commented, 'Heart-warming, insightful, delightful stories'.⁶² It was also considered that further workshops would reveal more in-depth stories and could be opened up to a wider cohort, 'Really interesting hearing the stories of other group members. Can you reconvene us at a later date?'.⁶³ Another wrote, 'Lovely to meet and chat about clothing and shopping with the group. Finding the different experiences across a range of ages'.⁶⁴

WOMEN'S EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENTS TO ORDINARY CLOTHING IN YORKSHIRE

This section seeks to pinpoint women’s emotional attachments to the making and consumption of ordinary clothing in Yorkshire, 1939-1979, by analysing the reflections of the workshop participants. The relationships Yorkshire women had with their clothing was also revealed in the oral histories associated with the outfits from the Yorkshire clothing archives. Being able to explore emotional attachments to clothing allows us to better understand how women create their sartorial identity and how this is communicated to others. Guy and Banim suggest that memories related to clothing connect us to our past and to our relationship with others.⁶⁵ Through analysis of the focus group responses, key emotions were identified. Ten comments have been selected from the findings and an emotional connection to each comment has been extrapolated. Whilst it is recognised that care should be taken not to be too categorical or simplistic about these precious and intangible connections, putting the emotions in the grid has the advantage of clarifying them. These are listed in Table 1: Focus Group Observations.

Table 1: Focus Group Observations

	Focus Group Comment (anonymous)	Emotion
1	‘They would sew your name on the label in the 1950s and things like that and wrap it all up beautifully’	Satisfaction
2	‘So even if it may not be perfect, it might be a very nice fabric or a lovely colour or a nice trim, it would have something of value within it, which you would like’	Attraction
3	‘I don’t think my mother would ever have contemplated buying anything at the jumble sale because being descended from servants, cleanliness was next to Godliness and you could never be sure if you hadn’t boiled them, disinfected them’	Shame

4	'I'm often worried that if I touch a fancy dress in a store, I might get judged for not being able to afford that, you know? Somebody might look at me and think, she can't afford that'	Inferiority
5	'She would not take two children inside as she had been a servant all her life'	Embarrassment
6	'You don't get that divide now where younger people wear certain things and once you get to a certain age you go into a certain way of dressing which has gone now'	Regret
7	'I think we were very influenced, I was influenced by popular music, so when I look at the trouser suit I made, with a few obvious differences, I did look at bit like Ray Davies [b. 1944]'	Enthusiasm
8	'One recalled a grey flannel smock dress at the height of the smock dress fashions in 1965/66. It was inspired by the designer Mary Quant's (b.1934) clothes and was grey, itchy and completely plain. When she took it home her parents were horrified and thought she looked like Orphan Annie'	Disapproval
9	'Really enjoyed today and I've learnt and remembered a lot. You set up a relaxed atmosphere so by the time of the discussions we were all well primed to talk and open up'	Enjoyment
10	'Heart-warming, insightful, delightful stories'.	Gratification

The ten descriptive words used to define the Yorkshire women's emotional connections to their clothing are varied and can be categorised as either positive or negative. These are detailed in Table 2: Ten Descriptive Words

Table 2: Ten Descriptive Words

POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
Satisfaction	Shame
Attraction	Inferiority
Enthusiasm	Embarrassment

Enjoyment	Regret
Gratification	Disapproval

To define a lasting evaluation of Yorkshire women’s emotional connections to their clothing within a contemporary context, the positive and negative associations are considered in relation to recent literature about current clothes. An article in *The Guardian* newspaper, entitled ‘Want People to Buy a Product that Lasts? Sell them an Emotional Connection’, explores how modern-day, slow fashion brands are marketing products to appeal to positive and negative emotions.⁶⁶ One of the companies discussed is the USA brand Appalatch who produce naturally dyed wool and cotton clothes, which they hope customers will want to keep and hand down through generations.⁶⁷ The marketing approach is to engage the consumers with issues of sustainability but not overwhelm them, ‘Instead, their website encourages people to value the relationship they develop with the clothes over time, and building connections between people based on this shared ideal’.⁶⁸ Therefore the *shame*, *inferiority*, *embarrassment*, *regret* and *disapproval* initiated by ignoring issues of sustainability could be negated by the *satisfaction*, *attraction*, *enthusiasm*, *enjoyment* and *gratification* to be gained through buying into the sustainable marketing approach of Appalatch. This strategy relates to the emotional connections with clothing identified by the female focus group participants and it frames the positive and negative associations in context with the place clothing had in their lives. The negative emotions were housed within some of the restricted regional boundaries in the making and consumption of clothing, and the positive emotions related to the

women's dress in the 1939-1979 period as they connected to the place clothing had in their lives as well as the Yorkshire region in which they lived. The strategy employed by Appalatch could therefore be a useful tool adopted by clothing companies globally as it harnesses consumer's emotions in order to generate commercial viability within the contemporary clothing industry.

The focus group participants were united in their passion to impart and share information about their clothing experiences. This combined an enthusiasm and willingness to discuss and debate the positive and negative aspects in making and purchasing women's clothing throughout 1939-1979. Ordinary dress influenced the values they placed on their relationships with clothing and was further evidenced in some of the poignant comments on the post-it notes at the end of the sessions. One said, 'Amazing to hear people's memories of shopping, socialising and the importance of clothing in Yorkshire'.⁶⁹ This highlights the worth placed on women's dress and ranged from the pragmatic, 'Shortages of cloth and clothing in the 1940s and 1950s. Women had far fewer clothes, if you changed shape you altered them', to the observation that clothes were a 'Marker of social class and outward display but also how they were created, bought, used and passed on'.⁷⁰

CONCLUSION

Through analysing the findings from the two Yorkshire clothing archives and the focus group conversations, the article addresses significant gaps in literature related to women's experiences of ordinary dress in Yorkshire, 1939-1979. The participants were able to contextualise their reminiscences about the role of female dress in the

region to explore how ordinary people shaped the way women made and purchased their clothes (Figure 12). This also helped to build relationships between the two collections through a fresh understanding and perspective. It was meaningful as curators from both archives were able to discuss the artifacts through community engagement in order to collate a distinct record of women's ordinary dress in Yorkshire within the time period. This helps to build an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of local sites of production and consumption in the region. The research therefore provides a unique and important framework for an expansion to the research, which could be tested through an exploration of ordinary clothing in other regions both within the UK and globally.

The study has also considered if women's involvement in making and consuming ordinary clothing is linked to the emotional relationships people have with what they purchase and wear. Ultimately, it reveals that once people have the opportunity to reflect on the clothing they buy and the effect clothing has on their lives, it evokes deep feelings that range from enjoyment and satisfaction to shame and inferiority. The study is therefore an important catalyst for new thinking and practice within the global clothing industry as emotions can be directed to augment the production and consumption of ordinary clothing, expanding the ideas initiated by companies such as *Appalatch*. Within this context it can be considered an important reference point of lasting influence to the international clothing business.



Figure 12. Participants in the workshops at Leeds Discovery Centre (2019). ©

Photograph courtesy of Alice Humphrey.

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Kevin Almond ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5194-0428>

Elaine Evans ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3848-582X>

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Society is a UK based organisation that promotes all aspects of the study of clothing and textiles < <http://costumesociety.org.uk>>.

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Elaine Evans, Biography

Elaine Evans is a Senior Teaching Fellow in Fashion Design at the University of Leeds. Her teaching specialisms are in garment technology, pattern cutting and 20th century fashion. Elaine's ongoing PhD research focuses on women's relationship with everyday dress in Yorkshire, 1939 – 1999, using the Yorkshire Fashion Archive collection to explore the regional social and cultural history of clothing manufacture and consumption.

Kevin Almond, Biography

Dr Kevin Almond is a Lecturer in Fashion at The University of Leeds. He is a Master's graduate from The Royal College of Art Fashion School, London and gained a PhD with a thesis titled, *Suffering in Fashion*. He has held various posts in academia and the fashion industry and has published widely. He serves on the advisory board for the *Journal of Dress History* and is peer reviewer for numerous academic journals.
