

Institution: University College London		
Unit of Assessment: 28 – History		
Title of case study: Using Memories of 1960s British Cinema-going to Promote Learning, Wellbeing and Community Engagement		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2001–2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Melvyn Stokes Matthew Jones Emma Pett Patrick Glen	Professor of Film History Research Associate Research Associate Research Associate	Oct 1972 – present Jan 2013 – May 2014 May 2015 – Sept 2015 Sept – Dec 2015; May 2017 – July 2018
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 1 August 2013 – 30 July 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)		
<p>Prof. Melvyn Stokes’s research project has recorded almost 1,000 people’s memories of 1960s cinema-going and made them openly available to cinema and family/local history enthusiasts. Project activities undertaken by Stokes, Jones, Pett and Glen have promoted greater awareness of the historical, social and cultural significance of cinema-going memories during this period amongst a diverse range of audiences, including secondary-school pupils, BAME and LGBTQI+ members of the public, persons with dementia and retired adult learners. Through a programme of 44 UK public events—including “immersive 1960s cinema” evenings recreating the world of 1960s cinema, screenings of 1960s films and talks/discussions—the project reached over 4,000 residents of Britain (England, Scotland and Wales) directly. It created greater public understanding of 1960s British history, promoted learning (among school pupils and older adults) and wellbeing among diverse audiences, changed the strategies and practices of a civic society and cinema, and stimulated the creation of cinema clubs.</p>		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)		
<p>When Film Studies/Film History began as an academic discipline in the 1960s, and for some time afterwards, its principal concern was with a purely theoretical spectatorship. Stokes’s body of research helped shift attention to the experiences and recollections of actual spectators. For example, in the introduction to <i>Hollywood Spectatorship: Changing Perceptions of Cinema Audiences</i>, Stokes argued for the need to reconsider theories of spectatorship and reception by attending to the ways in which actual audiences understood and interpreted films through the prism of their own cultural and social identities, and how these memories themselves have changed over time (R1). His AHRC-funded “Cultural Memory and British Cinema-going of the 1960s” project (Jan. 2013—Dec. 2015) built upon this research by collecting the memories of those who went to British cinemas in the 1960s – a crucial decade in both British and cinema history. The project team gathered a broad selection of people’s memories of going to UK cinemas in the 1960s, recruiting respondents through a programme of 44 events (film screenings/discussion, talks, lectures) across the UK. They collected over 900 completed questionnaires and 71 interviews that are publicly accessible in a permanent open-access searchable digital resource hosted by UCL library: https://bit.ly/37qC9De.</p> <p>The researchers discovered that, as argued by Stokes and Jones in (R2), there was a growing 1960s British interest in continental European cinema, including French “New Wave” films (by Truffaut and Godard particularly) and Italian directors, including Antonioni. This new interest was greatly encouraged by the rapidly-expanding numbers of young people in higher education who joined college film clubs and the efforts of programmers in local film societies and independently-run cinemas familiarly known as “flea pits.” In her article on fashion and 1960s British cinema (R3), Pett argued that the fashion and consumer culture represented in films of the time were strongly linked to notions of generational identity and invoked desires for social and cultural change among British cinema audiences. Project respondents reported that films had helped them to feel “modern” and part of a new generation distinctively different from that of their parents. This was the case even if their lives (early marriage, children) were very different</p>		

from “Swinging 60s” characters on screen. For male respondents also, following screen fashions can be interpreted as small acts of subversion in otherwise humdrum lives.

Pett and Stokes analysed interviews and questionnaires from members of Black and South Asian groups in (R4), noting that immigrants in mainstream cinemas were watching films that largely ignored people like themselves. However, attending some cinemas that offered special programmes (e.g. of Indian films) offered South Asian Britons the opportunity to interact with other members of the same community and discuss broader social and political issues, including racism in housing. At the same time, the screening of British films offered new immigrants role models and other forms of introduction to the culture of their newly-adopted homeland. Pett and Stokes identified a real sense of community in ethnically-diverse Tiger Bay, Cardiff that was encouraged by the cinema-going experience.

In (R5), Glen contrasted contemporary 1960s newspaper reports of youthful cinema-going with oral history interviews gathered by the “Cultural Memory and British Cinema-going of the 1960s” project in which those who were young in the 1960s recall what the cinema meant for them. During the 1960s, newspapers such as *The Daily Mirror* and *The Guardian* saw the lack of cinemas (particularly in New Towns) adversely influencing the socialisation of young people into adulthood. More prosaically, oral testimony remembers cinemas as antidotes to boredom. Newspapers emphasised a “generation gap” in cinema-going tastes; interviews suggest cross-generational cinema-going (even to films involving The Beatles, which might be expected to have appealed largely to a teenage audience). Where the press constructed delinquency and bad teenage behaviour, oral history suggests mainly escapist youthful daydreams.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

- R1.** Stokes, M., and Maltby, R. (eds.), *Hollywood Spectatorship: Changing Perceptions of Cinema Audiences* (London: British Film Institute Publishing, 2001).
- R2.** Stokes, M. and Jones, M. “Windows on the World: Memories of European Cinema in 1960s Britain,” *Memory Studies* (2017) DOI:10.1177/1750698016670794 Emerged from grant i.
- R3.** Pett, E. “Breaking the Rules: Fashion and Film in ‘Swinging Britain,’” *Cinephile: The University of British Columbia Film Journal* (2015), 11: 1, 23-28. Emerged from grant i.
- R4.** Pett, E. and Stokes, M. “Kinderfahung und postkoloniale zuschauer im Grossbritannien der 1960er jahre,” in Weber, T. and Mundhenke, F., eds., *Kinoerfahrungen: Theorien, Geschichte, Perspektiven* (Hamburg: Avincus, 2017), 185-210.
- R5.** Glen, P. “Exploiting the Daydreams of Teenagers: Press Reports and Memories of Cinema-going by Young People in 1960s Britain,” *Media History* (2017), 25: 3, 355-370, DOI: 10.1080/13688804.2017.1367653.

All the above (R1-R5) were peer-reviewed.

Grants:

- (i). AHRC ‘Cultural Memory and British Cinema-going of the 1960s’ (1 January 2013—31 December 2015). AH/K0004461/1. GBP324,849. PI: Melvyn Stokes.
- (ii). AHRC Follow on Funding for Impact and Engagement ‘Remembering 1960s British Cinema-going’ (1 May 2017-1 July 2018). AH/P013988/1. GBP78,887.44. PI: Melvyn Stokes.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The *Cultural Memory and British Cinema-going of the 1960s* project (i) demonstrated that individual memories of 1960s cinema-going are an important resource of cultural knowledge for this period (R2, R3, R4) and that there is a disparity between the memories of cinema-going in the 1960s and the narrative created and popularised by the media and passed on to subsequent generations (R5). The follow-on project *Remembering 1960s British Cinema-going* (ii) revised such popular narratives by recreating and discussing the experiences of 1960s British cinema-going at 44 events held between 2017 and 2018 (3 immersive events and 41 film screenings and/or talks) attended by c.4,000 people across the UK. Collective reminiscence of this kind with

diverse audiences “brings many benefits,” comments the Coordinator of the Masbro Community Centre in Hammersmith, who helped organise an event in 2018 (A). These benefits to wellbeing included: making participants feel “part of a collective history”; providing the opportunity “to look back and compare our lives then and now, appreciating what we have/how far we’ve come”; “evaluating how things have changed – society, values, mores, fashions, etc. for better or worse”; and encouraging a “sense of social cohesion – our shared experience brings us closer together” (A).

The events enhanced public awareness of the significance of cinema in people’s lives, while also encouraging closer collaboration between third sector institutions, stimulating new programmes/activities and/or helping recruit/retain members. As a result of attending project events, over 90% of the 260 participants who provided feedback knew, understood, or remembered more about the nature of 1960s cinema-going. 72% attested that, following the event concerned, they were inspired to research the 1960s and/or cinema-going further (B), which is facilitated by the freely-accessible UCL Library Digital Collection gathered by the original project. Between its creation in May 2017 and December 2020, 879 documents (interviews/questionnaires) were downloaded by anonymous users (B).

Using Immersive Cinema to Advance Public Understanding of History and Civic Society and Business Partners’ Strategic Aims

Three large “immersive 60s cinema” events held in 2017-18 recreated the experience of going to the cinema in 60s Britain and changed cinema-goers’ understanding of an iconic decade in modern British history. The research team drew on their oral history interviews and questionnaires to direct student actors from the UCL Drama Society in playing the parts of torch-wielding usherettes, the cinema manager, and protesters to more accurately evoke the 1960s experience as described in (R2) and (R5). The first event, attended by 220 people, was at the Theatre Royal, Wakefield, Yorkshire, in collaboration with the Wakefield Civic Society; the second and third were at the Prince Charles Cinema, London. In total, almost 900 people attended immersive screenings, a kind of experience one attendee described as “not done enough.” In their feedback, respondents demonstrated their increased understanding of the experience of cinema-going in the 1960s: “now I know [...] that the films played in a cycle without proper start times”; “learnt about the history of cinema”; “led to conversation about gender roles in society and music” (B). Comments also attested to wider wellbeing benefits achieved through reminiscence: “the sharing of memories is always so therapeutic”; “it reminded me of so much I had forgotten” (B).

For collaborating organisations, the events supported their strategic aims to extend and diversify their audiences and shaped subsequent programming. The chair of the Wakefield Civic Society became involved with the project because it provided ‘an opportunity to reflect on my own cinema-going experiences of the 1960s’ and encouraged the Society’s members to do the same. The screening in November 2013 of *Kes* (1969) – set in Yorkshire – showed, he explains, “a period in our social history that [members] would have themselves experienced and it gave them an occasion to share their memories as part of a collective audience made up of many from their peer group” together “with people who hadn’t been born at the time.” (C) The success of *Kes* led to screenings being incorporated into the Society’s events programme (total audience 270), as well as an “immersive 60s cinema” screening of *Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush* (1968) in 2017. The chair commented that the showing of *Kes* and the later “immersive 60s cinema” screening played a significant part in his strategy to attract new members while retaining existing supporters by convincing them “they are getting something enjoyable for their membership” (C). In addition, he and other members have subsequently begun making documentary films connected with Wakefield’s heritage.

The two “immersive” events at the Prince Charles Cinema in 2018 sold out their 330-seat auditorium. The Head of Programming reported that the idea for the events was “so well thought out and researched” that it was the best “in the 13 years I’ve been here.” “Bringing the period to life was an incredibly unique way of developing an immersive event ... and it worked incredibly well.” He noted that ‘having an evening when the entire building took a step back in time certainly lit a fire under our desire to discover more’ about the history of the Prince Charles itself. Building on this base, in summer 2020, the cinema launched its own “Nostalgia Project,” designed to “help

us piece together even more of our history in the hopes that should we run such an event again we could incorporate even more specific elements of the period” (D).

Fostering Adult Learning, Wellbeing and Inclusion among Diverse Older Audiences

The project’s other 41 introductory talks and post-film discussions elucidating the 1960s context in which the films had originally been seen (R2, R3, R4, R5) promoted wellbeing through sociability, allowing people to share memories within a community and learn from each other. They enhanced understanding and stimulated further investigation and creative production: “I am an artist and it was super inspiring!”; “the event has prompted memories of life in the 1960’s [...which] will now form part of my personal written memoir” (B).

Eight events for adult learning groups interested in cinema or history within the further education charity, the University of the Third Age (U3A) reached a total audience of 558. In line with U3A’s vision to “make lifelong learning [...] a reality for all third agers,” the events increased cultural understanding of cinema-going in the 1960s. “It was a kick start to do some research myself” one attendee noted, while another “increased my knowledge of local history” and another was inspired to join their local U3A film group (B). One attendee at a U3A event in East Renfrewshire was inspired to carry out further research via their local Facebook group called “Lost Glasgow” on the project’s discovery that double or love seats in the back row were traditionally known as “chummies” in Glasgow. Some of these events also led to the work of the local U3A being disseminated more widely, helping the organisation achieve its mission by raising its profile and facilitating its growth. An event in Leyburn attracted members from Richmond and other surrounding U3As and, together with coverage in the local newspaper, publicised to a wider audience the existing work of the venue, the local Community and Arts Centre, and its programme of film screenings (U3A Organiser, E). Feedback from these events frequently highlighted their promotion of wellbeing and community engagement: “Reminiscence is always of value when you get to a certain age,” comments an U3A organiser in Leyburn, “and being able to participate in the discussions afterwards [...] is very important in keeping the brain healthy” (E). Likewise, for one respondent, a 2018 event in East Renfrewshire “[h]elped organise my memories of very varied cinema-going experience” and “[g]ave a greater grasp of strands in 60s films” (B).

398 people also attended eight screenings in local community centres/artistic spaces in Manchester, Salford, Leeds, Sheffield, Glasgow, Newcastle, and London, which increased understanding of historical cinema-going and led to the creation of community-led cinema clubs. The event at Preston Community Library, Wembley, was accompanied by an exhibition on the history of local cinema-going in the 1960s created by the library staff. Feedback emphasised the importance of remembering as a community activity: “As a group event, we were better able to trigger each other’s recollections of standing for the national anthem etc” (B). A sold-out screening and discussion for 135 attendees at the Partisan Collective Arts Centre in Manchester, the Collective reported, “was highly attuned to our members’ interests and provided much needed income.” This income “subsidised the free and affordable use of the space for groups including women’s groups, refugee welfare organisations and tenants’ unions.” The audience “was very diverse in terms of gender, racial background and class [...] and] age.” The event aided recruitment to the Centre and, as a consequence of the speaker’s discussion of 1960s cinema clubs, led directly to the organisation of two new cinema clubs by members “to reflect diverse voices and experience,” while also inspiring another Manchester-based music venue, Yes, to screen films for the first time (F).

The project’s research-led engagement with marginalised and diverse audiences (D) gave members of these communities an opportunity to consider, critique and reflect on aspects of their histories as represented in 60s films, and served to promote wellbeing and social inclusion. Events included a screening of *To Sir, With Love* (1967) in collaboration with the New Black Film Collective at the Picturehouse, Stratford, London, with an audience of 164 older local British residents of African and Caribbean heritage in October 2017. Respondents at this event commented that the film and discussion stimulated their personal memories. The choice of film prompted some to relate it to their own experience as immigrants: “brought back memories of coming to the UK from the Caribbean – cross-cultural differences” (B). The Coordinator of the Masbro Elders project helped organise a talk/discussion in May 2018. “Our members, on the whole,” she wrote, “represent a cohort of elders who came to this country from the Caribbean or

South Asia [...] and have faced many barriers to accessing higher education, the arts and culture.” She believed the most important long-term benefit for this group lay “in being listened to and having their own experiences and memories appreciated and validated [...] This positive outcome has given me inspiration and ambition to pursue further encounters of this nature” (A).

Five LGBTQI+ events (including screenings at Manchester Pride and the IRIS Film Festival in Cardiff) also reached a total audience of 700 people. The screenings and discussions uncovered an often under-appreciated element of the queer British experience, the intersections of politics, leisure and entertainment. Attendees valued this opportunity to learn about “how culture and social policy directly impacted upon cinema going” as well as the combination of the research, which “contextualis[ed] the experiences of gay and queer men, which were then, shown in the film,” with memory-sharing: “there were wonderful anecdotes from oral histories of cinema going by gay men in the 1960s” (B).

Studies show the therapeutic benefits for people with dementia of rehearsing long-term memories and the positive effect this has on their care-givers (Cotelli, Manenti and Zanetti, 2012). Research such as (R2), (R3) and (R5) was used to spur memory-sharing by audiences at dementia-friendly screenings. Wellbeing and inclusion were also enhanced for attendees at project events in four UK care homes (total audience 98) and a screening and discussion of *The Pink Panther* (1963) to an audience of 61 at Glasgow Film Theatre. One respondent wrote that “the return of some long-forgotten memories has been a joy.” Others highlighted the significance of the event in creating an opportunity for both “spending time with my mother and enhancing my understanding of 20th century cinema” (B).

Enhancing Understanding of A-level History for Students and Teachers

Although the primary participants in this project’s impact activities were older adults, it also provided A-level students and teachers with a greater depth of knowledge about a crucial decade in modern British history. Five events attracted 354 students and their teachers; the largest of these was the British Film Institute A-level Study Day for 220 students. This event incorporated talks drawing upon (R2), (R4) and (R5) and demonstrated how to use materials from the project database in schools to shed light on 1960s British history. Feedback from students indicated enhanced learning and understanding of key topics: “helped me to a greater understanding of the 1960s and how it changed social attitudes”; “It demonstrated the generation divide that I didn’t understand before” (B). 79% of students who returned feedback said that they learned more about the subject (B). Positive feedback from individual school workshops attested to enhanced learning: “this session provided me with a unique learning experience and enriched me with relevant knowledge for my History of Modern Britain exam”; “It introduced new ways of approaching the 1960s as well as introducing new types of sources” (B). Many of the participating schools had diverse student cohorts. One Lecturer at City of Wolverhampton College notes that many of his students come from an area “with stubbornly low levels of educational achievement and significant socio-economic disadvantage” (G). He wrote that the Study Day encouraged students “to develop confidence in their academic ability” and aspire to university-level study and “was invaluable in helping learners develop their source responses for the Modern British paper and their use of sources in their coursework.” Furthermore, R2, R3, R4 and R5 helped A-level students “challenge the notion that a strict hierarchy of importance exists in the study of history, and in particular social history and oral testimonies from the twentieth century are less valuable than ‘significant’ national or global events” (G).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- A. Testimonial Masbro Elders Project Coordinator, Hammersmith
- B. Transcribed texts of feedback postcards (260), also available <https://bit.ly/3aSahKf>; downloads from open access Cinema Going Collection resource.
- C. Testimonial, Chair of Wakefield Civic Society
- D. Testimonial, Head of Programming, Prince Charles Cinema, London
- E. Testimonial Publicity Secretary, Leyburn University of the Third Age
- F. Testimonial, Partisan Collective Arts Centre, Manchester
- G. Testimonial, Lecturer, City of Wolverhampton College