

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: University of Northampton		
Unit of Assessment: 28: History		
Title of case study: The Searchlight Archive and British Extreme Right Culture		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2014 - 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:
Dr Paul Jackson	Senior Lecturer Associate Professor	2009 – 2020 2020 - Present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2013 - 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		

1. Summary of the impact

By developing targeted engagement with local authorities, advocacy groups, ██████████, Gale Cengage, and by cultivating a profile as a media expert, **Dr Paul Jackson's** research on the extreme right has provided unique guidance to a wide range of professionals and the wider public. His underpinning research is based on analysing historical materials from the Searchlight Archive, a unique collection documenting extreme right activism from the 1960s to the present day, collated by the anti-fascist organisation *Searchlight*, and from 2013 catalogued and made accessible to the public by the University of Northampton.

Impact activities drawing on this historically-informed research include creating bespoke Continuing Professional Development (CPD) tools for ██████████, supporting anti-fascist and anti-racist campaigning groups, a digitisation project with Gale Cengage (2018 – present), on-going analysis of developing events for Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Centre, and national and international media engagement.

The research has:

- Given police and front-line workers tools to understand and tackle extreme right activism;
- Provided policymakers with an evidence base to reach new conclusions to challenge the extreme right; and
- Provided media outlets the details required to report on issues such as neo-Nazi terrorism in greater depth.

2. Underpinning research

Jackson has developed his research at a time when issues posed by the extreme right are increasing. His distinctive contribution to these debates has been possible due to the University of Northampton's Searchlight Archive. His underpinning research combines scrutiny of historical documents from this major collection with analysis of more recent online material generated by contemporary activists. His research includes the first academic article on the now-proscribed terrorist group National Action [3.1]; and reports published by George Washington University's Programme on Extremism and the global Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) organisation Hedayah. These publicly accessible reports allow professionals to understand threats from contemporary transnational neo-Nazi networks [3.2] and the drivers behind extreme right lone-actor terrorism [3.3]. His biography of the British neo-Nazi Colin Jordan, meanwhile, [3.4] was described by Matthew Worley, in *Twentieth Century British History* as 'essential reading for anyone interested in understanding the politics and personnel of the British far right.' This body of work offers unrivalled contemporary historical contextualisation of ongoing developments within the extreme right space in Britain and internationally.

Jackson's expertise as a Historian in an area more typically dominated by Political Scientists, Criminologists and Sociologists allows him to offer a unique perspective, one drawn from his work on the historical contexts of contemporary extremism. One of the key points he highlights in his CPD sessions and other impact activities is that there is little intrinsically 'new' about the contemporary extreme right's underlying ideas or aspirations [3.4, 3.5, 3.6]. However, the manner in which online cultures have led to increasingly decentralised extreme right communities from the later 1990s onwards, and offered new modes of communication, has transformed the movement's ability to connect with audiences and develop its own impact, locally and internationally.[3.1] Phenomena such as the recent spate of terroristic threats posed by groups such as National Action and Sonnenkrieg Division has emerged from a longstanding radicalised culture, one which they use to give their activism deeper meaning. [3.2]

Jackson's research has placed into richer historical context a number of key themes:

- It is crucial to map the many local, national and transnational networks that underpin extreme-right cultures, not merely focus on a few larger organisations with a higher public profile [3.2, 3.5, 3.6].
- Contemporary extreme right cultures in Britain have important intergenerational dynamics and are rooted in well-established traditions of activism spread across a wide range of smaller organisations [3.4, 3.6].
- Terms such as 'groupuscular' (networks of small groups) are crucial for conceptualising the ways these numerous individual groups emerge and dissipate, collectively forming a complex and varied subculture that can appeal to a wide range of target audiences [3.4].
- Extreme right cultures regularly express hypermasculine tropes that appear as solutions for those who believe the world disempowers young men [3.2]. They are often also based on a sense of the cultic, and espouse conspiracy theories, which can give their core ideologies a powerful sense of 'higher' meaning, purpose and explanatory power [3.2, 3.4, 3.6].
- Lone actor terrorism from the extreme right is a particular issue that repeatedly develops from those on the fringes of this culture, and this terror threat is also driven by a range of non-ideological factors [3.3].

Jackson's research provides new perspectives on the ideological aims and concerns of the extreme right in Britain and internationally, its propensity for violence and criminality, and continuity and change in its organisational dynamics.

3. References to the research

[3.1] Jackson, P. (2014). [#hitlerwasright: National Action and National Socialism for the 21st century](#). *Journal of Deradicalisation*, 1(1), 97-115. [1].

[3.2] Jackson, P. Jackson, P. (2020). [Transnational neo-Nazism in the USA](#), *United Kingdom and Australia*. George Washington University.

[3.3] Jackson, P. (2018). [Beyond the 'Lone Wolf': lone actor terrorism and the far-right in Europe](#). In A. Kallis, S. Zeiger, & B. Öztürk (Eds.), *Violent Radicalisation & Far-Right in Europe* (pp. 37-77). Hedayah/SETA.

[3.4] Jackson, P. (2017). [Colin Jordan and Britain's Neo-Nazi Movement: Hitler's Echo](#). Bloomsbury Publishing PLC.

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[3.5] Jackson, P. (2014) Accumulative Extremism: The Post-War Tradition of Anglo-American Neo-Nazi Activism. In: Jackson P., Shekhovtsov A. (eds) The Post-War Anglo-American Far Right: A Special Relationship of Hate. Palgrave Pivot, London.
https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137396211_1

[3.6] Jackson, P. (2019) Dreaming of a National Socialist World: The World Union of National Socialists and the Recurring Vision of Transnational Neo-Nazism. *Fascism* 8(2) pp. 275 - 306

4. Details of the impact

Jackson's research has been of great relevance to those working with the Prevent Agenda, where threats posed by the extreme right are increasingly being recognised. Notably in the 2018/2019 (March), 1,389 people were referred to Prevent because of extreme right characteristics, an increase of 6% on the year before and nearly double the figure for 2015/2016. **Jackson's** research has created a new body of knowledge for those who require deeper understanding of the extreme right's leaders, supporters and wider influence. This has resulted in a wide range of impacts in the following areas:

Enhancing the Perspectives of Police and Hate Crime Workers:

In 2013, Portsmouth City Council commissioned **Jackson** to create a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) package for hate crime workers, which he subsequently updated in 2014. This was delivered over 150 times and was specifically designed to increase the understanding of threats posed by the extreme right among participants, and improved their ability to engage with the wider public. The Portsmouth City Council Hate Crime Manager testified that the programme:

'supported our local response to Far Right extremism and provided guidance on what can be done to challenge this issue [. . .] Without this valuable support, our approach would have been limited and therefore less effective in supporting vulnerable young people and adults.' **[5.1]**.

Jackson's package provided detailed, credible information on groups such as the English Defence League that gave local hate crime workers the precise knowledge required to respond to issues posed by the extreme right in their locality.

Building on this, in 2017 **Jackson** was identified by a Prevent coordinator for Walsall Council as 'one of the leading authorities in this area of study'. He developed a new package for teachers and pupils, which was sent to over 100 schools. After delivery, the Home Office reduced the threat level in the Walsall region, which had been elevated due to concerns over the extreme right. The Prevent coordinator who commissioned the package stated that this reduction was 'in large part due to the work around the strategy', which 'relied entirely on having a clear understanding of the risks and challenges'. He added, '**Jackson's** resource was a significant contribution to that understanding and we are extremely grateful for his work.' **[5.2]**.

Jackson has organised three one-day CPD events for specialist professionals tackling the extreme right, in 2016, 2019 and 2020. The 58 people who attended these sessions included: police, local authorities, antiracism groups, and organisations such as [REDACTED]. The workshops received universally positive feedback, and participants expressed that they directly informed their professional practice. One stressed that the workshop created a deeper understanding of 'the origins, philosophy and intentions' of extreme right groups, and helped identify 'what is "extreme right"'. Another explained the event 'provided me with a more evidence-based practice', adding 'better knowledge will allow me to provide better counter-arguments'. In follow up feedback three months after one of these sessions, an attendee added the session 'adds to confidence to challenge racism from a place of fact' and this feedback also highlighted the lasting value in terms of understanding extreme right groups and ideologies **[5.3]**. Overall, participant feedback demonstrated that these

workshops have provided professionals with the underpinning knowledge to change their practice, allowing them to develop new ways to challenge extreme right cultures on the ground.

Informing the analysis of Policymakers, Specialists and Advocacy Groups:

Since 2013, **Jackson** has engaged with [REDACTED] in relation to the threats of the extreme right, such as conducting several one-to-one discussions with researchers around his work, including in 2014, 2018 and 2020. [REDACTED]

[5.4].

In addition, **Jackson's** influence among specialist audiences related to security agendas is his work for [REDACTED]

This profile has led to wider impact, such as **Jackson** being invited to give a talk in April 2019 on the risks posed by the extreme right at the 13th Asia Pacific Programme for Senior National Security Officers. This event, organised by Nanyang Technical University in Singapore with support from the country's Prime Minister's Office, allowed **Jackson** to discuss ideas with a global network of 63 high end security officials from 28 countries. One example of how this led to further activity was **Jackson** being commissioned by Programme on Extremism, an independent thinktank based at George Washington University, to write a report on extreme right networks [3.6].

Jackson's research has also supported *Searchlight* magazine in its continued campaigning activities. **Jackson** has written over 25 articles for *Searchlight* magazine since 2013, influencing a range of readers from anti-racist movements[5.6,5.7]. In 2014, the University of Northampton hosted *Searchlight's* 50th anniversary conference, bringing together a range of international experts, and also helping *Searchlight* develop new relationships with police forces and anti-fascist activists. In 2015, **Jackson** became part of *Searchlight* Research Associates, a group created by *Searchlight* to guide its activities. According to *Searchlight's* editor, the relationship with **Jackson** has allowed 'the legacy of *Searchlight* to continue', as it 'gave us an opportunity to get our investigative work directly to an audience of practitioners and academics'. **Jackson's** work with Gale Cengage also allowed *Searchlight* to receive GBP10,000 in royalties, which it has used to continue its anti-racist campaigning work [5.8].

In 2016, **Jackson** supported Race Act 40, [5.9] a project funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and run by the Northamptonshire Rights and Equalities Council (NREC). The Chief Executive of NREC has testified that **Jackson's** work 'played a significant role in supporting our application to secure the funding to run the project' and added that 'The *Searchlight* Archive was instrumental in assisting us with recruiting volunteers in order for the project to be delivered.' Finally, the project was given an added legacy as 'documentation developed and discovered over the [course of the] project has been archived alongside the *Searchlight* [Archive at the University of Northampton] making them securely located but also accessible to future researchers who may

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wish to further explore these aspects of hidden history.’ Subsequently this material has been used by visitors to the Searchlight Archive [5.9].

Expert views for mainstream and specialist media:

Jackson regularly contributes to, and is referenced in, international media coverage of the extreme right. He has informed reporting and has helped to expand public engagement and understanding of these threats. This has included 115 discrete media appearances including articles written by **Jackson** for the *Guardian* and the *Huffington Post*; 10 television broadcasts, including as the on-the-scene expert for BBC Breakfast following the Finsbury Park Mosque terrorist attack in 2017, as well as for BBC News, Channel 5 and France24; over 20 appearances as an expert for BBC Radio 5Live (some of which were rebroadcast to BBC local radio stations), Radio 2, Radio 4 and LBC; and he has been cited in 30 national and international newspaper and news magazine articles. **Jackson** has explained issues to media researchers before live discussions, and has consistently provided clear overviews for wider audiences [5.7].

Promoting the Searchlight Archive, including online:

Jackson’s profile as a specialist has attracted a range of interest among a wide range of researchers working on the extreme right and this has attracted visitors to the Searchlight Archive itself. Without **Jackson’s** work with Searchlight magazine, and support from the University of Northampton to develop this resource into a working archive, the unique documents in this archive would not be in the public domain and available for use in ongoing research. The Searchlight Archive has welcomed 145 discrete visitors and remote visitors,

enhancing the understanding of extreme right cultures in a wide range of organisations beyond academia [5.10]. These stakeholders have also had discussions with **Jackson** during their visits, drawing on his knowledge and discussing his research as part of their engagement with the archive.

Jackson’s profile and expertise led to documents from the archive becoming a central feature of Gale Cengage’s Political Extremism and Radicalism online archive. This major online archive is now transforming the research and teaching of political extremism, primarily in universities in the USA, and Europe. Testimony evidence from Gale Cengage highlights how **Jackson** ‘took us through the various collections [in the Searchlight Archive] so we could understand the value of the material. We realized it was ideal for our project.’ They add that ‘getting permission to digitize Searchlight would have been impossible without **Jackson’s** assistance’, and that **Jackson’s** ‘advisory role went beyond just supporting us with the Searchlight Archive. He also helped us finalise the list of other collections that form the full digital archive’. **Jackson** was key to the marketing of this product, and he launched the online resource at an event in New Orleans in 2018 [5.8].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[5.1] Portsmouth City Council Testimonial

[5.2] Walsall Council Testimonial

[5.3] Extreme Right Aware attendance list and feedback portfolio

[5.6] Searchlight Magazine Testimonial

[5.7] Excel Media Diary for **Paul Jackson**

[5.8] Gale Cengage Testimonial

[5.9] Race Act 40 Testimonial

[5.10] Excel Searchlight Archive Visitor Data