

## Impact case study (REF3)

<b>Institution:</b> University of Reading		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 28 History		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Excavating Youth Culture in Norwich: co-creating a history of Punk from within		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2012 - 2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Matthew Worley	Reader Professor of Modern History	1 January 2005 - present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2016 - 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>The 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of punk in the UK was celebrated in 2016 with a year-long series of events in London which many in the punk community felt did not represent their past in a culturally appropriate way. The representation of subcultures has long been problematic, as by their very nature they tend to avoid engaging with the establishment (academia) or commerce. Worley's grassroots approach to research offered an alternative narrative in the build-up to the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary by overcoming the barrier between the punk subculture and the establishment. Worley's research has helped people to reimagine and thus have a richer understanding of British punk-related cultures and British youth culture more generally. His participatory approach to social history has had a profound effect on this traditionally hard to reach community. He has influenced participants' behaviour and that of stakeholders in the cultural, archival and commercial sectors; contributed to entrepreneurial activity; and stimulated local tourism by generating events and exhibitions. Most importantly, he has helped to preserve, conserve and present a cultural legacy that has generated new forms of historical practice and creative expression.</p>		
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>Worley has led research on the history of subcultures through a Leverhulme funded project: Punk, Politics and British Youth Culture 1975-85 (2013-15) that examined the relationship between <u>youth cultures, politics and social change</u>. To underpin this work, Worley co-founded the Interdisciplinary Network for the Study of Subcultures, Popular Music and Social Change (Subcultures Network) in 2011, funded by an AHRC Network Grant and hosted by the University of Reading. The Network's aims were to promote and facilitate research exploring the ways in which subcultures and popular music serve as mediums for social change; to encourage interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches to the study of subcultures, popular music and social change; to initiate and sustain a dialogue between scholars whose work focuses on subjects relating to subcultures, popular music and social change through regular workshops, symposia and conferences; to provide support and opportunities for peer-review towards funding proposals related to the study of subcultures, popular music and social change; to instigate and amass a significant body of scholarly work examining the relationship between subcultures, popular music and social change. These aims were primarily achieved through a series of symposia between 2013 and 2015 and resulted in a series of publications (outputs 1-6):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Riotous Youth (October 2013, Bristol)</li> <li>• Sound Affects (April 2014, Norwich)</li> <li>• In/between Spaces (September 2014, Liverpool)</li> <li>• Political Subcultures (March 2015, Surrey)</li> <li>• Global Subcultures, Local Identities (June 2015, West London)</li> </ul>		

Integral to Worley's approach has been decentralising the prevailing – media-driven – narratives of Punk that centred on London and Manchester. Indeed, the Subcultures Network exists to enable academics and cultural practitioners to co-operate and thereby co-create histories from materials and experiences embedded in local cultures. By applying this “theory-into-practice” approach, the Network has produced a history of punk that is “ours” rather than “mine”, “yours” or “theirs”.

The starting point for the project was a study of punk in Norwich. Worley met with members of Norwich's punk community to discuss gathering material for an article. Further contacts led to reams of ephemera, emerging from private collections and discussions brought forward memories and reminiscences. Instead of an article, the research generated a historical account that reflected its subject; materials and memories were combined with a historical overview to create a history in fanzine form: *Young Offenders: Punk in Norwich, 1976-84*.

One of those interviewed was the marketing manager for “Norwich Lanes” who had been a punk himself in his teens. He suggested developing a series of local events to coincide with the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of punk in 2016. Consequently “Punk in the East” was born, and in November 2016, the Norwich Arts Centre hosted a launch event, featuring The Ruts (whose Norwich gig in 1979 is often cited as one of the most exciting the city has ever hosted).. Local shops, pubs and cafes in the Norwich Lanes participated to form a trail – hosting photos, ephemera and artworks from the 1970s–80s – highlighting spaces important for the cultivation of punk culture in the region. Through November and December 2016, further gigs and a film show were held, and the Bridewell Museum, Norwich, incorporated a punk display into its “wider social history of Norwich” exhibit. This was curated by erstwhile punks, whose own clothes, records, fanzines and posters formed the displays, representing Norwich youth culture in the 1970s–80s.

The project continued to thrive after the anniversary celebrations, enabling ongoing collection of Norfolk's punk history. In collaboration with the Norwich Museum, which had already provided facilities to scan materials for the events of 2016, a virtual exhibition was devised. Materials were collated during 2017 and '18 and the “Punk in the East” website launched as a living archive in August 2018. Further physical events have since been held under the Punk in the East banner and an event inspired by the project ‘No Glue. No Glass Bottles’ took place in Sunderland in 2017. More recently, Worley's research and the Subcultures Network, together with the Punk in the East project and website, have inspired the Youth Club Archive's plans for a Youth Culture Museum. In 2020, a virtual Museum of Youth Culture was launched, and Worley is now working with the Archive towards developing a physical version of the museum.

### 3. References to the research

The research meets or exceeds the threshold for 2\* originality, significance and rigour. It has been published in various peer-reviewed journals (e.g *History Workshop*, *Contemporary British History*); in edited collections for Manchester University Press; and in a monograph for Cambridge University Press. Each of the published pieces have become recognised and essential references in relation to British history and the history of British punk and British youth culture. The article in *Twentieth Century British History* was for some time the journal's most viewed item according to the journal website.

1. Worley, M. ‘Ripped, Torn and Cut: Pop, Politics and Punk fanzines from 1976. In *Ripped, Torn and Cut: Pop, Politics and Punk Fanzines from 1976* (Manchester University Press, 2018) ISBN 9781526120595
2. Worley, M. *No Future: Punk, Politics and British Youth Culture, 1976–84* (Cambridge University Press, 2017) ISBN 9781316625606
3. Worley, M. ‘Punk, Politics and British (fan)zines, 1976–84: “While the world was dying, did you wonder why?”’, *History Workshop Journal*, 79, (2015), 76–106 ISSN 0309-2984 doi: <https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/dbu043>
4. Worley, M. (ed.), *Fight Back: Punk, Politics and Resistance* (Manchester University Press, 2015). ISBN 9780719090295

5. Worley, M. 'Oi! Oi! Oi!: Class, Locality and British Punk', *Twentieth Century British History*, 24/4 (2013) ISSN 1477-4674 doi: <https://doi.org/10.1093/tcbh/hwt001>
6. Worley, M. 'Shot By Both Sides: Punk, Politics and the End of "Consensus"', *Contemporary British History*, 26/3 (2012) ISSN 1743-7997 doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13619462.2012.703013>

#### 4. Details of the impact

In contrast to the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of punk events in London, which many in the subculture felt were imposed on them for commercial gain, the events in Norwich, and those it inspired beyond, were embraced by the former and current members of the punk community, who took ownership of the events as their history. The overarching theme of these projects and events has been to empower individuals with an active interest in their own history to engage with it and share it in ways that resonate with them.

##### A. Cultural impact on punk subcultures in Norwich and the UK:

To provide an accessible focal point for groups and individuals interested in the work that Worley and the Subcultures Network were doing, a Facebook group was established (in September 2020 it had 4,300 members, E1). This provided a forum to discuss ideas for the "Punk in the East" project and enabled and encouraged people to engage in collating and validating their own history, producing and attending events born of their own creative endeavour. The material people shared was initially compiled in a fanzine comprising text and imagery offered by Norwich's punk community (E2). After a run of 500 sold out, a further 500 fanzines were reprinted following requests by local books shops and individuals unable to secure an original copy.

Following the first meeting between Worley and the Norwich punks, another Facebook group "Punk in Norwich" was started, and its members continue to engage and share material. It currently has 963 members and serves as space for discussion about punk and its local history (E1). A further Facebook page, 'Punk in the East', served to promote the project itself and continues to promote related projects into 2020 (currently 940 followers; E1). One Norwich schoolboy punk who graduated to Backs Records and London's Rough Trade, commented: "The [...] websites and Facebook pages have been such a great and useful tool in helping me reconnect with my past and engaging with punk history [...]. It's been invaluable in helping me remember the gigs, the music, the times and the people and has allowed me to reconnect with lots of people I'd lost touch with years and years ago, and rejuvenated my interest in the whole culture immensely." (E3).

The main anniversary events in October-December 2016 brought together past and present punks and created a sense of ownership of the past within the community. Unlike the officially sanctioned London-centric "celebrations", Punk in the East was developed with grass-roots enthusiasts who had forged punk-related cultures in Norfolk and nearby in the 1970s–80s. As one contributor (Stephen Hansell, singer in The Disrupters) who contributed memorabilia to the exhibition commented: "Back then I never thought for one minute that what we were doing would one day be regarded as social history [...] I don't think many people analysed it at the time, I know I didn't, it was just more of a compulsion, a way of life" (E4). A film of the launch event captured the impact made on those attending, with comments showing how Punk in the East reinvigorated their interest, validated their cultural practice, and embodied their youthful experiences (E5).



The Punk in the East website, launched in August 2018, was collated from within the local community and continues to develop. Photos and images have been contributed by those in and around the city, but also from Britons living around the world who are keen to retain links to their youth and friends. Over 200 people have contributed items to the site to date, with two further large donations of material due to arrive after the coronavirus lockdown. In 2020, the website was receiving about 30 unique visitors a day (E6). The exhibition at the Museum of Norwich was curated by those who had amassed private collections or been members of local bands in the 1970s and 1980s. Since the exhibit was first placed in the museum in 2016 there has been a significant increase in footfall and a change in the demographic of visitor over the course of the exhibition (E7).

Worley's expertise is widely sought. He has been invited to advise on subsequent local events that have been inspired by the original Punk in the East project and events, such as 'Punk in the Provinces' (Norwich Arts Centre, November 2017 and Q&As with punk luminaries who visited Norwich under the Punk in the East banner. The project has also had significant reach beyond Norwich, inspiring cultural practitioners in Sunderland (The Bunker Collective) to devise a similar event (9 September 2017), replete with gigs and a website (E8).

Worley's work has also influenced and inspired the London-based Youth Club Archive to develop a Youth Culture Museum. In particular the organisation is adopting Worley's methodology for community-based and collaborative collection development, enabling people to take ownership of their social history and inviting the public to submit items to the museum. National Lottery Heritage Funding has been secured and plans are underway to develop the idea from online to a physical museum. The Archivist wrote: "We were incredibly impressed and excited by The Subcultures Network and the brilliant work Matthew Worley and his peers do. [We] felt that they were the perfect partners on our National Lottery Heritage Fund project to build the online Museum of Youth Culture. Working with Matthew enabled us to find the right academics and authors to write a narrative and build context to the archive, making the collection more accessible than it's ever been." (E9).

Much media attention was also generated. In Norwich, local TV, radio and print outlets reported on Punk in the East (e.g. BBC Radio Norfolk interview in November 2016). On 9–10 January 2018, ITV regional news ran a feature that developed the themes of the project, interviewing Professor Worley and various East Anglian punks to trace the cultural legacies into the twenty-first century. Nationally, Worley was interviewed on his wider research project on BBC Radio 6 on 5 April 2018 (2,560,000 listeners) and contributed to non-academic writing events such as Louder Than Words (Manchester, November 2017) (E7).

#### **B. Socio-economic impact on Norwich and its cultural venues:**

Punk in the East was developed in collaboration with Norwich Lanes and took place in October–December 2016. The launch at Norwich Arts Centre was sold out and attended by 200 people of all ages, among whom were photographers returning to document the people they had first photographed some 40 years previously. The wider series of events included an exhibition at the Museum of Norwich at the Bridewell and a trail around the Norwich Lanes. The exhibition



brought increased footfall to the museum at a typically quiet time of year: “From the 22<sup>nd</sup> October [...] until Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> January we had 3,814 people through the door [...]. For roughly the same period the year before in 2015/16, we had 3,044 people through the door. So we are looking at an increase of 770 people.” (Norfolk Museums Service, 3 February 2017) (E7).

At the end of the initial project, the Bridewell Museum continued to support the project, extending the exhibition, reconfiguring its displays of social and cultural history, and contributing to the collation of material for a website-based ‘virtual exhibition’. The trail around Norwich Lanes took in numerous shops, pubs, cafes, arts spaces and cinema. Most of these had a connection to Norwich’s punk past, with traces of this displayed in shop windows or inside. Surveys following the project confirmed sold-out events and increased footfall with local businesses and shop-owners noticing a marked increase in the number of visitors to the lanes and their premises (E10).

Worley’s grassroots approach to social history has had a profound impact on a traditionally hard to reach community. In particular, he has developed an approach to collaborating with and enabling members of punk subcultures to take ownership of their social history. The research has been deeply transformative for those involved. The approach has enabled other organisations that are seen as part of the ‘establishment’ – such as a museum – to engage with previously hard-to-reach groups and demonstrate the possibilities of broadening their understanding of local social history. Worley’s methodology has also been adopted by other cultural groups, such as the Youth Culture Archive, seeking ways to engage with their target audiences and has enabled them to develop their own activities and make plans for a permanent museum.

#### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- [E1] Facebook Groups (provided as a PDF).
- [E2] *Young Offenders: Punk in Norwich, 1976–84* (2016).
- [E3] Testimonial from Norwich punk.
- [E4] Testimonial from Stephen Hansell.
- [E5] A film of the launch event that came out of the project was made by MotionBlurr <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OrMWztfSxXs>
- [E6] Punk in the East website (provided as a PDF).
- [E7] Norwich Museum feedback and testimonials.
- [E8] A further Facebook page documents the event in Sunderland inspired by the PITE project, Bunker Group 35 (provided as a PDF).
- [E9] Testimonial from Museum of Youth Culture.
- [E10] Surveys from participants on the ‘Punk Trail’.