

Research Directions

Office of Research Services

Picture This: young people and media violence

Associate Professors Virginia Nightingale and Anna Gibbs, School of Communication Arts, are undertaking research into young people and media images. This ARC Discovery project will investigate the role of affect and emotion in the communicative power of images, particularly when young people encounter disturbing imagery.

‘Violence is a feature of contemporary life and young people must develop the capacity to witness and react appropriately to violence in the world around them’ says Professor Nightingale. ‘Our study differs from previous research into media images and young people by focusing on the affects (fear, distress, anger, shame and so on) and emotions (particular social and cultural mixes of affects, for example, ‘a thrill’ mixes excitement and fear) young people experience when viewing various images.’

The project is designed as participatory research, combining an online discussion forum, a series of focus groups and individual interviews. High school age participants will be asked about, among other things, what makes particular imagery disturbing; what images they have found hard to forget; what connections they make between images that refer to real and fictional events; and how they compare the violence they see in the media with the violence they experience or witness in everyday life. The researchers will also archive and map the disturbing imagery that young people access, such as, film, television, weblogs, etc.

The study will provide a much needed multicultural Australian perspective about young people’s experiences of disturbing media imagery and could guide media production and classification.

Project Title: *The Power of the Image: affect, audience and disturbing imagery.*
Funding has been set at: \$304,000.

July 2006

Contact Details

v.nightingale@uws.edu.au

<http://www.uws.edu.au/about/acadorg/schools/communicationarts>