

## Panel 10

### IVSA Conference 2009

#### Appreciating the views: How we're looking at the social and visual landscape

Panel Title:	
<b>Ethical Issues in Visual and Image-based Research</b>	
Description	
<p>In recent years, prompted by the collapsing of disciplinary boundaries and aspects of postmodernism and postcolonialism, there has been a heightened interest in what constitutes ethical practice in social and cultural research. This panel is concerned with the place of visual images within this broader debate. The premise of the panel is that visual research practices raise new ethical issues, as well as some familiar ones in new ways. The panel therefore welcomes papers across the full range of ethical issues, including, but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ethical practice in the gathering of visual material; for example, have visual researchers had to develop novel approaches to informed consent?</li><li>• The ways in which visual methods challenge or alter the relationship between researchers and subjects/participants.</li><li>• The ethical claims of participatory research practices that use visual methods, for example, 'photovoice'.</li><li>• Ethics in interdisciplinary research, for example, where visual practices in photography and the arts are engaged in a dialogue with established social science approaches.</li><li>• Ethics associated with the management and storage of visual 'data', including where the visual material may have a long-term cultural and/or aesthetic value beyond its use as data.</li><li>• How researchers deal with controversial or sensitive visual material.</li><li>• The ethics of visual display and representation, for example, where the dissemination of visual material from research involves the representation of individuals or social groups (especially where there are significant disparities in power between researcher and researched), or where there are issues of cultural copyright.</li><li>• Ethical issues associated with rights, ownership and permissions to access and use visual material, both contemporary and archival.</li><li>• Research on the ethics of visual research itself.</li></ul> <p>Whilst the panel welcomes reflections on general ethical principles that might serve visually based research, papers discussing specific cases where researchers have encountered complex ethical dilemmas are especially encouraged (whether or not these were entirely resolved). Following C. Wright Mills, it is better 'to have one account by a working student...than a dozen "codifications of procedure" by specialists'. The panel is open to papers from the full range of disciplinary perspectives that make up the field of visual studies, including contributions from visual practitioners.</p>	
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Final Selected Papers

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Paper Title	
<b>International visual ethics: problems and solutions</b>	
Description	
<p>Visual methods comprise a range of approaches and techniques for conducting research, including photography, film and drawings. Visual approaches raise specific ethical challenges which may be distinct from those raised by purely textual data. Central to these are issues of anonymity and confidentiality, privacy, copyright, and data sharing and archiving. Research ethics varies depending on national and local context. Guidelines and frameworks generated by word and number-based researchers are useful to image-based research. There is only limited guidance for researchers on ethical issues in relation to visual data. Research ethics is becoming increasingly important around the world and this is impacting on the scope and quality of visual research. As visual research becomes more collaborative across continents and across disciplines consensual visual ethics will become a requirement. Currently there is little international debate on how this can be achieved. There is a need for international resources which enable visual researchers across a range of social science disciplines to fully engage with the ethical dimensions of their research, and to share and develop good practice. This paper will outline problems and potential solutions to issues underpinning the establishment of international visual ethics.</p>	

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Paper Title	
<b>Re-configuring the past: arriving at an archive through the eyes of Ngarinyin Community protocol</b>	
Description	
<p>The sacred cave paintings of the Wanjina and Gwion of North West Kimberley are some of the most significant rock art in Australia exclusive to the living cultural, social, spiritual, political practice of the Ngarinyin, Worrorra and Wanambal language groups. There is a long Western tradition of the interpretation and appropriation of these images beginning with the colonial discoveries of the Wanjina by George Gray in 1838 and the Gwion Gwion figures by Joseph Bradshaw in 1891. In 1938 and 1955 the Frobenius Institute Frankfurt sponsored an expedition to Ngarinyin land with the intention to document worldwide 'Stone Age people's' rock art cultures.</p> <p>The archival imagery of this expedition reveals visual methodologies of acquisition reproducing Ngarinyin cave paintings as life sized painted copies onto canvas or as watercolours, and the photographic documentation of this activity. Although the meanings, symbolism and the execution of the Wanjina paintings associated with the traditions of the Ngarinyin, are documented in their anthropological analyses, the literature avoids addressing the cultural and spiritual distress associated with the requisition of sacrosanct material. As the cave paintings are inextricably linked to the soul, spirit, creation and regeneration of the land, animals and people, what cultural implications did the removal of copies from the sacred space into Western possession have on the community?</p> <p>To re-visit the Frobenius archive through a Ngarinyin perspective provides a context to identify their protocols in re-claiming the intellectual property rights associated with their ancestral pasts and current family ownership. Whilst the anthropological focus was on describing the cave paintings 'symbolic' social functions, what are the ethical implications of the transgression of cultural boundaries? Positioning my argument within the framework of the Wanjina, Willinggin, Wungurr Ngarinyin native title determination of the Federal Court of Australia (2004) provides a context in which to re-assert indigenous governance and to renew coherence between the past and present indigenous cultural maintenance and recognition.</p>	

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Paper Title	
<b>Anonymisation and visual images: issues of respect, voice and protection</b>	
Description	
<p>One of the central ethical issues confronting visual researchers is how to manage the use of identifiable images. Much visual material makes the anonymisation of individuals problematic and many visual researchers, as well as their participants, view anonymisation as undesirable. However, there may be pressure from a range of stakeholders for images to be anonymised, particularly in relation to research with some groups such as children. In addition, there are a range of ethical issues that need consideration in relation to the use of identifiable images; these include the contexts in which images may be consumed, the longevity of images in the public domain and the potential for future uses of images. This paper draws on a qualitative study, comprising focus groups and interviews with 30 visual researchers, which explored their views of ethical issues in visual research. Participants identified the primary ethical challenge of visual research to centre around issues of anonymity and identification. Data indicated that, while this issue is widely discussed in the literature, it remains one which presents an ongoing challenge for researchers. While the importance of principles of 'respect' and 'giving voice' to participants was noted, in some contexts the decisions made are more complex and situated than this orientation suggests. The tension between study participants' rights and researchers' desire for study participants to be seen and heard on the one hand and researchers' responsibility to protect participants on the other was identified. This paper will explore some of the challenges which consideration of anonymisation and identification of images present for visual researchers, the factors that drive the decisions they make and the impact of those decisions.</p>	