

Research In Practice (ADAD5004/C)

BA (Hons) Graphic Design

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For this assessment, I confirm that I have NOT used Generative AI to support me in structuring my submission, including creating a draft argument structure, identifying parts and headings. I confirm that I have not used Generative AI to create text for my submission. I confirm that I have not used Generative AI for creative materials, such as images.

Independent Inquiry Proposal: Creativity, Authenticity and Media

Within this proposal for my dissertation I will be delving into the meanings and theories behind my three key words in which I have chosen based on my own personal interests, beliefs and passions. The three key words I have chosen to cover within this proposal are: Creativity, Authenticity and Politics. I will break down what creativity truly means to people and how famous artists such as Van Gogh used it as an outlet for their thoughts and how people continue to do this even with the definition of creativity

constantly changing within this digital landscape. As well as creativity I will also touch upon my second key word of Authenticity and how many people are demanding authenticity within today's society and how authenticity is bringing the younger generation together especially with the rapid growth of the green party within younger people in today's political climate. For my final keyword, media, I will be delving into how the media represent people within their works and the impact they tend to have depending on the validity of that representation that they present to their audience and how they have a responsibility because of this. I will also dive into the control that the media can have over people due to their influence and how many people blindly believe whatever is fed to them which can lead to conflict.

Creativity is "the use of skill and imagination to produce something new or to produce art" (*Definition of creativity noun from the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2026*) it's a core part of what it means to be human and means so much to so many people. There is no set way or rules behind being creative which allows people to express themselves through their favourite creative medium, with this being seen for centuries even through more notable names such as famous artist Vincent Van Gogh'. It is a known fact that Vincent struggled with his mental health throughout his

life with historians revealing his struggle through letters he had sent to family and friends while in an asylum. Vincent stated that *'Now the shock had been such that it disgusted me even to move, and nothing would have been so agreeable to me as never to wake up again. At present this horror of life is already less pronounced, and the melancholy less acute. But I still have absolutely no will...'* (To Theo van Gogh, Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, c. Thursday, 23 May 1889) Here we see the struggles that Vincent had to face and his inner turmoil during these times, however, even with his struggle with mental health he always fell back into painting. Possibly his only way to still feel somewhat grounded in reality when his brain is trying to convince him otherwise.



(Fig 1. Vincent van Gogh, *Pietà (after Delacroix)*, 1889)

The piece above is not an original of Van Gogh's but instead a re-paint he did of élestin François Nanteuil's *Pietà (after Delacroix)*. Vincent painted this piece while going through a very rough patch with some theorising that possibly 'Vincent identified himself with the recently deceased Christ' due to him writing to his good friend Theo that "In the very suffering religious thoughts sometimes console me a great deal," This shows that Vincent

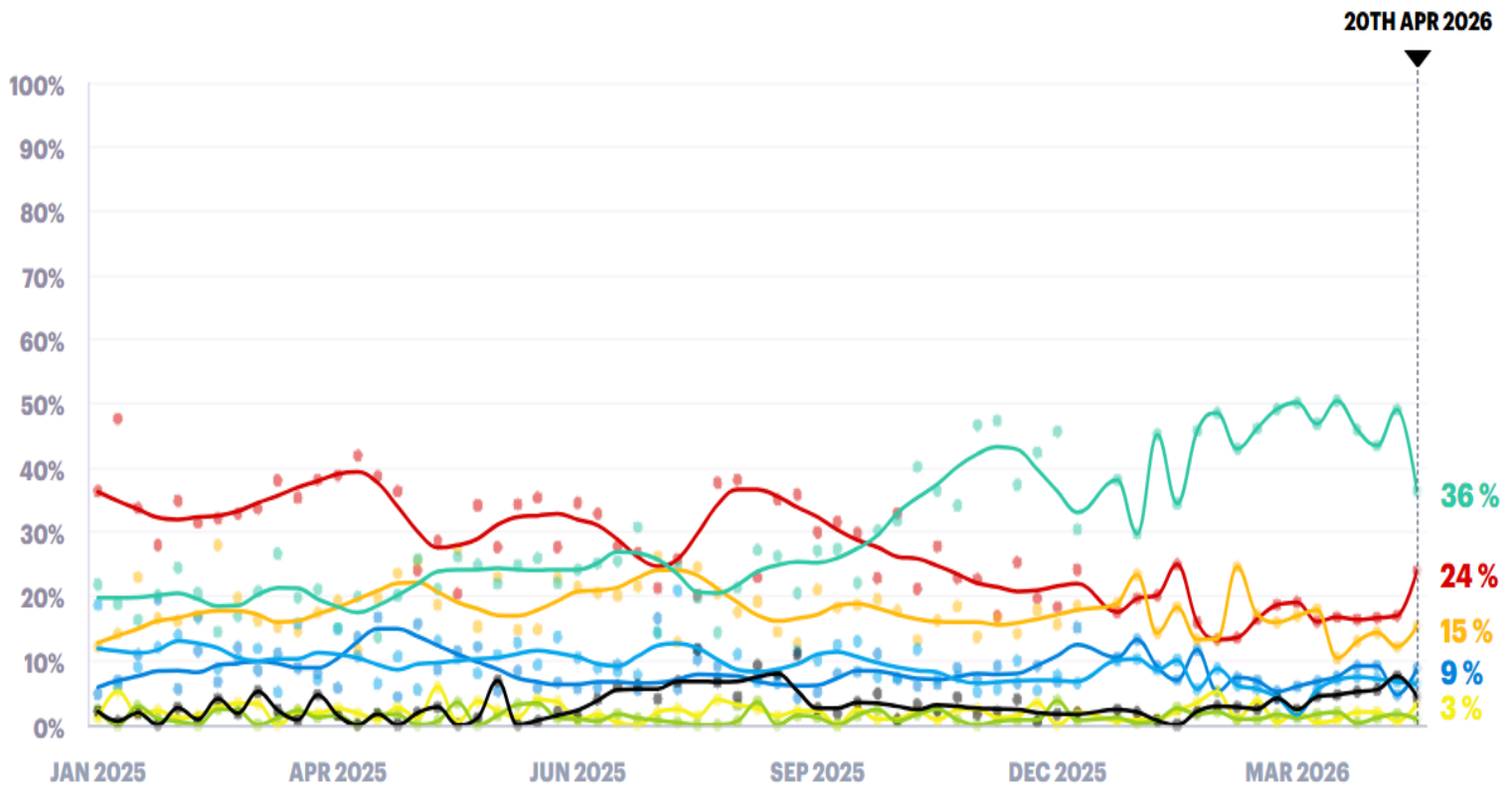
truly did in some cases put his thoughts down onto a canvas with this method still being seen today with those who may struggle with mental health.

A modern study showed from the annual taking part survey conducted by the UK's Department for Culture, Media, and Sport that out of "7,182 participants.37.4% of respondents confirmed that they had taken part in at least one craft activity over the last twelve months." (*Anglia Ruskin University ARU, 2024.*) This 37.4% of people confirmed they experienced higher happiness levels as well as a greater sense of life satisfaction that coincided with a stronger sense that life is worthwhile, a sense that many people feel while being in employment. These statistics highlight just how important creativity is to the human mind and how it has been and can be used as medicine for those who struggle with bad mental health. As well as bad mental health, taking part in creative tasks has also been found to improve cognitive functions within Alzheimer patients. "In a trial involving 39 people with mild Alzheimer's in Japan, those who participated in art therapy showed less apathy compared to a control group that did simple math exercises. In another study of 45 people in Britain with mild to moderate dementia, those who engaged in art making once a week for 40 weeks showed improvements in physical abilities, became more social and were

calmer compared to a group that did recreational activities.” (*Fisher Centre for Alzheimer's Research Foundation, 2017*) This further shows the health benefits creativity can have on the human mind and how we as humans respond positively to engaging in creative tasks.

Creativity doesn't just benefit us as people but it can also lead to benefiting the world around us through a medium called 'activism'. Activism is “The use of creative expression to cultivate awareness and social change” (*Skaara, M. 2024.*) It encourages young people and creatives to handle topics such as climate change through the means of art and to create pieces that demand action. Through the journey of activism participants have reported gaining a deeper understanding of climate resilience and regeneration as well as the medium of storytelling and arts in transforming and communicating climate action. “Before and after surveys captured that, on a scale of 1 to 10, the participants' improved their understanding of: climate resilience from 6.1 to 8.2, regeneration from 6,2 to 8,0, and the role of the arts and storytelling in transforming climate action from 6.2 to 8.6.” (*Skaara, M. 2024.*) These statistics show that creativity can not just inspire but also inform which can allow people to be more well informed about our planet and the issues that we must face instead of sweeping under the rug.

There are many takes on what Authenticity truly means but many describe it as being “true to one's own personality, spirit, or character” (Merriam Webster Dictionary, 2026.) to be authentic you must preach what you practice so to say and as a new generation of young people are becoming adults authenticity is being strived for more than ever. “In a 2023 survey of 800 Gen Zers that Vox Media and Horowitz Research conducted, 47% of respondents agreed that a brand that advertises around an unrelated cause is engaged in nothing more than a sales ploy—an indication that members of this generation prioritize authenticity.” (History Factory, 2024) This Survey goes to show that younger people are much more likely to place their loyalty into a brand or a cause that is authentic and doesn't just hop on a trend to gain popularity and this mentality carries over into our current political climate especially within the UK.



(Fig 2. Voting Intention, 2026.)

This Graph from YouGov shows the trend of votes from the 18-24 age bracket and who they are currently most likely to vote for in the next elections. The red on the graph represents labour at 24% while the green represents the Green party who are currently favoured within this age bracket at 36%. The Green party stands strongly on their motto of “Let’s make hope normal again.” (Green Party, 2026.) and are a party for the people promising to tackle an affordability plan which will aim to tackle the high cost of living crisis as well as making homes more affordable. Both of

these issues are affecting the 18-24 age bracket more than ever, even myself as a 21 year old has to possibly accept the fact that I will never be able to afford a mortgage in our current economy so it's no wonder The Green Party are capturing the hearts of the younger generation. As well as promising to look after the people the leader of The Green party, Zack Polanski, is openly gay which gives young people especially those within the LGBTQ+ community representation within politics that they have never been given before. Zack did not have to make his sexuality known but doing so shows the authenticity that the Green Party stands for and that young people are searching for. In comparison to the Green Party, Reform UK only have 6% of the 18-24 age bracket with their policies looking to "Repeal the Human rights act" (ReformUK, 2026) an act which sets out the fundamental rights and freedoms that everyone in the UK is entitled to. It incorporates the rights set out in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) into domestic British law." (*The Human Rights Act, 2018*.) With some of these rights being: The right to life, Freedom from torture and inhumane or degrading treatment as well as the right to a free trial with many more very serious rights being respected under this act. Reform threatening to abolish this act does not instill authenticity and trust within the younger generation but instead scares them. Many young people are

facing extreme stress about the upcoming elections due to the harm that RefromUk will instill.

Moving onto authenticity within a more creative sense we can't ignore the debate on Artificial Intelligence, especially generative AI which has become very popular within recent years. "Generative AI refers to deep-learning models that can generate high-quality text, images, and other content based on the data they were trained on." (*Martineau K, 2023*) With this 'data' usually consisting of other artists' creative work without their consent creating a debate on how authentic art created by generative AI really is and how generative AI is making us question if every image we are seeing on social media these days is even real.



(Fig 3. Photo of Pope Francis in Puffer Jacket Was Fake, 2023, Inside Edition)

The image above is an Ai generated image of Pope Francis wearing a Balenciaga puffer jacket. It took the internet by storm in 2023 with many people initially not seeing the lies behind the image as they rushed to their keyboards to exclaim their surprise at this image, However, it wasn't long before people started to question the authenticity of this image with many highlighting flaws within the image such as the cross necklace that was missing string on the other side and seemingly lead know where. This image raises the question on how authentic the internet really is these days and if we can even trust what is being shown to us through the news with generative ai being so widely spread. As well as not being authentic generative Ai is also misleading and can be a problem for the older generation who don't understand technology as well as younger generations do which would make them vulnerable to the validity of generative Ai which could lead to misinformation being spread quicker and being hidden within the actual factual information.

Media is “the means of communication, as radio and television, newspapers, magazines, and the internet, that reach or influence people

widely.” (*Dictionary.com*, 2026) It is still a very popular medium in the present day with many forms of media still being appreciated by many different people and therefore representation, especially accurate and positive representation is pivotal. “representation is a depiction of a minority, such as people of a different sexuality or race.” (*Algonquin college*, 2022) and therefore representation is very important to these minorities who may feel pushed out within everyday society. While representation is very important within all age groups of minorities it is pivotal that children both within and not within those minorities are exposed to positive representation of different groups throughout their development. This is important because it allows the children within minority groups to feel seen as they are finally seeing someone who looks like them on the tv while children not within those minority groups are exposed to the different cultures and ethnicities of the world making them much more tolerant and understanding as they grow up. As well as children, positive representation can also teach adults to be more tolerant. A Poll conducted in 2012 showed that “27% of voters said that “[.] depictions of gay characters on TV made them more pro-gay marriage.” Later, some of these voters said that Modern Family was a part of this change of heart.” (*Common sense media*, 2021) This is just as important as these adults have a huge part in the younger

generations future so the more accepting and tolerant they become the more the younger generations will learn this positive behaviour through them However, even though many agree that representation is very important for adults and children to be exposed to, many argue that the media still has a long way to go when representing a minority. Studies show that “Characters of color in shows most watched by children age 2 to 13 are more likely to be depicted as violent, and women of all ethnic-racial groups in adult programming are more likely to appear in sexualized roles.” (*Common sense media, 2021*) These negative stereotypes and misrepresentations can cause a lot of harm to these minorities especially when it comes to impressionable children who may grow up believing these stereotypes as well reinforcing some negative stereotypes that the adults watching may already agree with.

While these negative stereotypes are very harmful to minorities in some cases the media uses this to gain control and purposefully portray a bad light onto these minorities to paint a fake narrative that supports that specific media companies beliefs. This has been seen through many news broadcasts however, the one I am going to be shedding some light upon is going to be Fox News. Fox News is a US, right leaning, News broadcast that reports on daily news and events however, many people question their

validity especially when it comes to political news. A study that took place by scientists: David Broockman, who teaches at UC-Berkeley, and Joshua Kalla, who teaches at Yale. found that “When Fox viewers watched CNN, they heard about all sorts of things Fox wasn’t telling them. They processed that information. They took it in. They became more knowledgeable about what was really going on in the United States.” (*Froomkin, D. 2022*) *The CNN are a left leaning News broadcast and therefore have different political values than Fox News which in both news companies have an influence on how they choose to share their news. Those who watched CNN* “became more likely to agree that if Donald Trump made a mistake, Fox News would not cover it.” (*Froomkin, D. 2022*) This highlights the corrupt nature of certain types of media especially those who have a certain narrative they want their viewers to believe, Fox News is a right leaning news broadcast and therefore would not want any of their viewers to be seeing any criticism against President Donald Trump as they want viewers to stay loyal to his ideals and in the same breath Fox’s own ideals also.

In Conclusion, my three keywords that I have researched highlight the complexities of creative media and how it can be used to help those

struggling with mental health and benefit those that use it to express themselves however, when put into the wrong hands can be used to spread misinformation and gain control over a targeted audience. This misinformation can be anything from stereotyping to simply skipping around the truth; however, with the rise of AI we are constantly left wondering if an image we are seeing is even real before we can appreciate it. Creativity is constantly being tugged one way by those who want to use it to express themselves and share the beauty of art with others while tugged the other way by people who use tools such as AI to create a narrative they want people to be fooled by.

This struggle brings me to the question of:: **Will creative careers ever be the same again with the rise of artificial intelligence?**

I will aim to answer this question through my third year dissertation, diving into the roles of graphic designers and other creatives and study how AI has started to mould their roles and if artificial intelligence is just a trend or looking to stay for good.

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Images

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