Topic Background: A Sociological Analysis of Graffiti

Graffiti through a Historical Lens

Unlike other art forms, the origins of graffiti do not come from any one era; rather it can be traced throughout human history. According to *Grove's Dictionary of Art*, the term "graffiti" derives from the Greek word "graphein" meaning, "to write," however the term has also been defined as any inscriptions (drawings or words) scratched or scrawled on public surfaces. Academics have long debated the artistic merit of graffiti particularly when associating modern day urban graffiti with ancient pieces such as the Palaeolithic cave paintings of Lascaux (Welsch, 1993: 32). Greek graffiti dating to sixth century B.C. has been found in Abu Simbel, an ancient Egyptian town. Much of ancient graffiti can be traced along trade and pilgrimage routes. One example includes the passage marked between Palestine and the Catherine Monastery in the Sinai Peninsula; Greek, Latin and Nabatean inscriptions litters this trail (Bartholome, 2004: 87).

Graffiti alluding to religious groups has also been common; in fact, biblical allusions have been rampant. One case includes a piece from third century A.D., which reads "Alexamenos worshipping his god" and depicts a man kneeling to a crucified figure (Gross, 1993: 251). Moreover, in *Graves, Caves and Refugees*, Simon Parker argues that a large number of Iron Age graffiti can be located in caverns and tombs in Judah. Through analysis of the historical undertones of the inscriptions, the presence of distinct themes can be observed within these works, including threats thwarting grave robbers, responses to national disasters, expressions of community emotions, and reactions to personal devastation. The messages show an urge to leave behind a mark on the world before death. Although much of recorded graffiti has been in Europe, scholars have also

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traced graffiti through Mayan, Aztec and Incan hieroglyphics. Thus, ancient periods have placed significant value on the idea of the human need to proclaim ones' existence. Graffiti to this day, in most cultures, realizes this phenomenon.

Graffiti continued throughout Europe but did not experience a substantial appreciation until after the French Revolution in 1830. At this time, popular media began to recognize graffiti, particularly, as a form of political commentary. For example, in 1833, the satirical periodical *Caricature* published an illustration of two children being scolded for drawing pear-faces of King Louis Philippe on a wall (Sheon, 1976: 16). The cartoon suggests two things: first, the publication of the time recognized the existence of graffiti; second, graffiti was being used for socio-political expression.

The type of graffiti common to most present-day understandings was launched into the spotlight during the 1960s. Mirroring civil rights movements, anti-war protests and political upheavals, graffiti once again became an important tool for personal expression (Welsh, 1993: 30). Modern graffiti since the 1960s has been argued by Susan Phillips to evolve into two distinct groupings: popular graffiti and community-based graffiti. These classes further subdivide into various categories. While popular graffiti, including subcategories such as the so-called everyday stuff (witty remarks and phallic symbols) have been around as long as human culture, community-based graffiti has been considered a modern phenomenon born of modernist tendencies in urban cities. As a diverse movement, this type incorporates political, gang-related, and hip-hop elements. Cities, with isolating landscapes and modernity, become the source of influence and inspiration for graffiti artists. Indeed, the graffiti that we think of today can be associated with the hip-hop subculture that developed out of the inner cities in the United States.

Graffiti surfaced in the late twentieth century into its various forms; and this demographic phenomenon can be observed today. While academics have argued for the birthplace of modern graffiti to emerge originally from Philadelphia in the late 1960s, there has also been acknowledgment that the phenomenon of graffiti was first given widespread recognition through the appearance of subway art in New York (Phillips, 1999). Graffiti became even more notorious in mainstream culture with the emergence of artists such as Jean-Michel Basquiat and Keith Haring, who had their artistic foundations in graffiti art. Basquiat was first known for his part in creating the famous trademark SAMO© (acronym for "Same Old Shit") – an exemplary example of graffiti containing a message with regards to anti-materialism. Haring also did many works on the streets of New York, including familiar images of pyramids, television sets, the human figure and the crawling baby. These artists, to the public, have grown to represent the movement of subway graffiti (Stokstad, 2004).

Hip-hop graffiti, asserts Phillips, is "taking over the world faster and more effectively than any [other] revolution" (1999), with key elements such as tagging, throw-ups and pieces, all having their start in the New York subway movement of the 1970s. Hip-hop influences in the popular culture of graffiti will be addressed in the latter part of this research. Graffiti has definitely reached many parts of the world with the spread of the "hip-hop nation" and this movement continues to grow in magnitude.

Graffiti as a Form of Deviance

The hip-hop nation persists in strength and influence; many municipalities have been feeling its effects. In 1992, the City of Los Angeles spent over "$15 million" on the

elimination of graffiti (Grant, 1996). Moreover, in 2002 according to a report complied by *Keeping America Beautiful*, L.A.'s figure rose to "$55 million" and the United States overall came in with a "$12 billion" spending.

The expansion and intensification of graffiti in major American cities have nonetheless influenced Canadian cities, including Calgary, Vancouver, Montreal and Toronto. The hip-hop subculture holds a strong place in reality. In effect, the situation has grown to cause much concern to everyday citizens. Graffiti can be seen as a threat to the quality of life in a community because millions of taxpayers' dollars are spent on its removal; in fact public funds can be entirely swept up by graffiti eradication.

The problem has undoubtedly become costly and the matter now rests in the hands of various city-operated programs. *The Ubyssey*'s News Editor, Jonathan Woodward, reported that in 2003 the University of British Columbia "spent $145,000 cleaning up vandalism" and the Vancouver School Board spends well over $150,000 per school year removing graffiti alone. The phenomenon has mounted to the formation of the Vancouver Anti-Graffiti Task Force. Its strategy launched several preventive measures. Such measures include a minimum fine of $500 to those found responsible for an act of graffiti; moreover, city by-laws stipulate that all businesses hold the responsibility of removing graffiti on their buildings within ten days of its appearance or owners face a minimum fine of $100. Through the institutionalization of such penalty systems, it appears that the city clearly considers graffiti to be a form of vandalism, as a violation against the law. In doing so, Vancouver has categorized most graffiti artists as a targeted group of deviant individuals.

Graffiti has linkages with the term delinquency in the perspective of city officials. The act has become an illegal offence because it implies the act of damaging property without authorized permission. The public sees graffiti as an act of deviance because it decreases the value property, detracts from the beauty of neighbourhoods and hurts tourism. Unattended pieces of graffiti give off the visual impression of an "uncaring and indifferent society." When the city fails to remove graffiti, it creates an "environment where other more serious crimes flourish" (Grant, 1996). The "Broken Windows" theory developed by James Wilson and George Kelling states that graffiti along with trash, broken windows, and other forms of urban decay supports this idea that things go from bad to worse when vandalism is left unchecked. Citizens no longer feel safe, and try to avoid areas such as these. This leads to an increase in delinquency and criminal activities.

The *Canadian Oxford English Dictionary* defines deviance as "the behaviour or characteristics of a deviant," a person who "departs from the expected rules of conduct" and strays from normal, social standards. Graffiti can be seen as an act of deviance for a number of reasons, in particular with regards to the destruction of property, theft of supplies, and relationship to gangs. In *Urban Graffiti: Crime, Control, and Resistance*, Jeff Ferrell defines graffiti to be a form of resistance towards "legal, political, and religious authority" (77). The illegitimate aspects of graffiti are a reflection and manifestation of wider social themes of alienation and hostility. Through doing graffiti, the artist claims to be resisting establishments and fighting the segregation, isolation, and entrapment so prevalent in large city settings. Graffiti, as a socio-cultural occurrence,

allows young people to share or differentiate cultural values and norms and redefine urban spaces.

Another reason why society regards graffiti as a form of delinquency is because it directly relates to theft or what a graffiti artist call "racking." This includes shoplifting spray paint, markers, and other graffiti supplies. The supplies required become expensive when these youths begin to feed an addiction that needs to be carried out on a daily basis. Many artists will steal the paint and supplies they need, thus the correlation between individuals with criminal records for theft as well as graffiti vandalism has not been uncommon (Grant, 1996). The situation holds the potential to elevate from here. For instance, graffiti artists can be associated to one or a number of gangs. While gang graffiti makes up a small proportion of general graffiti, they are usually considered the most violent and dangerous. Artists in gang graffiti find enjoyment in "marking territorial boundaries, advertising individual members, and threatening rival gangs." This phenomenon become an entry point into a subculture that leads to more serious crimes such as burglary, assault, fights, and drive-by shootings (Grant, 1996).

There also exists a psychological advantage in turning to this kind of deviance. Graffiti provides avenues for young people in the search for exhilaration and stimulation. Ferrell maintains that, "The experience of tagging… is defined by the incandescent excitement, the adrenaline rush, that results from creating their art in a dangerous and illegal environment – and that heightened legal and police pressure therefore heightens this [experience]." Perhaps even more significant, graffiti allows artists to elevate their status and gain respect within the subculture. Once caught in this kind of subculture the act becomes addictive in some cases. Graffiti artists have one main aim and that includes

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the need to display their names prominently to get as much exposure as possible; and they will do this with persistence.

Controversy abounds in defining the act of graffiti as deviant. Perhaps it represents power hierarchies. This includes the power and knowledge struggle among various forces including class, race, gender, and religion. In this case, are there merits in openly allowing graffiti to exist as a kind of free expression? Should there be forums for those who do not have access to expensive publication? How can the unknown voices of society be heard without censorship? In short, the act of graffiti represents "a set of post-modern and anarchistic dynamics that challenge both conventional notions of legal and social control and conventional understandings of deviant and criminal subculture" (Ferrell, 1998: 601). However, graffiti also represents an understanding of artistic work and expression. The concluding statement leads us to the next section. There needs to be further examination in this phenomenon, more specifically in the motivations that causes it.

Graffiti as an Art Form

Since the start of modern graffiti in New York in the late 1960s, there has been much debate over its legitimacy as an art form. Many see graffiti as a gang related and merit-less, while others hail graffiti as a legitimate art form of the utmost importance (Sartwell, 2003).

Before delving into a discussion of graffiti as a form of art, it should be clear as to what type of graffiti needs to be addressed, as graffiti ranges from comments scrawled on bathroom walls to massive mural. The most basic form of graffiti includes simple

markings or writing. Following this includes the tag, which is a quick, yet stylized

writing of one's "tag" name, often done with a felt marker. Tags simply say that "I was

here" – it marks ones turf or territory (as mentioned above). Being quick and "practical",

tags are not meant to be artistic or aesthetically appealing (Stowers, 1997).

       While simple tags stand for the roots of graffiti's history, the advent of aerosol

paint brought rise to large multicoloured tags that evolved to full on murals by the mid

1970s. Central to the graffiti subculture is "style wars", or who can paint the best work.

This has launched graffiti into an evolution – from bubble letters, to 3-D lettering (known

as a "stamp") to "wild style" – a complex and mostly illegible work. The goal of the

seasoned graffiti artist is to become the "King" or "Queen" of their home area, railway or

transit line by creating the most stylistic "pieces" in the most places (Stowers, 1997 and

Powers, 1996).

       In this discussion of graffiti as an art form, one must make the clear distinction

between tags or scrawling and spray-paint murals. Murals are often created for aesthetic

reasons and often display immense skill. The American Heritage Dictionary defines art

as "the conscious production or arrangement of sounds, colours, forms, movements, or

other elements in a manner that affects the sense of beauty, specifically the production of

the beautiful in a graphic or plastic medium" (2000). Certainly, graffiti art displays the

listed characteristics and requires much skill. Pieces must be pre-visualized in piece

books and specifically planned. Aspects of the art world have even accepted graffiti as

art, having had many gallery showings (Powers, 1996). However, this does not imply

that graffiti has been well received by the general populace.

The fact that society views graffiti as subversive has to do, in large part, with its appeal and the identity of the graffiti subculture. Graffiti can be seen as an art form for the lower class to rise up and have a voice; it is about the reclamation of public space and the denouncing of ownership (Johnson, 2002). Crispin Sartwell, a member of the graffiti subculture, presents this ideal well, who wrote a controversial editorial for the Los Angeles Times comparing graffiti tags and commercial advertising. He writes:

> "If you have money, you can put your tag everywhere, all the time, in all media […]. Money brings with it an absolute right to convey your message and your name and your image to everyone, to completely dominate space of all kinds…. Speech is free in the sense that it is more or less protected by the constitution; it is not free in the sense that it costs money…. [Graffiti is] an equalization of expression in public contexts, a seizure of space for non-corporate, non-governmental messages. It's free speech in every sense of the term" (2003).

While comparing graffiti to advertising is not necessarily a fair comparison, it does highlight the democratic nature of the art form. In fact, when placed in a gallery, many found that graffiti becomes sterilized and losses much of its meaning (Powers, 1996). Pam Johnson argues that placing graffiti in a gallery is cultural appropriation, as the act attempts to place graffiti with other works stemming from the European tradition of fine art. The curator defines the selections in the galleries, and as such, the institution comes to define graffiti. Thus, causing graffiti to lose the original spirit of its movement – to "seize the walls" (2002).

Thus, within these contexts that one must begin to develop strategies to counter act graffiti. While graffiti maybe illegal, unsightly - and sometimes even harmful - it also can be art. Moreover, simply removing the piece or punishing the perpetrators will not necessarily be effective deterrents – this is part of the culture of graffiti. In closing our discussion of graffiti as an art form, we believe that it needs to be stressed that the

problem needs to be looked at with a respect towards it's history as a art form and a sub-cultural expression.

Graffiti as a Part of Popular Culture

Popular culture is the vernacular culture that prevails in a modern society. Large and powerful institutions frequently dictate what should and should not be included in popular culture. It illustrates continuing interaction between the creators (such as multi-mullion dollar industries) and the consumers of that particular society. Elements of popular culture become mainstream over time, but through continuous transformations popular culture has the tendency to faded or rise in certain periods of time. Today graffiti, along with break dancing is considered to be one of the four main elements of hip-hop culture (Wikipedia, 2004). The intricate relationship between hip-hop and graffiti is evident when analyzing the history, trends, messages, and motivations of graffiti, as well as their impact on the health of the community.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s graffiti had been gradually increasing (Broderson, 2002). With the notoriety of such graffiti artists as Taki (183), widespread taggers and the development of "wild style" graffiti writings soon became a popular occurrence in cities such as New York and Los Angles (Broderson, 2002). In the mid 1970s, the phenomenon exploded with the birth of a hip-hop nation and works of graffiti artists can be observed in the most blatant spaces. New York's subway system became a war zone between officials and artists. As Deborah Broderson states, "even as transit authorities struggled to remove the colourful paintings, or "throw ups", New York graffiti was receiving international recognition as part of a nascent hip-hop culture" (2002). The movement spread from rail yards and subways to the streets; it progressed nationwide

with the help of rap music and the mass media, which – as some would argue – led to worldwide mimicking (Wikipedia, 2004).

Movies such as *Beat Street* (1984) and the documentary *Wild Style* (1982) perpetuated the glorified image of graffiti and its link to the hip-hop culture that was being embraced by so many. One critic from rhino.com asserts that *Wild Style* "was the first to link graffiti, break dancing, DJing, and music as a lifestyle…" (1997). The movies cemented what was already being accepted, that graffiti had become an essential and admirable part of hip-hop culture. These images of such lifestyles were so popular that graffiti transcended the stereotypes of race and class as it became "abundant even among middle-class white children" (Wikipedia, 2004). Although different genres are used, most graffiti artists are classified by their style and originality. Graffiti has become so intertwined with rap and the hip-hop world that even websites offer free downloads of graffiti lettering and images.

Hip-hop is often viewed to have a negative impact on the health of the community. Many films use hip-hop as a way to add reality to the film, through the diction, style, and sexist attitudes of the characters; and producers seek to assume and emphasize such qualities (Massood, 2003: 159). By reinforcing these images, films and rap give the idea that this is the way all African-Americans live (Massood, 2003: 185). Such avenues, Massood claims, further promote violence (177), as well as corrupting the use of the English language (185). Graffiti has become more than a factor in the development and style of the hip-hop life style – it has become a symbol of that culture.

While there have been many positive outcomes of graffiti in relation to the hip-hop culture – such as providing a new venue for original thought and expression,

encouraging creativity, and helping to develop a new art style – there have been serious problems related to it as well. As mentioned previously, the paint used to tag is often stolen from demonstration racks in local stores (Maxwell, 2004). Extra police officers are required to deal with the problem, which creates more jobs, but also wastes taxpayers' dollars. Random surveillance systems have been installed on train cars (Maxwell, 2004), eroding the privacy of all individuals, not just taggers. The defacing and destruction of public property has cost cities and tax payers hundreds of thousands of dollars, and has promoted deviant behaviour among youth and young adults. The challenge for societies will be to find an alternative way or acceptable setting for graffiti artists to express their culture and continue displaying their art.

Graffiti as a Mode of Communication

In order to understand graffiti as a mode of communication, it is insufficient to simply decipher the texts without first identifying graffiti as a medium. Thus, it is not only useful but also necessary to acknowledge and examine the significance of graffiti as a medium and the impact on the nature of the message being communicated.

Graffiti and other "public art media"—a collective term for alternative communication methods—have been largely dismissed as subversive and illegitimate (Chaffee; Gross; Hermer & Hunt 456). While it is debatable whether these qualities are negative or positive, the counter-structural nature of graffiti communication, nonetheless, appeals to the marginalized voices that seek to challenge the control and censorship of dominant discourse. In Paraguay, for example, the use of graffiti as a communication medium has become well established as "a social and political dimension of popular

culture and of the socio-political system" by many different political forces, especially by those who are marginalized in the struggle over power and distribution of influence (Chaffee, 1990).

This phenomenon can largely be attributed to the key features of graffiti: accessibility and anonymity. Like many other forms of media or art, graffiti serves to advertise and propagate ideas, share information and support or oppose the system. However, a distinctive quality separating graffiti from other, more "legitimate" forms of media is that it is "one of the easiest and most efficient" ways for individuals and groups to voice political dissidence, social alienation and anti-system ideas (Chaffee, 1990). Because it offers to individuals, both economically and spatially, high-accessible communication channels at low-risk retribution, it is understandable why graffiti is such a desirable method of communication against inequalities in resource and power distribution. However, it should be noted that these very advantages could also risk encouraging individuals to misuse graffiti to perpetuate or express negative messages aimed to harm other individuals and groups. This matter also brings into a conflict theorist's question of who defines graffiti, in other words, which power groups are able to gain the position of defining what is considered to be deviant

Anonymity and accessibility allowed by graffiti can be equally invaluable to a student venting in the bathroom stall about government legislation, the World Trade Organization or tuition hikes as much as it is to a political protester in Paraguay. In institutions where formality and structure are privileged, graffiti offers opportunities to break away from the rigidity to create a space for a more organic discourse by inviting uninhibited and uncensored discussions that are often rare in scholarly writing (Read,

1977: 5). Freed from the unyielding language of academia, students are able to assert aggressive identities and resist dehumanization (McCormick, 2003: 111). For instance, numerous evidences of extensive multi-person dialogues staged in campus bathroom stalls suggest graffiti not only serves its purpose as a mode of communication but serves it well (Loewenstine, Ponticos & Paludi 308; Otta 590; Wickens 13). To dismiss graffiti as obscenity would be to discredit its value as a medium of communication, thus silencing the voices of those whose only chance of being heard is through this marginalized form of discourse.

Graffiti as a Reflection of Gender Differences
While using graffiti as a mode of communication is naturally universal, it is necessary to make some basic distinctions between the genders. Males and females experience graffiti in very dissimilar manners. Agents of socialization are active in differentiating the expected gender roles and behaviours. Similarly, there should be little doubt that graffiti indeed reflects gender differences.

Contrary to conventional stereotypes, a study launched by Elizabeth Wales and Barbara Brewer on graffiti in four high schools of differing socio-economic statuses, discovered that 88% of washroom graffiti was committed by females (1998). The gender differences are apparent in the types of graffiti committed by females and males in public spaces, in particular, public washrooms. While male graffiti appears "negative and argumentative", female graffiti is often "positive and supportive" (Green, 2003: 231). Moreover, studies of washroom graffiti revealed that 86% of graffiti in the men's room to be erotic in nature (Wales, 1976: 116) with the majority of the remaining graffiti being "slogans, jokes, and declarative statements" (Wickens, 1996: 1). On the other hand, the

graffiti produced in the ladies' room lies within the guidelines of social and moral norms. While erotic graffiti remains predominant in males' washrooms, it accounts for only 25% of the graffiti in the female counterpart. Wales and Brewer contend that it is more common for females to write about "feelings and personal matters" (1976). However, studies have shown an interesting correlation: an increase in the frequency of erotic graffiti in female washrooms comes with an increase with females' socio-economic statuses (Wickens, 1996).

Gender socialization plays a significant role in the gender differences in the location and type of graffiti used. For instance, females exhibit a need to privatize their participation by limiting their involvement to isolated and secluded areas; and we can hardly disagree that washroom "cubicles make it private and anonymous" (Green, 2003: 293). Females may avoid outward displays of deviance because they are taught compliance over disobedience.

Washroom graffiti also identifies the differences in the nature of male and female sexuality (Wales, 1976: 115). According to Rhonda Lenton, males and females are conditioned to follow gender roles, which represent the "widely held expectations" of male and female behaviour (71). Unlike males, females are "expected to desire love before intimacy, while males are encourage to be sexually aggressive and experienced" (73). Moreover, females are socialized to use language that is "polite and less assertive," on the one hand. On the other, males are encouraged to be direct and forceful. Adie Nelson and Barrie Robinson point out that females who openly display sexual feelings are viewed undesirably. Because presentation influences a females chance for upward mobility, many fear that "speaking in a low status way" will result in a mirrored decline

in social position (175). One may infer that females in higher socio-economic groups are forced more heavily to adhere to societal expectations for appropriate female sexual behaviours and language. As a consequence, however, these young women tend use erotic graffiti as a form of sexual expression. This becomes their method of counteracting and coping with the pressures toward gender conformity. Recapitulating, graffiti ultimately allows people to "blow off steam."

Graffiti as a Reflection of Racism
Graffiti is a faceless agent for communicating social attitudes within particular economic, political and social settings. Through the examination of several articles written about local (Fisher and Moxin, 1983), international (Peteet, 1996), and U.S. (Gonos, et al, 1976; Jones, 1991; Miller, 2002; and Austin, 2001) social contexts, we attempt to highlight some of the various uses and meanings of graffiti within the context of race and racism. For example, we can extrapolate the idea of intolerance by studying graffiti found in the streets of Israel (Peteet, 1996). We can examine ideas around racist ideology by looking at graffiti found in residences, bathrooms, and other public spaces in America (Gonos et al., 1976; Jones, 1991) and we can look at anti-racist, social justice ideology through interviews with graffiti artists tagging the railways and infrastructures in and around Vancouver, B.C. (Fisher & Moxin, 1993).

Economics, politics, and particular social settings influence the number and kinds of incidences of racist graffiti; furthermore, common social attitudes towards these influences are reflected in graffiti tags (Gonos, et al, 1976; and Jones, 1991). Jones writes about the rise of racist graffiti on U.S. campuses in recent years. He attributes this rise in racist graffiti to several factors. Increased competition among students for "good

jobs" has fostered a fear among the white working-class community that the black community is taking jobs away from them. Secondly, the ultra conservative political climate beginning with Ronald Regan and continuing with George Bush has promoted a subtle racism through cutting of social programs and attacking affirmative action. Thirdly, he states that university campuses are becoming increasingly diverse and many students are unaccustomed to negotiating multiethnic environments. This third claim is supported by an article entitled *Anonymous Expression: A Structural View of Graffiti* (1976), which argues that in more liberal, multicultural settings such as universities, there is more anonymous racist graffiti than in racially homogenous settings. The authors claim that in settings where the social values are shifting, and there is an appropriate public position on an issue (for example anti-racism), there exists a greater tendency for the opposite views to be expressed covertly in the form of anonymous graffiti. Despite these studies, racially homogenous cities or communities are not free from incidents of hate crimes.

       In what seems to be a neighbourhood untouched by racism near Brooklyn, there were three accounts of racist graffiti where people would commonly not reveal such views (Reeves, 2001). Reeves describes the citizens of the neighbourhood and how surprised they were by the 'racial slurs' written on the face of a business mural. He implies that the graffiti has been used as a means to communicate beliefs that would not usually be heard around town. This supports the research done by Gonos, et al (1976) in which they argue that graffiti provides a way to anonymously voice unacceptable beliefs about race.

The preceding discussion reveals how graffiti has been used in particular social settings to express negative views about racial minorities. However, graffiti takes on a very different meaning when it is understood as a powerful means of expression for marginalized racial groups themselves, who use it as a way of getting their voices heard in a society that often renders them invisible. Graffiti has been used in a variety of contexts as a creative means of exploring racial identity and autonomy, and as a medium for resistance against prevailing power hierarchies in society (Miller, 2002). In the book entitled *Aerosol Kingdom: Subway Painters of New York City*, Ivor Miller outlines the stories to the people behind the graffiti. He traces the emergence graffiti writing in New York City as a creative and subversive art form that emerged out of an African American cultural continuum and as a response to European colonialism. He argues that marginalized youth used graffiti as a means of gaining empowerment through incorporating statements about identity, culture, and contemporary society into their artwork. Therefore, although graffiti can be used as a tool for reinforcing power over marginalized groups, it has also been used subversively by marginalized groups to make public claims about oppression, racial identities, and power.

Although graffiti artists do come from a range of different socio-economic and racial backgrounds, most come from low-income, working-class African American and Latino communities (Austin, 58). Within many of these communities there is a general feeling of being marginalized and invisible to the rest of society. And within this context, graffiti can be seen as a struggle for public space, and a means of getting their voice heard within the anonymity of a large city (Austin, 4). Ivor Miller explains that "writers testify to the reality of their lives through their art… (for) through their paintings, writers

indicated that 'we are here, we are struggling'"(Miller, 45).   A sense of powerlessness

pervades many of these marginalized communities and graffiti is a highly creative act of

resistance against the administration and more generally the oppressive and racist social

structures in American society. Graffiti offers people a way of claiming their right to be

a part of the social and cultural life of the city and demanding recognition and rights

(Austin, 4)

Latino and African American cultural traditions have had a huge impact on the

development of graffiti writing. In the book *Taking the Train: How Graffiti Art became*

an Urban Crisis in New York City, Joe Austin asserts that universities and ethnic

neighbourhoods in New York have become the sites of national student movements and

radical groups such as the Black Panthers and the Congress of Racial Equality during the

1960s and early 70s (Austin, 43-44). He argues that many writers were informed and

inspired by these movements and incorporated ideas about ethnic identity and autonomy

into their graffiti writing (Austin, 44). Therefore, graffiti became a medium for exploring

their own racial heritage and overtly expressing these ideas to the public at large. As Ivor

Miller states:

> The frustration and anger youth felt around them from their parents and
> communities and the resilience and hope for new possibilities that came
> with the emergence of black, Latino and Native American consciousness
> were translated into a green light for artists without tools, without canvas,
> to paint it loud, to create their art, by any means necessary" (Austin, 47).

Through graffiti, marginalized youth that possess very little in terms of material wealth

found a creative way of getting their message out there and publicly displaying

nationalist ideals and a new racial consciousness.

Friendships formed by graffiti artists often transcended the rigid ethnic barriers imposed by ethnic gangs in particular neighborhoods and society at large (Miller, 29). In order to move around safely at night, graffiti crews consisting of several youth had to be formed. These crews were often multi-ethnic and were formed around a common desire to paint rather than around ethnic or cultural ties (Miller, 29-30). Miller argues:

> In the creation of multi-ethnic and multi-gendered crews, many writers resisted the prejudices of their parents as well as institutionalized racial and gender categories…writers intentionally subverted the race consciousness of the larger society"(Miller, 32).

In the United States, where segregationalist ideas were very popular, young graffiti artists worked against these trends in hopes of creating a more unified society.

Within an international context, Palestinian people used graffiti as a way of making their voices heard in the face of censorship and oppression by the Israeli government. They used graffiti to record their own cultural history and to signify defiance against their oppressor. In Peteet's article (1996), she explains how graffiti has been employed to defy the Israeli government and communicate the Palestinian struggle of the present day. She argues that in this context, graffiti intervenes in and subverts the relations of power between Palestinians and Israelis. The presence of Palestinian graffiti signifies that their oppressors cannot fully censor their lives, their voices, and their history. The anonymousness of Palestinian graffiti may allow individuals to be heard without being seen; therefore, graffiti is a means for people to express beliefs that may or may not be acceptable in everyday social situations (Gonos, et al, 1976).

Graffiti tends to have negative connotations in society, as does racism. However, there are graffiti artists who disagree (Fisher and Moxin, 1993). Although they acknowledge the damage to property and the costs incurred by incidents of graffiti, some

artists feel that graffiti has emerged as a genuinely positive way to express peace and justice (Fisher and Moxin, 1993). Is graffiti being misunderstood? According to Wendy Hawthorne of the Vancouver Crime and Prevention Unit, graffiti damages the city and property (October 7th Lecture, 2004). However, Peteet maintains that Palestinian culture reveals graffiti to be a sign of "resistance" and "defiance." Moreover, youth may simply want their ideas to be heard whether they are negative or positive. However, we must remain aware that although there may be some artists doing graffiti to communicate positive ideas, others exploit the phenomenon to relay hate messages (Fisher and Moxin, 1993).

Graffiti is a powerful social medium for public expression. It is very difficult to make generalized statements about the messages contained within graffiti and the motivations behind them. The meanings and messages are highly contingent upon the particular contexts, geographies, and histories of the actors involved. Historically, graffiti has been used in a number of different ways to express ideas about race and racial identities. For example, we can see that graffiti is used as a unique communication style in human society that 'silently' voices the current and shifting ideas in societies throughout the world (Gonos, et al, 1976; Fisher and Moxin, 1993; Jones, 1991; and Peteet, 1996). Graffiti can also be used to "overcome disparity" (Peteet, 1996) and drive ideas surrounding economics, politics and the environment (Gonos, et al, 1976). Graffiti acts as the faceless communicator, expressing and reflecting serious human-oriented issues of power, intolerance, competition, and desperation: the roots of racist ideologies. However, it can also be a highly creative, positive medium for people to explore their cultural roots, affirm their racial identities, and promote ideas of tolerance and respect.

Who will conduct the study?

The study will be conducted by Laura Fleming (co-leader), Lori Leung (co-leader), Anthony Sage, Barry Lochrie, Claire Barnes, Clare Hacksel, Esther Whang, Felicia Haider, Jennifer Lupichuk, Natalie Hillary, Rick Vugteveen, Rose Chan, Sheri Pickering, Vikki Ireland and Yuk-Sing Cheng.

Researcher's Purpose:

To investigate whether the types of graffiti found on campus correlate with the background research that we did on the topic.

Research Questions:

1) How much graffiti was found in each "type" category (racist, sexist, territorial tagging, etc.)?

2) What is the link/is there a link between our background research and our field findings?

Methods:

Fifteen people gathered at the first graffiti group meeting. Two leaders were chosen (Laura and Lori).

It was established that the group did not have much knowledge of graffiti so they decided that before beginning the field work they wanted to gain a deeper understanding of the subject matter. A brainstorm session took place which resulted in several aspects of graffiti being put on the table. These were sexism, racism, art form, hip hop culture, history and deviance. Five groups of two and one group of three formed. Each group took on one of the topics as their research theme. The individuals within each group analyzed two articles on their given topic. They each sent a background research write up to either Lori or Laura. Lori and Laura put the main report together and then e-mailed the final copy to the group members. Prior to beginning the photograph portion, everyone was expected to read the background analysis report in order to establish a broad knowledge base.

Steve Bohnen (Community Relations Officer, Campus Security) assigned the area on campus that he wanted photographed. This was the box formed by Student Union Mall

on the North, East Mall on the West, Wesbrook on the East, and the roadway between Library Processing and the Health Science Parkade. The graffiti group chose to examine the exterior surfaces of the area as well as the interior of the Student Union Building (SUB). Laura Fleming was delegated as the leader of the outdoor fieldwork. Lori Leung was delegated as the leader of the indoor field work. The thirteen members of the group decided whether they wanted to do indoor or outdoor research then joined the appropriate team (either Lori's or Laura's).

Laura drew the rectangular area onto a campus map with black felt marker then divided it into four exterior "blocks". She divided her team of eight into 4 "mini groups". Lori divided her group into sections that would study the three levels of the SUB including all washrooms.

The mini groups were responsible for photographing all graffiti in their designated block/area within a one month period (Oct. 1st-31st). All surfaces within the block/area were to be checked once. The e-mailed excel spreadsheet was to be printed off prior and filled out during the field work. It's sections included: recorded by, date/time, interior/exterior surface, location, graffiti/tag, medium, message, notes, photo link.

This experiment did not include any sort of time sequencing so it was not necessary for groups to re-check their areas for new graffiti within the one month time period. All photographs and completed spreadsheets were to be sent to Steve's e-mail account by October 31st.

On November 16th, Laura sent out an e-mail which asked each "mini group" to complete a two page analyses/discussion of their block/area findings based on the two research questions.

Sampling

There was no sample for all graffiti within the designated area was photographed and recorded onto the excel spreadsheet.

Data Collection

Each mini group analyzed their assigned block before heading to the field. They planned how they would cover the area. Some started from the bottom right hand corner and worked their way to the top left hand corner. Others split their block/area into several sections and worked through one section per day. No guidelines were imposed as to how each section was to be completed. The only requirement was for all regions of each block/area to be photographed once.

When a mini group came across a piece of graffiti one member digitally photographed it while the other filled in the pre-printed excel spreadsheet's fields.

Timelines

September – background research
October – fieldwork
November – analyses/discussion
November 30th – presentation and report

Required Resources

8 digital cameras
internet access
paper
pens
computer access
clip boards

Strengths and Limitations of Proposed Study Design

Strengths
Our group spent a considerable period of time researching literature on the subject of graffiti. This meant that group members were aware of the many tributaries of the subject. They could apply their literature knowledge to their field work. Members observed the discrepancies between the literature and what they were actually finding. The background research also gave people a greater appreciation of the depth of the graffiti subject. What appeared to be vandalism motivated by boredom ended up being a multi-faceted form of expression.

The amount of graffiti that the group found in each type category triggered many questions as to who makes up the UBC student body and why they chose to use graffiti. Do students feel as though they're not being heard? Is graffiti thus used as a key form of expression for certain individuals, groups or issues?

The Soc 302 group's preliminary study provides groundwork from which the next group may build upon. Over time, UBC will gain a greater understanding of the nature of graffiti leading to an increased ability to stop its negative consequences.

Limitations
This researcher believes that the graffiti group took on too great of an area. The outdoor group responsible for block one were unable to dedicate the amount of time required to cover such a vast area in detail. In the future, either a greater mark weighting on the project or a smaller region could prevent such a problem.

Unfortunately, time limitations made it impossible for the group to touch on every facet of the graffiti debate. Future groups will want to expand on the background research. For example, they will want to incorporate the political aspect of graffiti. Time sequences may also be an interesting entity for future examination (e.g. how much new graffiti per week).

Analysis/Discussion

Student Union Building- Survey of the bottom floor bathrooms
The amount of graffiti in both the men and women's washrooms was minimal. It appeared that the stalls in the bathrooms had recently been replaced and the paint appeared relatively new. In the men's bathroom, we found that the majority of the graffiti was done in the open area. The majority of the graffiti was simple signature tagging. A common place for tagging was the mirrors. The attraction to tagging the mirrors may have been that when the glass is etched with a sharp object, it gives off the appearance of a 3D wild style tag. Moreover, the mirror is area in which most look at, and the tag is in the readers face giving the tagger the opportunity to have his tag highly publicized. Other tags in the bathroom were done with simple markers and a large white marker. In addition to the tags, we found a few pictures done in pen and felt markers. While we did not find any graffiti of religious, political, sexist, or satanic; however, we did find what appeared to be an old faded swastika on the backside of the door. Contrary to our background research, which indicated that the majority of graffiti in men's bathrooms is of a sexual nature, we found no erotic or sexist graffiti in this bathroom. However, as noted previously, it appears that the bathrooms had recently been redone.

Contradictory to background research that indicated that 88% of bathroom graffiti is found in women's washrooms, there was significantly less graffiti found in the women's washroom compared to the men's. One may infer that females, at UBC, are given ample opportunity to express themselves both sexually and emotionally and do not

feel the need to articulate through acts of graffiti. We discovered that the writing in the women's washroom was congruent to the background research. It appears that women were attempting to provoke feelings from the reader, attempted to get a point across, messages were witty, and catchy, attempting to catch the reader's attention. In one instance there was a multi-person dialogue. Moreover, there was one incidence that the writer was provoked by an advertisement that referred to women's natural body processes as being "yucky". In this situation, the writer was able to use graffiti as a form of communication, and she was able to share her disapproval of the advertisement with a large audience. In comparison to the men's washroom, the graffiti found in the women's washroom was inclusively staged in the bathroom stalls. As noted in the background research females exhibit a need to privatize their participation by limiting their involvement to isolated and secluded areas.

Survey of Block 3 (Outdoor)

In block 3, which is the area in between the old bus loop and the Library Processing Centre, between East mall and COPP, there was a high level of graffiti and tags. Most of this was concentrated in the old bus loop, most likely caused by the high levels of students. This could also be caused by the boredom of students waiting for a bus at a non-peak time and by the fact that this is often the access point of the campus by non-students, non-staff or faculty members who are not apart of the UBC community. Most of the graffiti found in the bus loop, and in the rest of the area, were tags often done in felt markers or spray paint. A few of these tags were done in wild style, a graffiti form most commonly associated with the hip-hop culture's graffiti artists; a few were done in semi-wild style, containing only a few arrows shooting off of the letters, while one was

done in the complex wild style, in which the arrows and shapes are actually the letters or are an integral part of the letters. In general though, there was few wild style graffiti and higher concentration of tags. However hip-hop sub-culture was also evident in the work of two taggers, metro and honour who tagged their nick name in more than one spot in the area. Hip-hop taggers tend to adopt a specific street name and have a desire to tag as many surfaces as possible, so as to gain recognition within the sub-culture as a prominent tagger. Most of the graffiti appears to have been built-up over long periods of time, especially in regards to the old bus loop, as many of the tags were starting to fade, had been tagged over, or were partially covered by signs. There was also evidence of Bubble gum graffiti at the bus stop, but that was the only area in which it was found.

Most of the tags in the old bus loop did not appear to be territorial tagging—where different crews tag a surface as their territory so as to later put up a piece—as there were no pieces in the bus loop, which suggests as mentioned in the Survey on the Third Floor of the SUB, that the tagging has been done as a form of deviance rather than as a form of territorial tagging by graffiti artists. However, the tags found on nearly every dumpster in the area may have been a form of territorial tagging. Dumpsters at UBC are often the surface of choice for many political graffiti artists, including the messages on one dumpster in the area: "Recycle" and "Think of the future". While this was the only dumpster with a piece on it, the others may have been tagged by a crew intending to create another mural such as this.

While sexist and racist messages seem to be absent in the area, this could not be fully determined. On one of the bus loops, there are multiple tags written in a language that neither of the surveyors, Natalie or myself, were able to read (possibly Chinese?).

This therefore limits our ability to say for certain whether or not there were any sexist or racist messages in these particular tags. The characters could be a phrase or merely another street name. However, we found these tags to be of specific interest because of the different style than the usual tagging found. It was very clean: there were no drips or running spray paint and there were no blurring of the letters, suggesting that it is not a tag but a message. The idea that they were messages was also supported by their near vicinity to each other (one even overlapping another), making it appear as though they were almost in response to one another. They were also done high off the ground, meaning that the individual used either a ladder, stood on a friend's shoulder, or climbed onto the top of the shelter and wrote it from there. Graffiti has been known to draw in youths who feel that they do not belong, so while these messages may or may not be of a racist nature, they may be the result of racism. If the individuals involved felt discriminated against and felt that they were alone, they may have felt an instant bond with others about to do this or those who have already done it and joined in so as to feel a sense of belonging. This may also be seen as a way for members of the group to communicate, having lost their voice due to oppression by the dominant, Anglophone group. This form of communication also allows for the individuals to graffiti messages that would otherwise have been removed shortly by UBC Security, including racist or sexist ideologies. However, besides the possibility of this graffiti there was no other graffiti that contained racist or sexist messages that was found in this area.

Overall, the tags and graffiti in this area were generally kept off buildings and signs, with the closest exceptions being those on a service sign and on a sign for a building. Generally graffiti was found on dumpsters, garbage cans, lamp posts, and other

objects. Most of the graffiti were tags, with the exception of one political message (on the dumpster), those in a foreign language, and a few wild style (mainly on dumpsters). There were very few graffiti written on walls or the ground as well, with a few exceptions, most notably two red "E"s in various places (otherwise known as the Engineers' E).

Aquatic Centre Analysis

We found that the Aquatic Centre is a prime target for graffiti and tagging. The main form of graffiti is in the "tag" or "tagging". Although, not many tags can be found at the entrance of the building the back and upper level has large quantities. We noticed one tagger who goes by the name of "honer" to be very prominent in this area with several tags on the benches and rubbish bin directly outside the centre. The "Honer" tagger uses a variety of colours including blues, whites and pinks. This is a departure from the sub basements washrooms tags which are mostly done in black marker pen. The most likely reason for the change in colour as we move to outside tagging is to attract attention and for the tagger to become more renowned in the area. One must keep in mind that the main aim of a tagger is to display their names significantly and to get as much exposure as possible. They will do this with persistence even if this means writing the same tag on the same bench several times.

The majority of tagging takes place at the Aquatic centers outside upper level and at the back of the building. The reason for this is that these areas are more secluded and shut off from preying eyes. Concentrating first on the upper level, we found lots of tags on a wooden banister overarching the outdoor swimming pool. The wooden railing is completely covered in old and more recent tags. Tag after tag, the railing acts a guest or "signature" book that records who has been there. Again we see a large variation in colours but a simple style with no hip hop or wild style present.

We also found a large wall that seems to have been plagued by graffiti in the past. This is evident due to the scratch marks and different shades in colour that have been left behind from cleaning off the graffiti. This wall acts as a make-shift mural wall which is perfect for graffiti due to its height, metallic shinny surface and seclusion. All these aspects make it very appealing. However, the main thing we found interesting is that if a tag and/or mural is not completely cleaned it will be prone to more graffiti in the future. However, not only can there be no trace of paint or outlines it must also be cleaned in a way so that it is not obvious that graffiti was present there previously. If a tagger sees part of an outline it is only natural for them to redo their work or go over another taggers

outline. Coincidently, if a tagger sees that someone's art or tag used to be there because

markings have been left behind from the cleaning process then it will again be re-tagged.

Moving onto the back of the aquatic centre, the large tip bins are ideal targets for

graffiti. Large quantities of tags are located here. Again, one reason for this is because the

tips secluded area. However, we also feel that a major reason for the large quantity is

because taggers have been tempted to work here. A UBC environmental group has

covered two of the tips with environmental messages using colourful murals. Messages

of "environmental stewardship and sustainability" are promoted on them. This has

attracted graffiti artists to paint or tag over the murals and to add to them. The notion that

it is "alright" for them to tag here has been placed in their minds. Another point worth

mentioning is that the calligraphy style handwriting adopted by the UBC environmental

group to compose their message in itself actually looks like a taggers signature or

message, again tempting actual taggers to tag here.

Note: The fact that rubbish tips are dirty and generally run down looking having broken
glass and discarded rubbish surrounding them sends out the message that no one cares
about the aesthetic appeal of this area. A tagger assumes he will not get into trouble for
writing here. To some extent this can be linked to Wilson and Kelling's "broken
windows" theory which I talked about in the background research.

Area around the SRC, Dentistry Building, and GSA

The amount of graffiti found in our area, which included the SRC, Woodward, GSA, Biomedical, and Dental building, was less than expected. Despite the large area that we covered, graffiti and tags were few and far between, however, clusters did exist mostly around bus stops, on garbage bins, and on benches. While we did encounter some graffiti on the walls of buildings, they were much more rare. The areas of concentration suggest that perhaps many artists do respect permanent property, but their need to leave some sort of legacy continues to be an important part of their construction of self-identity. Almost all (90%) of the graffiti we found were tags. However, we also encountered some examples of socio-political, religious, hip-hop or wild style, sexist, and non-descript graffiti. Gang, satanic, bubble gum, and skateboard graffiti were notably absent from this area. Tags were normally written using markers or were scratched into the wall, while some of the more artistic graffiti was drawn using paint, chalk or pastels.

Most of the tagging that we found could be described as territorial tagging as we did find some tags that had been scratched out by other taggers. We also noticed a repetition of tag names, such as "Remio", "Metro", "Admil", and "Sighfu?". This reveals a subculture of graffiti artists on the UBC campus who interact with each other, and claim territory through their tag names. In her presentation, Wendy Hawthorne, a constable in the Crime Prevention Unit, states that the amount of tags that individuals are able to "get

up" in various areas of the city gives them more recognition and respect among their peers belonging to this subculture. The number of tags that we found on the campus also may speak to the alienation and frustration that some people feel on campus. In a large university composed of more than 30 000 students, some students feel invisible and alienated from the UBC community. In some cases, this could led them to become involved in a graffiti subculture, where they can find a sense of belonging and make their identity known through their tag names.

With respect to socio-political graffiti, we found a message written on the backside of a sign in front of the General Services Administration building stating "Eat fungi, not GM foods". We also found a small message on the side of the Administration building stating, "UBC fuck". Some politicised individuals feel that they are unable to express their (often more radical) political beliefs within traditional, institutional settings, therefore, they turn to graffiti as a medium of expression because it is both subversive and accessible to the wider public. Many politicised people also use graffiti to explicitly deviate from the norms imposed by society. Graffiti challenges conventional notions of private property and art, while promoting free speech and democracy.

We discovered one religious graffiti message that stated "Love Thy Brother" on the outside of the General Administration building. The presence of religious graffiti on campus today reinforces the fact that graffiti has a long history beginning in Antiquity. Since the 3rd century AC, religious graffiti has been found depicting religious figures and sayings. Religious graffiti may be used by religious groups to communicate their message to the public at large.

One sexist graffiti message was located on the outside of the Macdonald Dentistry building. The graffiti read "I Love Rape" with two symbols of the female beside it. This is an example of graffiti that males and females experience differently. This piece specifically targets and degrades woman, and serves to make females feel uncomfortable on campus. The motivations behind racist or sexist graffiti are numerous. The graffiti artist may feel threatened by women's achievements, the increasing number of women in universities, or he may simply be overtly expressing the underlying sexism that pervades North American society. Sexist and racist graffiti allows individuals to voice their often-unpopular opinions to the public, while at the same time remaining anonymous.

We found several colourful pieces of graffiti artwork on garbage dumps and brick walls that could be categorized as hip-hop or wild style. One was an image of a robot and another was a painting of a big pair of red lips. The intricate designs left behind by artists gives them an opportunity to visually verbalize unspoken words. Artistic graffiti also challenges and subverts normative assumptions about art and public space. Through their often-beautiful images, these graffiti artists force people to question the traditional boundaries between artwork and vandalism. They lay claims on public space, and denounce ideas of ownership and public property by displaying their artwork on sides of buildings and garbage dumps. However, their creativity does affect the overall atmosphere of an education institution.

Overall, graffiti serves many functions and uses, as it is clear in our field findings that art, sexism, racism, individualism (territorial tagging), and popular culture (colour, medium used) are all interrelated at different levels. However, we have found that graffiti is primarily used as a medium of expression and communication used by groups of people who feel that they cannot express their beliefs within dominant discourses and institutions.

UBC Bus Loop- Fieldwork Analysis

The UBC bus loop holds a surprisingly small amount of graffiti. This area accommodates thousands of people daily, with commuters from areas as far as Burnaby. Most of the markings are done on benches or garbage cans that are situated all over the bus loop. Many of the tags were done in felt pen or bingo markers. There was no real correlation between colours of the felts or bingo markers. However, the colours were valuable tools in determining which taggers were together at the time the tag was placed. Throughout the bus loop there is very little graffiti with meaning. That is, there are no sexist or political messages being written on the public structures.

It becomes apparent that Translink designed the bus stops with no backrest so that the problem of taggers could be cut down. This is one of the many initiatives Translink is implementing to cut down the impact of graffiti in the Greater Vancouver area. Another initiative is the use of brown bus benches that makes tagging with darker felts and ink-based tips less effective. What was very surprising about the survey was that there was no new graffiti after a one week period. It seems that the graffiti within UBC has been drastically reduced. From personal observation last year, there has been a significant decrease in the amount of tags around campus. This observation is starkly contrasted by the amount of graffiti that is visible in the eastside and downtown. Within the bus loop many of the tags look rather old and faded. The strange thing is that the bus loop is quite a new structure. From further investigation it became apparent that many of the old bus loop structures were moved from the bus loop's previous location to the new one.

Most of the tags that were on the bus stops and benches were strictly territorial tags. There was a full lack of hip-hop wild style pieces; which uses artistic principles to make masterpieces. All in all, there were not a lot of repeat offenders on the bus benches. It looked like a group of taggers came up for one night and then left after hitting their tags. Furthermore, there is a complete lack of racist or sexist lingo within any of the recorded tags. This observation is somewhat surprising considering that most of the taggers, from personal opinion, are quite juvenile in skill.

All in all, the UBC bus loop has a very minimal impact from graffiti. There is a small amount of old graffiti on the bus stops. This graffiti does not have any racial or hate element within it but it still can be considered visible pollution.

Student Union Building-Old Bus Loop and Surrounding Walkway Zones

The tags/graffiti in this zone, indicated as Area #1 on the map, were found on "natural" objects and "unnatural" human constructions in the outdoors. Graffiti was found on natural objects such as trees and ornamental rocks in the area between the old bus loop and the Student Services Building near the eastern side of East Mall. Both tags and graffiti were marked on unnatural human constructions including the following items located within this study area: doors, windows, ledges, stairwells, driveways, sidewalks, and garbage cans, recycling boxes, ashtrays, newspaper boxes, fire alarms/hydrants, bulletin boards, building walls and ceilings.

There were some items that were tagged or had graffiti on them more than others. Garbage cans, fire hydrants/ alarms, the south side of the Student Union Building (SUB) and natural items such as trees and ornamental rocks had the least amount of graffiti/tags. This may have been because there are fewer numbers of these items in the area; furthermore, the south end of the SUB is in close proximity to the swimming pool, common area and cafeteria where many people are watching as well as using (rather than abusing) the facilities. The stairwell to the PITT Pub on the west side of the SUB, newspaper boxes at the old bus loop, telephone booth area between the SUB and the Student Services building had a significant number of graffiti/ tag markings. The reason for these markings may be because people do more graffiti when they are using alcohol at the pub, then along the way to smoke cigarettes outside, use the telephone or walk around the area, they mark their "territory" to leave their "message" behind.

The most tags, and some graffiti, were found along the top and bottom entrances at the north side of the SUB as well as along the driveway to the entrance area of UBC Plant Operations. Here the ledges, windows, doors, bulletin boards, walls, ceilings,

sidewalks, ashtrays and sides of stairwells were marked up. There may be the most tags/graffiti at the entrances to the SUB, both top and bottom, because this is close to the arcade inside the SUB. Perhaps the nature of video gaming could be associated with violence and feelings of destruction, therefore, people choose to use the area to act out their feelings otherwise not acceptable in society. Furthermore, the north side of the SUB faces a large open area that may make people want to stay close to the building at night or sneak down the driveway to the "cove-like" Plant Operations that is a hidden and covered place to smoke, sneak around and draw on the walls.

Most of the tags and graffiti done in this area were in felt marker but others were done in spray paint, pencil, charcoal, chalk, crayon, stickers and scratches. Felt markers are probably the easiest medium to use because felts are cheap and easy to carry in a pocket. Spray paints are heavier and could require a bag to carry the cans. Pencil, charcoal, chalk and crayons are less effective because they do not turn out vivid on much of any surface at all. Stickers are expensive to make. Scratches are not easy or quick to do on cement walls or tiles, so felt markers tags/graffiti have been found the most in this zone at UBC.

People have been writing on walls for hundreds of years and researchers have found that it is because of a desire to leave messages behind before death (ref?). Perhaps this is the case for UBC students who want to "leave their mark" before finishing at school to move on in their lives. The types of messages found in this area were mostly unidentifiable, but seemed to be popular culture tags to mark territory rather than blatant racist, political, religious, and historical or gender remarks.

Student Union Building- Ground Floor

The ground floor of the Student Union Building (SUB) was not characterized by neither overtly prevalent nor large amounts of graffiti as defined and discussed in our initial background research of the issue. Potential reasons for this include the high traffic volume typical of this floor from the facility's users and the broader campus community, especially as this particular floor is one of the most frequently used and constantly occupied spaces on the University of British Columbia (UBC) campus. These factors can arguably be linked to this sector's low prevalence of graffiti, as graffiti writers and producers would have little time to create their works while undisturbed in open spaces, which constitutes the majority of space within this sector.

An interesting note is the amount of graffiti prevalent around objects that are both intrinsically and symbolically linked to outposts of corporatism on the UBC campus. One of the most frequently observed targets of graffiti have commonly been the advertisements found in the washroom facilities located on this floor. While this is only reflected lightly in the actual research data itself, past advertisements in the SUB (stemming from the Alma Mater Society's ongoing advertising contract with Zoom Media) have often found themselves frequently defaced, in part due to students' backlash against the appropriation of public space by corporatist interests, and attempts at re-democratizing this sense of public space. The lack of further examples of this type of graffiti in the actual research data can be traced back to two factors. First, the washroom facilities on this floor had been both scrubbed clean of any graffiti before the commencement of the research period. Secondly, the nature of these advertisements (particularly within the washrooms of the SUB) have changed in recent times, with the advertisements in the washrooms displaying more overt attempts at a quasi-public art

theme, over more traditional corporate advertisements. In other advertising locales on this floor (such as the large bus shelter size advertisements), traces of past graffiti could also be observed. However, these had been cleaned off by SUB maintenance crews during our field data observations, and could only be seen evidenced by traces of cleaners and materials that had remained from this graffiti.

Graffiti observed in the washroom facilities was more clearly evidenced in the women's washroom facility, as the men's washroom did not exhibit such overt elements during our research timeframe. This use of graffiti, beyond the aforementioned purposes, can be traced back to its uses and context as a differentially gendered form of communication, as can be seen in data gathered from the walls of the women's washroom stalls which evidenced sociocultural political commentary.

Other locations where graffiti could be found mostly involved areas where facility users spent greater amounts of time. These included the lounge areas in the SUB, such as graffiti on the tables found in the South Lounge, the payphone areas in front of Blue Chip Cookies, and the Toronto Dominion Bank's ATM machine on this floor. The majority of these appeared to be consistent with previously defined elements of "tagging."

Overall, the ground floor of the Student Union Building was not found to be prevalent in graffiti. The examples that were found were mostly of the commentary forms of communication, as well as less frequent examples of tagging. Cases of "delinquent" graffiti, such as sexist, racist, or other hate-based elements, were not clearly evidenced from our field observations.

Student Union Building – Survey of the Third Floor and Stairway

The third floor of UBC's Student Union Building holds the least amount of graffiti/tags in the entire building. Low public flow and little student traffic contribute to this block's lack in graffiti. The majority of the graffiti occurs in the public washrooms (two women's and two men's). We discovered that most markings in bathroom stalls are comments, responses, or reactions to advertisements – done in pen, pencil, felt markers or with sharp objects. Through some investigation, we found that UBC maintains a contract with Zoom Media (based in downtown Vancouver). This company holds a monopoly on publicity in the building's space. Many of the advertisements contain controversial messages, often sexist in nature, in order to attract attention. Another graffiti style common to public washrooms includes "Bubble Gum" graffiti. According to Vancouver Translink Security's definition, this style typically involves "the eternal proclamation of love" such as: "Sarah loves Jim," although the style can also include open-ended comments or questions designed to spark dialogue.

In the hallways of the third floor, we came across political messages done in chalk dealing with the 1996 APEC issue. Although the graffiti has faded, the outrage with APEC can still be seen on many of the brick walls of the SUB including the main stairway leading to the concourse and the basement. The messages addressing APEC illustrates the artist(s) or the protestor(s) discontent with the current economic system of the time and graffiti has clearly provided a venue for communication and expression. Socio-political graffiti such as that found in the SUB are typically created in response to social issues and/or the current political structure of the time. Individuals involved in socio-political graffiti tend not to think of themselves as artists rather as protesters or activists spreading messages for their cause. In reality, socio-political writers do not see

tagging as "right," however; they justify their own actions by labelling their tags as "political commentary."

We found most tagging work done on the stairways and on exit or entrance doors leading to and out of the SUB. Most for these tags do not convey the kind of art movement prominent in city settings (such as the large hip-hop murals well-known to railroad tracks and sky train stations of the Greater Vancouver region); the tags, we discovered, were done for territorial purposes only. These illegible tags mark the artist(s) territory; mostly completed in fancy coloured felt markers. However, ironically the absence of artistic graffiti in the SUB may suggest a lack of necessity for territorial graffiti, further suggesting that the graffiti recorded has been produced for the thrill or exhilaration. This assertion illustrates some of the delinquent aspects of the graffiti phenomenon – rather than as a precursor to a mural. Tagging can provide an enhancement to the artist's self-esteem and self-belonging; the act also offers a feeling of self-identity to those who feel invisible in that individual's particular social environment – it becomes a means of friendship, specifically if the tags were done in groups (crews).

Sexist, racist, satanic, and wild style hip-hop were seemingly absent from this section of the SUB. This is likely in part due to the fact that UBC Plant Operations has a two-hour clean up policy regarding any tags considered as "hate." Furthermore, UBC's policy towards graffiti is similar to that of the "broken window syndrome" used in the New York Subway system in the 1980's. The theory maintains that if you (security, police force, administration, etc.) take care of the small problems, the larger – more severe – issues will take care of themselves, or will not likely happen. The concept being if a house on a block is left abandoned with a broken window, the broken window will

encourage further destruction of the house; where as, replacing the broken window will likely prevent additional damage to that particular piece of property. Plant Operations take a serious stance on any vandalism found on UBC grounds, and aim at cleaning up graffiti – particularly hate based – as a means to discouraging any further graffiti in the immediate area.