UBC Social, Ecological Economic Development Studies (SEEDS) Student Report

A Sociological Analysis of Graffiti at UBC

Claire Barnes, Rose Chan, Yuk-Sing Cheng, Laura Fleming, Clare Hacksel, Flecia Haider,

Natalie Hillary, Vikki Ireland, Lori Leung, Barry Lochrie, Jennifer Lupichuk,

Sherilyn Pickering, Anthony Sage, Rick Vugtereen & Esther Whang

University of British Columbia

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OBJECTIVE: To discuss why graffiti may be being produced at UBC and the intent behind the phenomenon

Graffiti through a Historical Lens

Graffiti can be considered the art and/or expression of the untrained. Graffiti cannot be classified as a recent art form but one that consists of many historical roots. It is an expressive form that reflects the social issues of the society at hand through self-expression on walls or anywhere that could be marked. 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 illustrate an urge to leave behind a mark on the world before death. Although much of recorded graffiti has been in Europe, scholars have also 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 fact that the graffiti was reflected in this manner demonstrates the emerging three-way connection of caricatures, graffiti, and children's artwork. A Parisian caricaturist and illustrator had been observed as continuously writing his name on a wall covered in graffiti. The graffiti on the wall originally – predominantly made up of stick figures – was done by children. This artist appeared to associate himself with the children's art as well as graffiti; and thus mirrors this three-way connection. Moreover, his work proves that graffiti includes both artists of all kinds as well as so-called untrained or non-professional graffiti artists (Sheon, 1976:16).

Societies throughout history and to the twenty-first century continue to hold mixed feelings toward graffiti. The Romantic period had stirred up interests in many forgotten forms of art including graffiti. For example, Victor Hugo hinted at his fascination with graffiti in popular woodprints. In 1833, Balzac in *Ferragus* expressed his interest in the graffiti that appeared on the walls of the Rue Pagevin. And Restif de La Bretonne recorded in his diary that he had left graffiti on walls in Paris. This age of Romanticism had certainly

triggered an exploration into other expressive art forms; and in this context graffiti became appealing, due to its ability to be inclusive and versatile to various artists (Sheon, 1976:16). Indeed, graffiti can be created by anyone. This movement even prompted conservative art critics to take interest. In one instance, critic Theophile Gautier stated, "In the ill-formed Graffiti (of a child) the idea f a soldier comes out with much more force than the idea found in a more finished drawing" (Sheon, 1976:21). In other words, true originality appears in the naïve, unclassical style, where the assumptions of beauty can be defied.

The phenomenon of writing in public spaces has stretched to touch all the continents. It could be seen as a human characteristic; we obtain an intrinsic need to leave a mark, to provide a sense of permanence. This characteristic has transcended time. Even the infamous writing in washrooms is not a modern form of graffiti expression. In the gender-neutral and non-sex segregated washrooms of eighteenth century Paris, graffiti reflected questions, comments, and answers. This signals the rise of "graffiti languages" ("*The Economist*, 2004): men had the tendency to write comments of hostility, while women display more romantic ideas. The fact that male writings would be read by women, in this period, may reflect the limit to crudeness in comparison to the much more rough nature of male washrooms today (*The Economist*, 2004).

A major part of graffiti includes imaging. Much of it has to do with tagging, putting a name down so as to label the area of choice as one's own. For example, soldiers stationed in West Virginia, in a town known as Harper's Ferry, covered the all four walls of a small room with graffiti. These scribblings were recently discovered under years of wallpaper and paint renovations. Apparently, the soldiers had wanted to leave a mark of remembrance and did so by using pencil and pieces of fireplace charcoal. We can be assumed that the urgency of needing to publicly write for commemoration has been around for as long as writing itself. Graffiti dabbles on issues of human nature that force one to want to be remembered and not be forgotten through the passing of time (Pritchard, 1: 1967).

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.

We have observed how graffiti holds many historical roots – it has transcended time. Interestingly, its popularity also seems to transcend the hierarchy of class structures as well, particularly in our own time. Before mass education, society considered the written word a luxury, reserved exclusively to the rich elite. At times, graffiti would be written in several languages, reflecting the educated nature of the phenomenon (*The Economist*, 2004). However, now that literacy has become widespread and writing tools have become easily and cheaply accessible; graffiti and the hip-hop subculture continue to prevail among all class structures, recruiting artists on a global basis.

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.

Deviance was once thought to have been "learned and supported in intimate peer groups", and that "adolescence carry a potential for delinquency", but that could be avoided by concentrating on conventional goals (Teeyan and Dryburgh, 2000: 78). Teeyan and Dryburgh attempt to find the causes of graffiti or vandalism in general by interviewing fifty-six adolescent males. The main reason for delinquency was peer influence; while for property crimes, the motives included self-gratification and practical uses. A general theory, proposed by Gottfredson and Hirshci, states that delinquency resulted from a lack of self-control, which came from a "need for excitement and risk-taking" (78). Horowitz and Tobaly study the issue of school vandalism in-depth. They found that the motivations for damaging other people's property included anger, boredom, aesthetics, and adding to previous vandalism. They define vandalism as "a voluntary degradation of the environment with no profit motive whatsoever" (Horowitz and Tobaly, 2003: 131). In the 1930s, causes of vandalism were considered to be feelings of alienation and meaninglessness. They propose a more modern view: people who engage in vandalism are those who "experience social mores and values inconsistently" (131). In 1978, the U.S. Department of Health, Education and

Welfare conducted a research on school vandalism, and found a connection between school effectiveness and climate and graffiti. When it "was not positive and did not enhance students' social welfare" (132), vandalism appeared to be high. It also increased when it "did not effectively promote learning" and when "students did not have a sense of belonging" (132). In drawing from the works of Dust and Geller, Horowitz and Tobaly assert the idea that "tolerance, respect for others, and motivation to achieve" would help alleviate vandalism.

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 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. For instance, Keith Haring, a representative of graffiti-art, is very particular about the matching of "painting" tools, the location, and the material of the walls (Chung, 2004).

Aspects of the art world have even accepted graffiti as art, having had many gallery showings (Powers, 1996). In 2004, the Cultural Olympiad held a festival of graffiti art, Chromopolis, in Greece. Chromopolis invited sixteen graffiti artists from seven different countries to "paint" on public walls in ten Greek cities. During the event, the sixteen graffiti artists and other participants were permitted to "scrawl" on the given public walls; and graffiti art classes were offered to the public. The Cultural Olympiad strives to teach people the skills, by integrating graffiti styles with classical art techniques (*Graffiti Olympics*, 2004). Evangelos Venizelous, the Minister of Culture in Greece, states that graffiti was "once a sign

of rebellion" but now considered an "intensely communicative art form" and "a symbol of cultural unity."

In addition to the art galleries featuring graffiti, auctions have occurred specifically for the purposes of selling the works of graffiti artists. In Hong Kong, the famous graffiti writer/artist, Tsang Tsou-Choi, calls himself as the 'King of Kowloon' because he believes he descended from Chinese royalty. Tsang has spent five decades scrawling Chinese characters in public areas. His style 'calligraphy' has been admired and praised as being a "representative of modern Hong Kong." In 2004, one of Tsang's graffiti art piece sold for 7050 US dollars (*News.Designerz.com*, 2004). In New York, the work De La Vega, another graffiti writer, has also been exhibited; Central Park Conservancy auctioned off one of his bench designs (Chung, 2004). George Dickie, professor of art history at Rice University, concludes "It is art if it is called art, written about in an art magazine, exhibited in a museum or bought by a private collector. It seems pretty clear by now that more or less anything can be designated as art." This reveals that graffiti is becoming more popular and gaining acceptance from the general public. Therefore, according to George Dickie's definition, graffiti can be considered an art form.

However, opponents toward graffiti remain unconvinced. Indeed, there exist many irreconcilable conflicts based on cultural differences and assumptions of what constitutes as art. 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).

Within these contexts that one must begin to develop strategies to counteract 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 fade 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 1960's and 1970's graffiti had been gradually increasing. More

specifically, art in the form of graffiti began in the late 1960's on the subways of New York

City (Tucker, 2005). With the notoriety of such graffiti artists as Taki (183) and Julio (204),

widespread taggers and the development of "wild style" graffiti writings soon became a

popular occurrence in major metropolises (Broderson, 2002). In the mid 1970's, the

phenomenon exploded as hip-hop as a culture spread into the mainstream and works of

graffiti artists began to show up in prominent spaces. New York's subway system became a

war zone between officials and artists. For example, officials responded to the work of

taggers by giving the targeted structures a new, paint resistant coating (*Bronx View*, 2005).

But, the implementation of new cars, for instance, did not stop artists; the widespread nature

of graffiti can be overwhelming (*Bronx View*, 2005). 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. Many believe that "graffiti artwork adds colour to a world that often lacks it" (*Bronx

View*, 2005). 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). Furthermore, when graffiti was hitting the spotlight in this period, artists were primarily Puerto Rican and African American youths, who lived in "poor inner-city neighbourhoods" (Tucker, 2005). Now we see both male and female artists from all different races, backgrounds, and socio-economic classes (Tucker, 2005).

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. Sociologist Devon Brewer focuses on inner city graffiti; he concludes that the motives for graffiti must be considered to fully understand the phenomenon itself. He argues that there exist four major values in hip-hop graffiti: fame, artistic expression, power, and rebellion (188). These ideals are prominent in all four facets of hip-hop as mentioned above and further illustrate the strong relationship between them.

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
form of 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. Graffiti is a linguistic phenomenon,
which involves both "form and content" by commonly making use of discourse – "any
segment of signs larger than a sentence," and signs – something which "stands for something
other than itself" (Gross 1997). Thus, it is both useful and necessary to acknowledge and
examine the significance of graffiti as a product of human linguistic expression, as well as the
nature and impact 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
and 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" way for individuals and groups to voice political dissidence, social alienation and anti-system ideas (Chaffee, 1990). Because it offers to individuals, 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. Graffiti has been able to "reflect the nature of the society that produced them" by communicating individual's opinions and values concerning important issues within the society (Gadsby, 1995). However, these advantages may also lead some individuals to perceive that graffiti serves to express or perpetuate negative ideas about other groups. Consequently, a conflict theorist would question who is given the power to define graffiti; which groups are able to gain dominance to decide what should be considered deviant?

The use of publicly owned space is undoubtedly regarded as deviant, and yet the use of private space for public consumption, like graffiti – will also be considered deviant by the general public (Bartolomeo, 2001). Bartolomeo affirms that "private space becomes public when the public disapproves of how an individual uses the space privately" (2001). Thus, society often determines both public and private dimensions, leaving the little room for the self-expression of individuals. This in turn affects the efficacy of accessibility; a graffitist's primary objective is always to communicate to others; his/her message will not be as known to the public if it is concealed behind the walls (Bartolomeo, 2001).

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. Graffiti constitutes an act of

self-disclosure and an expression of a very personal nature, but maintains the writer's privacy through anonymity (Gross, 1997). 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 also serves it well (Loewenstine, Ponticos and 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 and the Discussion 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. According to recent research, the relational study between graffiti and gender has often been linked to an unstable set of methods (Green, 2003). The broad range of conflicting information, which has been recorded, has left us with an inconsistent set of conclusions. There are many theories as to why male and female graffiti are different, but the choice of methodology sometimes results in contradictory assumptions.

Researcher, Alan Dundes has attempted to use the "primitive smear impulse theory," as a tool for his gender based research on graffiti (Abel, 1977). The theoretical tool helps in explaining the differences between gender specific graffiti. The intriguing, though questionable, theory suggests that males may be compensating for their physical inability to

birth children, by impulsively fulfilling their needs through the marking of graffiti (Abel, 1977). On the other hand, females lack the impulsive need and therefore, mark less (Abel, 1977). Other suggestions have attributed the act of graffiti to risk-taking and a way of proving masculinity (Macdonald, 2001: 97). Statistics indicate that males are more inclined to prove this 'masculinity' by performing acts of graffiti (Macdonald, 2001: 101). Thus, masculinity has been cited as one of the largest and most predominant driving forces behind this phenomenon (Macdonald, 2001: 101).

Further psychoanalytical studies have suggested that female graffiti is less prevalent because "females are in this low artistic medium as little productive as they have long been noted to be in the higher forms such as music, literature and painting" (Abel, 1977: 133). However, researchers at the University of Oklahoma found a lower rate of graffiti in female restrooms, particularly in the same areas with a higher predominance of smoking. Therefore, Abel's theory remains inaccurate. For example, it does not explain why females participate in different activities, other than graffiti, to release stress or to express themselves (Abel, 1977: 133).

Female graffiti has been branded "sparse and unimaginative" (Abel, 1977: 133). Abel found minor sources of humour in women's political and advisory statements (Abel, 1977: 137). In supposed 'liberal' universities, throughout the United States, it was discovered that female graffiti has been regarded as a form of liberation (Abel, 1977: 135). These findings suggest that females use graffiti in response to oppression. This may also provide evidence that females prefer to express themselves in a romantic and gentler manner. In the contrary, studies have indicated that washrooms produce an exceptional environment for stereotypic gendered behaviour, because they hold a high element of privacy and gender specificity (Green, 2003). Therefore, the relational study of gender and graffiti could be best defined within a washroom environment or context. Gender socialization plays a significant role in the gender differences of 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.

Many washroom graffiti studies have concluded that there exits only a narrow gender gap, in regards to the topic, but wider gap within the style of language used (Otta, 1996). The majority of research indicates that politics and sex are the two central topics between both genders. Yet, the descriptive language of sex and politics seem to differ. For example, men tend to be more "erotic", in nature, while women are more descriptively romantic (Green, 2003). 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). It is also important to point out that women make less sexual references than men overall (Arluke, 1987). The graffiti produced in the ladies' room lies within the guidelines of social and moral norms. Politically, men tend to be very negative, argumentative and dominating; while women are supportive and offer advice (Green, 2003). 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).

However, we cannot conclude that men commit more acts of graffiti. Indeed, there exist many studies that specify otherwise. For example, a study conducted in Brazil found no significant differences in the amount of graffiti (Otta, 1996). While another study indicates that females have been responsible for 80% of the graffiti taken within that time span (Green, 2003). Again, contrary to conventional stereotypes, a 1998 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.

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. Consequently, however, these young women tend use erotic graffiti as a form of sexual expression.

Although there appears to be a mixed view on the differences between the two groups, it is widely concluded that the gender gap is continually closing and becoming very minimal in the today's society (Green, 284). Despite the discrepancies observed in each study, it remains clear that washroom graffiti has become a 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 and 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" (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 neighbourhoods 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"(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).

Moreover, graffiti is another vehicle for those in power to use against people of colour in order to sustain the divide between the superior and the inferior complexes. An example that illustrates the process by which media associate people of colour and deviant acts includes referring suspects as "Black." In "*Black Students Accused In Racist Graffiti Incident,*" Jones states: "The fact that the students are Black doesn't excuse their behaviour." The quote suggests that fundamentally all blacks have a homogenous behaviour; the statement also reveals the use of stereotypes and assumptions that the media hold against racialized groups. It is not graffiti that voices racism, but the issue of racism in our society, which furthers intensifies the controversial nature of the phenomenon. The power dynamics of the institutions dictate the behaviours of marginalized people. When we pass by a piece of graffiti, we automatically and sometimes unconsciously make the linkages to crime, gang activities, deviancy, and even certain types of racialized groups. In order to eliminate racism, and graffiti, we should examine how we, as citizens, are just as responsible as those who actually commit the act. We should also acknowledge the harm inflicted by graffiti. Hate groups abuse the subtle forms of graffiti in order to recruit members, particularly middle class youth, who are increasingly gravitating towards racist, supremacist groups.

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.

<u>Graffiti and Political Expression</u>

Ernie Zelinski in <u>Off the Wall: Graffiti for the Soul</u> states that "Perhaps nowhere else does the general public more clearly express itself than through graffiti" (1999: 1). Indeed, the phenomenon of graffiti has become ubiquitous. The political nature behind these messages varies in scope and intent. As we have observed, throughout history, "innumerable people have given way to the temptation to leave their marks on… any blank surfaces that attract them" (Whitford 1992: 2). Now, political proclamations in public places are commonplace, particularly in urban spaces. In turn, political reactions are fired back.

Zelinski asserts that the political aspect of graffiti began when society witnessed the "'Rules, OK' form. This style apparently originated in Europe during the 1970's when OK was added to political slogans such as 'Provo Rules' referring to the Provisional IRA in Northern Ireland" (34). While graffitist Quik provides an explanation: "the pain of a repressed urban people has always been core of my life. Suburban segregation, racism, and pure competition truly fired my anxieties to graffiti" (Thomas, 1984: 44), others including Dr. Whitford in his book <u>Getting Rid of Graffiti: A Practical Guide to Graffiti Removal and Anti-</u>

graffiti Protection maintain that the academic debate to the question of "whether or not graffiti is art and whether or not it is therapeutic for the perpetrator" remains irrelevant to those who must encounter offensive graffiti on a daily basis (1992). Whitford further states that "Even as a medium for the expression of political disillusionment or defiance, graffiti has to be low on the list of effective options" (1992). Public opinion on the matter, according to Whitford, usually leans towards a negative perception. Generally, people tend to view explicit graffiti done with political goals in mind as having an adverse impact on the community's environment, as a form of visual pollution. Anti-graffiti policies are executed in order to "keep business running", to prioritize the removal of "high visual impact" graffiti ("obscene and racist" in meaning), and thus to protect the public from harm (1992: 9-10). Therefore, organizations whose property can be susceptible to political graffiti hits often implement protection and counter measures to deal with the issue.

Jeff Ferrell's Crimes of Style: Urban Graffiti and the Politics and Criminality studies the case of Denver, Colorado, in the U.S. He says that "During the late 1980's and early 1990's Denver and its suburbs have seen the markings of racism and reaction" (1993: 3). Ferrell pushes the matter of racism further by illustrating the proliferation of 'white power' messages, KKK images, and the pictures of swastikas (1993: 3). Clearly, the graffiti in this nature exposes the need for white supremacists to maintain their position in the hierarchy of whiteness and of power, to attributes their own problems to self-created scapegoats, and to help simplify the complexity of a constantly unstable environment. In one specific time period, during the war in the Persian Gulf, the alleys of Denver experienced graffiti hits, which openly revealed people's "criticisms of U.S. imperialism and jingoistic attacks on Saddam Hussein" (1993: 3). However, Ferrell states that extreme political graffiti (including racist and gang-related graffiti) should not be categorized as an aberration. More specifically, he cites that "the great majority of Denver graffiti originates somewhere outside of Bloods and Crips, neo-Nazi groups, and unaffiliated individuals" (1993: 4). Note well,

Ferrell asserts that "If we bother to look beyond carefully cultivated anti-gang hysteria, we can surely read in the gangs and their graffiti the experience of being young, poor, and of colour in a culture which increasingly marginalizes this configuration" (1993: 5). Ferrell's purpose then involves a critical analysis of graffiti writing in the context of the dynamics between crime and culture as well as the lived inequalities experienced by graffitists.

Zelinski touches on the lighter side of political expression in graffiti. He claims that at the University of Alberta "Some of the graffiti poke fun at various faculties. Some ridicule the educational institution's management and faculty; and some ridicule the graffiti writers" (1999: 34). This observation correlates to experiences of many other universities across of the country. Here, at the University of British Columbia, for example, students, faculty, and the public continually witness graffiti pranks/stunts committed on behalf of the Engineering faculty. According to Carrie Robinson, news writer for *The Ubyssey*, the Engineers Undergraduate Society hosts an event where students receive "'points for every E… they steal [in a] night'" (2004). Graffiti can then be a reflection of campus rivalry, merriment, a way of alleviating the stresses of university life and of attracting public attention and fame. For students, the purpose of these assumed "light-hearted" pranks becomes not only a means of making a political statement (such as 'We're the best faculty') but also simply "'to cause ruckus'" (Robinson, 2004). Many, however, to not consider the costs associated with such activities.

Most graffitists do not regard themselves as vandals, even although some gain motivation by the city's authoritative attempts to stop the damage. Whitford points out that "Interviews with graffitists have revealed that they get satisfaction from indulging in an unlawful pursuit and in beating the system. Some are stimulated by the spice of danger" (1992: 5). Politically, many graffiti artists/writers feel inadequate or neglected – whether they live in a liberal democracy, in an authoritative dictatorship, or war-torn state. In searching for acknowledgement, potential members of this subculture turn to graffiti when

they believe they have no other alternatives or avenues for political expression. Therefore, in order to address the problem of graffiti, reformers must recognize that the power hierarchies and hegemonic discourses entrenched in our institutions continually silence marginalized voices. The barriers towards freeing oppression must also be assessed.

Further to the point, Ferrell attempts to outline the "image and ideology in the criminalization of graffiti" (1993: 134). He worries how anti-graffiti campaigners in Denver during the 80's and 90's "used an assortment of discomforting images, factual distortions, and symbolic references to locate graffiti in specific contexts of perception… this ideological onslaught has been essential to the creation of moral panic around graffiti" (1993: 135). Thus, contrary to the functionalist anomie or strain approach Ferrell adopts a conflict argument (Macdonald 33: 2001). Moreover, he claims that the socially constructed moral panic serves "as a source of campaign support and legitimation, and also as a useful control strategy – a sort of epistemic clampdown, a narrowing and restricting of the range of explanations for graffiti" (1993: 134). Recapitulating, in employing political mechanisms in response to acts of graffiti, reformers should be cautious not to reinforce over-dominating 'clampdowns'.

The tension, illustrated here between scholars (such as Ferrell and Whitford), reflects the large divisive debate about graffiti as a phenomenon in general. Again, is it a problem? If so how should society go about in addressing the issue at hand? In a recent report conducted in Vancouver, researcher C. Noble states:

> Graffiti, something that is defined as both vandalism and an artistic practice, not only indicates criminal activity and an act of sub-cultural resistance, but also sustains an economy of removal and cultural debate…. Graffiti re-contexualizes language – the very base unit of social organisation and power. It violates one of the central pillars of our economic system by rejecting the hegemonic codes behind the ownership and respect for property (2004).

Noble touches on a new phenomenon. The frictions apparent between city officials or those who hold a strong anti-graffiti stance and the communities of graffiti artists both contribute to

the perpetuation of the problem. Therefore an important question continues to resonant: how do we reconcile a society's (be it New York, Vancouver, or a university setting) need to maintain an image, to protect the public from harm, to uphold the principles of common good, and the right to self-association ("to exist as a practicing subculture" such as graffiti) – as valued in Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Noble, 2004)? How do we define public space? Noble also worries about the future of our public space – particularly in facing privatization, globalization and the melting pot theory. He answers: "The image of the city as a site of diversity, accessibility and tolerance is losing ground to a different symbolic vision – one of cleanliness, control and containment" (2004). In other words, graffiti constitutes a political response to the pressures of an increasingly interdependent economy, of a world turning towards homogenization. Thus, the debate of graffiti is a very political one; it is a problem which will require political solutions.

FIELD WORK ANALYSIS

OBJECTIVES: To analyze the tags/graffiti according to verbal or visual patterns, locations and vehicle (medium used).
- *Outside: to determine who are the prolific taggers and where they generally tag*
- *Inside: to assess the graffiti done in response to advertising and other motivations*

Notes:
-These separate analyses could not have been completed without the assistance from Constables Wendy Hawthorne, Valerie Spicer, Elizabeth Miller, Steve Bohen, and Dr. Patricia Kachuk. Their consultation forms the basis for this aspect of the project.
-The analysis for each block should be read separately and as part of a discussion; they do overlap and contradict various findings. This situation illustrates the depth of the phenomenon and highlights certain obstacles towards finding a solution.

INSIDE BLOCKS

Third Floor and Stairways of the Student Union Building

On a historical basis, graffiti seems to reflect a similar attitude now as it did in previous times. It is a form of expression, a deviant reaction to the norms of society. The background research suggests that graffiti began (in a recognized sense) as a form of political expression. Much of ancient graffiti targeted a wider audience with the use of pictorial expression; this was done in order to include the illiterate population in Europe, which could understand the political strife being articulated. Therefore making graffiti more understandable and comprehensive to larger audiences had been an important part of the phenomenon. Today, however, the majority of the demographic in Europe and North America are literate. Thus, words can and are being used for political appeal. The "word"-oriented graffiti found in this block aims at an educated, non-universal group.

Graffiti present in the area appear to be done out of boredom, as if someone did not have anything else to do but etch with sharp objects or draw with markers on surfaces. This was not a form of political or purposeful expression but rather basically something to do with the given medium at hand. The mediums used differ tremendously from outside supplies. Interestingly,

chalk is a common medium in this block. Its impermanence suggests that someone may have wanted to make a statement but not actually do any real damage. Moreover, the usage of chalk appears to be merely a nuisance – and an inexpensive though time-consuming one to remove.

Recapitulating, the third floor of the Student Union Building holds the least amount of graffiti or tags in the entire building. Low public inflow and little student traffic contribute to the lack in graffiti. Majority of the graffiti occur in the 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 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. This style typically involves the eternal proclamation of love such as: X loves Y, although the style can also include open-ended comments or questions designed to spark dialogue.

Evidence from this block does not show artistic talent nor hip-hop related graffiti but verbal abuses from certain groups with differing ideologies. For example, various graffiti groups acknowledged hatred towards certain political, economic, or social policies. The subject matter present on the walls is student or university oriented and reflects controversies the campus must deal with at the time. For example, we came across political messages done in chalk dealing with the 1996 APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) 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. Political graffiti such as that found in the SUB are typically created in response to social issues and/or the current government action 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 labeling 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. The tags that we did observe were very unique and creative in nature. However, one piece of graffiti was a smiley face, requiring little or no artistic ability. Therefore the artistic ability of a graffiti artist ranges widely and this was reflected and represented in our block. Basically much of the graffiti present was very basic in nature and anyone with writing ability could make a duplicate. No real artistry or references to the hip-hop scene took place. These illegible tags mark the artist(s) territory; mostly completed in fancy coloured felt markers. However, ironically the absence of artistic graffiti in this sector may suggest a lack of necessity for territorial graffiti, further suggesting that the graffiti recorded has been produced for thrill or exhilaration. This assertion illustrates some of the delinquent aspects of the graffiti phenomenon. 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).

Reasons for the lack of graffiti on the third floor or an excess of graffiti could be a result of traffic through the area, as stated earlier. The lack of graffiti refers to the fact that there is empirically more graffiti downstairs and outside of the Student Union Building as compared to the upper, less-traffic heavy level. This reflects that the area may not be a good area for graffiti because it is not as frequented as other blocks. The concentrations of the graffiti were located at the top of stairwells, a bold place to make a statement. This allows the viewer to see the piece immediately upon entrance to the third floor. This counters the idea that a lot of graffiti is in hidden corners or that graffiti tends to be more secretive so that the perpetrator may not get caught. On the other hand, most of the chalk pieces were blatantly done on large walls. The finding touches on a discrepancy: graffiti artists prefer popular public spaces, however they cannot be too remote or too high profile. Under the same belief that the area is not as frequented, could be reason for the lack of cleaning and maintenance on the third floor. Much of the photographs of graffiti taken first term remained. This indicates that the area contains little offensive material and therefore not considered a priority for Plant-Operations.

Sexist, racist, satanic, and wild style hip-hop graffiti were 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, policy towards graffiti is similar to that of the "broken window syndrome" used in the New York Subway system in the 1980s. 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 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.

Main Concourse of the Student Union Building

The Main Concourse of the Student Union Building did not contain a noticeable amount of graffiti or tags. The volume of people constantly coming into and going through the building could explain the low occurrence of graffiti. The areas has been made into open spaces where people can see their surroundings, thus potentially low-profile taggers have been deterred from doing graffiti for fear to being caught.

The open areas include the tables in the lounge where people study and eat throughout the day and the central area in between the main entrances. These areas had a couple of hits, such as those found on one of the ATM machines. The graffiti, here, consisted of some names scrawled on with felt, and do not appear to be well planned out, as the biggest one was printed in plain writing rather than in a stylized symbol or signature. The tables had names written on with White-Out and pen which were hard to spot unless one is specifically looking for it or sitting by them, suggesting that they were not done for the act of tagging or being deviant. Research on deviance suggests that taggers often experience alienation and hostility, and vandalize to resist establishments. Seeing as this type of graffiti was most likely done by UBC students, the deviance explanation probably will not explain for the table writing.

The women's washroom on this floor of the SUB contained the most graffiti hits. Writing in the stalls were mostly responses to the built-in advertisements. For example, one commented on how many years it took to grow a roll of toilet paper. Other informative advertisements, such as personal health information, did not have any responses. The medium

most often used was pen, suggesting that people did not plan on writing in the stalls; they simply grabbed what was handy and wrote out personal thoughts. The motivations for this kind of graffiti were driven by anger from the messages, boredom, and adding to or responding to other previously done graffiti. This finding has support in our background research analysis.

The only motivation that does not seem to play a role in the graffiti found in the Main Concourse includes aesthetics. This level had names scrawled on indiscreetly, probably due to a lack of time and privacy in the highly used and exposed building. They were done quickly, and not as an art form or for any enjoyable reason. The locations and methods of the graffiti demonstrate that the reasons did not include notoriety or recognition by other prolific taggers.

Another place highly hit by graffiti was the sunken lounge on the west side of the SUB. There were many names engraved in the wooden part of the couches, and some written in Whiteout. They were not the typical spray painted tags of exterior walls; they included names written or scratched in, which seems to be the norm on this floor. This graffiti looks old and has accumulated throughout the years, which again, prompts more people to add to it. Because this is a location where people sit, relax, and socialize, the cause for graffiti is boredom. The fact that this area is lowered makes it is separate from the rest of the floor. It provides more privacy, because people cannot see directly into the area. Isolation and seclusion creates a vulnerable environment for graffiti. Moreover, because the existing graffiti has not disappeared, it becomes tolerated and even accepted. When people expect the carvings to be there, they will not be as hesitant or discouraged to add to them. Graffiti hits also occurred on the signs, specifically on notices above fire alarms. The motivations for this also seemed to be boredom, since they did not consist of tags.

Koerner Library

(Please refer to the excel documents entitled *Washroom Graffiti and Gender Differences Data* and *Cubicle Data*, found in the folder entitled "Koerner Library Analysis" within the larger Graffiti Spreadsheet file.)

This mini-group discovered little or almost no graffiti or tags in the washrooms within the Student Union Building at UBC and therefore decided to collect data in another location. We chose to conduct our research in Koerner Library (a popular study place for students and staff). Our fieldwork suggests that 2004's new partitions for the washroom stalls in SUB – which looks cleaner and much more aesthetically appealing – appear to be working (effectively deterring hits). We also conclude that students and the public will respect AMS space and become reluctant to do graffiti when property is clean. In short, clean areas gain respect as opposed to areas neglected by custodians.

Based on the data gathered and our final analysis of information gathered from Koerner Library, we found that the category of "responses" is the number one motivation overall for both female and male graffiti. Therefore, we conclude that if the cubicles and washroom stalls were cleaned regularly and consistently, there would be a significant reduction in graffiti or tag hits, because most are produced in response to another. Indeed, we observed a clear chain reaction – graffiti seems to breed more graffiti. Secondly, the data reveals that most graffiti contains sexual content regardless of gender. This is interesting in light of our background research analysis, which came to a different conclusion, in that male graffiti should contain more sexually oriented messages than their female counterpart.

<u>Washrooms in the Student Union Building</u>

The amount of graffiti in both the men and women's washrooms was minimal. In the men's

bathroom, we found that the majority of the graffiti was done in the open areas. The majority of

the graffiti was simple signature tagging. A common place for tagging was the mirrors. We

conclude that the reasons for this finding are twofold: first, when the glass is etched with a sharp

object, it gives off the appearance of a 3D wild style effect. Second, the mirror is an area in

which most people look at, thus giving the tagger an opportunity to publicize his/her tag. Other

tags in the washroom were done with markers. In addition to the tags, we found some graffiti

done in pen and felt markers. While we found little graffiti of the religious, political, sexist, or

satanic categories, we did find an old faded swastika on the backside of the door.

Contradictory to the background research, which indicates that 88% of washroom graffiti

is found in women's washrooms, there was significantly less and almost equal amounts of

graffiti in the women's washroom compared to the men's. One may infer that females, at UBC,

are given ample opportunity to express themselves on different levels (including sexually and

emotionally) and hence, do not feel the need to articulate themselves 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. And in order to get

a point across, to catch the readers' attention, messages were witty and captivating. In one

instance, there was a multi-person dialogue. Moreover, there was one incidence where 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

that individual showed 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

stalls. As noted in the background research females exhibit a need to privatize their participation by limiting their involvement to isolated and secluded areas.

Ground Floor of the Student Union Building

The ground floor of the Student Union Building was not characterized by neither overtly prevalent nor large amounts of graffiti as defined and discussed in our initial background research on the phenomenon. 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 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 widespread 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.

Overall, the ground floor of the Student Union Building was not found to be ubiquitous in graffiti. The examples 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.

OUTSIDE BLOCKS

Student Union Building, Student Recreation Centre, War Memorial Gym

Out of all the areas we covered in our section, the amount of graffiti was evenly distributed, but the size of the tag differentiated depending on the type of building and the traffic inflow of the nearby buildings – with the highest concentration around the ventilations of the Aquatics Centre, then the SUB and the SRC. One speculation about the particular placement of tags and graffiti includes high-exposure areas. In order for artists to gain recognition from students and other taggers, choosing a place where many people walk pass on a regular basis is the best method to 'get up' and leave a mark. However, one may suggest, based on the fact that taggers like to show their graffiti in the most bustling of places, that tags should be highest outside the SUB, but our fieldwork concluded otherwise. A reason for taggers to choose the Aquatics Centre over the

Student Union Building may be because there is a significantly higher risk of getting caught drawing tags on SUB property compared to the Aquatics Centre, where less people dwell there, but the same amount of exposure could be achieved due to the close proximity to the old and new bus loops on campus.

Tags such as Admit, Motor, Keyer, and Remio were found on several occasions. Compared to the results of other group members, the same tag names were prevalent throughout campus as well, suggesting that taggers do find UBC as a place to claim recognition and territory. We also discovered a stenciled art piece by the set of stairs leading to the SUB on the side facing the Aquatics Centre, and a tag sticker marked with the individual's tag name as well as a his/her crew name. (Note: it is common for taggers to include both their own tag name as well as the group to which they belong.) The mere fact that groups exist within the graffiti culture (which could represent a microcosm of society) indicates the need to belong and the presence of a power battle – struggles between differing people.

Many tags and graffiti surrounding the SUB 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 east-most 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 stairway 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 and

tag markings. The reason for these markings may be because people do more graffiti when they

are consuming 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.

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, where as spray paints are

heavier and require a bag to transport. Moreover, pencil, charcoal, chalk, and crayons are less

effective because they do not turn out boldly; stickers are expensive to make and scratches or

etching are not easy or quick to do on cement walls.

As noted in our background research analysis, 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 or to commemorate emotions. Perhaps this is the case for UBC students who want to "leave their mark" before finishing 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.

<u>General Services Administration Building</u>

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 politicized 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 politicized 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 third century AC, religious graffiti has been found depicting religious figures and sayings. Religious groups to communicate their message to the public at large may use graffiti.

Aquatics Centre

We found that the Aquatics Centre has become a prime target for graffiti and tagging (which was done more often than the former). Although, not many tags can be found at the entrance of the building the back and upper level contain large quantities. We noticed the prominence of Honer (a tagger) in this area, who had hit several benches and garbage cans located directly outside the swimming pool. Honer uses a variety of colours including blue, white, and pink. This is a departure from the tag hits found within the SUB, which are mostly done in black marker pen. The most likely reason for the change in colour as we move to outside tagging includes the need to attract attention, for the tagger to become renowned in a particular area. One must keep in mind that the predominant aim of a tagger is to display their name in such a way to gain as much exposure as possible. They will do this with persistence even if this means writing the same tag on the same surface several times – repetition is important. For example, we found lots of tags on a wooden banister overarching the outdoor swimming pool. The wooden railing was completely covered in old and more recent tags. The railing acts a guest or "signature" book, recording who has been there. Again, we see large variation in colours in simply style.

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 previous cleaning attempts. This wall acts as a makeshift mural wall, which is perfect for graffiti due to its height, metallic shinny surface, and relative seclusion. All these aspects make it a very appealing surface. Similar to other findings in other blocks, we noted that graffiti breeds graffiti. Indeed, if tags are not completely cleaned it seems to be prone to more graffiti in the future. Moreover, we should note the importance of ensuring that cleaning jobs are done well and completely, because even a small trace of paint or outline from old hits prompts new hits. If a

tagger sees part of an outline it is only natural for them to redo their work or go over another taggers outline.

The large garbage bins are ideal targets for graffiti; large quantities were found. Some consists of murals featuring environmental messages, such as "environmental stewardship and sustainability". 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 ingrained into their minds.

Present and Old Bus Loop

The UBC Bus Loop (both old and present) holds a surprisingly small amount of graffiti. While this block contained minimal graffiti and tag hits; the problem is notable and therefore significant. Moreover, it still can be considered visible pollution. This area accommodates thousands of people daily, with commuters from areas as far as Surrey. 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 Greater Vancouver. 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. Within the bus loop many of the tags look rather old and faded. The strange thing is that

the bus loop is 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 lack of hip-hop wild style pieces; which uses artistic principles to make masterpieces. Sharply put, 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 surfaces with tags. Furthermore, there is a complete lack of racist or sexist lingo within any of the recorded tags. Some of the graffiti were done high off the ground, meaning that the individual used a ladder, stood on a friend's shoulder, or climbed onto the top of the shelter and wrote it from there.

Most of the graffiti and tags were 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 Honer who tagged their nickname 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. However, the tags found on nearly every dumpster in the area may have been a form of territorial tagging. Garbage bin 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.

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 give 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, identity and public property by displaying their artwork on sides of buildings and garbage dumps. However, their creativity does affect the overall atmosphere of an educational 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. Graffiti has been known to

draw in youths who feel that they do not belong. If the individual involved felt discriminated against, they may have felt an instant bond with others 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.

Wesbrook, Pharmacy (Cunningham), Woodward

The amount of graffiti found in our area was less than expected. Despite the large area that we covered, graffiti and tags were few and far between; however, clusters did exist mostly on signs, garbage bins, sidewalks, and benches. While we did encounter some graffiti on the walls of buildings, they were much more rare. The areas of concentration suggest that many artists do respect clean property and the particular surfaces of buildings can act as a deterrent, 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-descriptive graffiti. Gang, satanic, bubble gum, and skateboard graffiti were notably absent from this area, except for one slanderous piece of graffiti we found using, what looked like a felt marker, on the window of one of the buildings we examined. Tags were normally written using markers, spray, paint, or were scratched into a dirty wall. Mostly though, tags were the primary source that was found as opposed to graffiti.

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, Dyme, Admit, Aqua, and Kiff. This reveals a subculture of graffiti artists on the UBC campus who interact with each other, and claim territory through their tag names.

The more a tagger puts his tag up, the more territory and recognition/representation he/she is acquiring. 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 lead them to become involved in the graffiti subculture, where they can find a sense of belonging and make their identity known through their tag names in a more discrete way.

Biochem/Physio, IRC, Anatomy, Dentistry, Anatomy, and Bookstore

Based on our observations, the majority of the graffiti found in our area were tags. Tagging is the most basic form of graffiti associated with hip-hop style sub-culture and practice; it requires a tagger to mark many areas with their stylized nickname to achieve notoriety within the graffiti sub-culture. However, there was also a fair amount of graffiti unrelated to tagging. These other forms of graffiti, which could possibly be linked to the student body at UBC, involved opinionated or expressional content. Graffiti of this type in our block included messages about environmental sustainability, political symbols, and math equations. Most of this graffiti was found on, or close to the IRC building, and around the entrance areas, whereas the tags were most common between the COPP and Pharmacology buildings, as well as between the Anatomy and Dentistry buildings. It must also be noted that the two latter areas hit mostly with tags were either within or near a courtyard.

Garbage bins, or dumpsters, were found to be the most common hits, along with lampposts and staircases. Dumpsters are most likely the most targeted surfaces due to their size

and visibility. Also, taggers will react to the many tags already marked on the bin, adding to the non-ending cycle of graffiti. Not only does the sheer size and visibility of these structures make them more vulnerable, but their very purpose contributes to them being constantly hit, as well. We should ask who would care about a dumpster being tagged all over. After all, it is only meant to store waste. Thus, taggers may perceive dumpsters as being relatively invaluable property, and think that society may be more accepting, or at least tolerant, towards graffiti on garbage bins.

Surprisingly, the outdoor benches were not hit, but this was attributed to the fact that the benches appeared fairly new. Similarly, open, bare walls were not marked, with the exception of one graffiti message, "Stop Rape Now" at the IRC. This may be because most of the walls are relatively inaccessible, covered by shrubs and low trees. In contrast, the surfaces that were more commonly hit were more accessible, being out in the open and in the courtyard. The courtyard allows for great visibility from nearly all viewpoints, because of its open and circular structure. Thus, when students leave any entrance coming out into the courtyard, they will see the graffiti. Many students pass through during the day, but there is very little surveillance within these areas because they are mainly behind the buildings. The combination of weak surveillance and the openness of the courtyards make these places ideal sites for graffiti.

The notion of visibility then, leads to one of the differences between a prolific tagger and an average university student. When the latter creates graffiti, he/she may be doing it to express a particular point of view. Examples of such graffiti found were "Stop Rape Now" and a group of anarchy stickers. Students may also be doing graffiti out of sheer boredom, as was expressed through the scratching of fish and stick-people on concrete walls at the south entrance of the IRC. Taggers, on the other hand, create graffiti to make their identities known, and to claim their

territory. Much of the motivation behind being a tagger is that the title becomes an integral part of the individual's identity. This becomes appealing when the individual already feels pushed towards the margins of society in some way.

The graffiti or tag thus becomes the established symbol of the tagger's identity. Examining various tags of one tagger shows that, as individuals step into the tagger identity, they become more skilled over time; their growth as a tagger is seen through the simultaneous development of their tags. An example found in our fieldwork was the tagger Remio. Comparisons of Remio's numerous tags showed that with time, the tags become more complex and wild-style. Remio's older tags, the ones he presumably started out with, consisted of simple block letters in black permanent marker. The more recent tags still consisted of black permanent ink, but the letters appeared to be wild-styleer, with increased intricacy and arrows woven into the letters. Remio's advancement in his skills of graffiti and identity as a tagger can thus be traced through studying his various tags.

The choice of medium used thus presents another interesting contrast between the types of graffiti studied. Tags were exclusively made with paints, pens, or acid wash, while expressional graffiti was usually done in chalk, pencil, scrapings, or stickers. The mediums used by taggers accomplish permanence, while the opinionated graffiti made in pencil or chalk, might not be viewed as detrimental by the artist. The difference in mediums is indicative of the diverging motives of each form's artists.

Another prolific tagger we found was Reach. Reach was concentrated around the Anatomy building, as well as the IRC courtyard. He uses permanent marker in either white or yellow, although one of his tags was observed to be in blue spray paint (back entrance to Anatomy, north side). He most likely belongs to the crew DVH, along with fellow tagger Metro;

both taggers were seen together with the crew name DVH twice, around the IRC courtyard. The tagger Reach seems especially unique, in that he seemed to like to play with the contexts of his tag in various ways. For example, he tagged over the surfaces of two doors, which were only accessible by climbing a three-story staircase (located at Anatomy). In another instance, he wrote his tag vertically on a lamppost, in the IRC courtyard. Tags that were found on the Anatomy doors also consisted of a symbol, one, which may be the Japanese character meaning "big".

Along with Reach and Metro, another pair of taggers discovered was that of Kiff and Admit. Kiff writes his tag in yellow paint, with the symbol of an arrow. His tags appear to have dripped onto the pavements that he hit, suggesting that he did not use a spray-paint can or permanent ink, but rather, a different technique. Interestingly, both of his tags that were found were on similar structures; Kiff tagged the raised pavement borders that outlined the dirt beds along the pathway between COPP and Pharmacology. The tagger Admit is also seen beside Kiff, and in an identical medium as well, suggesting that both taggers were possibly tagging together at the same time, sharing the paint.

It is these kinds of events – outings on which crewmembers embark to create graffiti, often on a large scale – that are known as "missions". The missions serve to claim the territory and identity of that particular crew, and lead to competitions with other groups. Although there was no evidence of large-scale graffiti left over from the night of a mission, the graffiti found in the courtyard areas suggested that the taggers were able to gain access into these areas somehow, that would also be easy for the average passer-by to do without having to be a student. The COPP building is close to the old bus loop, which is now a parking lot. Many people who are not regular attendants to UBC have access to this area, as it is linked to the main roads. The

surveyed area around the Anatomy and Dentistry buildings was also near the roads, with the university village across the street. The entrance from this street into the Dentistry courtyard is undoubtedly void of any surveillance – the pathway is too dark even during the daytime. Thus, as mentioned before, these sites have major accessibility to the public and little surveillance, making them ideal target areas for graffiti, especially tags.

[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 women, 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.]

Our findings that tags comprised the majority of our fieldwork correspond with additional background research, which stated that 90% of the graffiti reported in Vancouver is often categorized as hip-hop style. Based on this discovery, we believe that most of the graffiti in our block was done by non-students. Hip-hop graffiti, a common practice belonging to the hip-hop sub-culture, encompasses traditions, lifestyle, and a distinct language. Those who are of this sub-culture define themselves and create an identity through a sense of belonging and recognition they appropriate by participating in the group's customs. Such practices include tagging, which is competitive, especially amongst the newest members of a hip-hop graffiti group. The main motivations of these graffiti artists are loyalty to the sub-culture's customs, and

are unrelated to ethnic or socio-political beliefs. Tagging then becomes a means to gain respect, and most often evolves into a lifestyle and an obsession.

Our group's findings are consistent with the data on hip-hop graffiti artists. The placement and organization of the tags suggest behavior relating to the sub-culture's customs: one, tags accumulated in areas where other tags were made, two, certain tags were abundant in the area of study, three, marked areas were either highly visible or elevated. These tagging characteristics are of a competitive nature and are essential for enhancing recognition and reputation within the hip-hop subculture. It is our group's hypothesis that the majority of the tags made in our block are not made by UBC students. Referring back to our background research, hip-hop taggers tend to have low self-esteem, are craving attention, and between the ages of thirteen to twenty-four. A significant proportion of taggers are also known to have learning disorders such as ADD and ADHD. We believe that the tagger profile is incompatible with a typical university student.

METHODOLOGY

Who will conduct the study?

The study will be conducted by…
(In alphabetical order by first name)

- Angle Wong
- Dena Williams
- Daniel Beynon
- Ian Ashley
- Jasmine Lin
- Julie Yu

- Kelsey Partridge
- Lauren Nguyen
- Lori Leung (group director)
- Paige Faulkner
- Leslie Ann Gurley
- Rose Chan

Researcher's Purpose:

1) To enable the stakeholders, including the Vancouver Anti-Graffiti Task Force, UBC's Alma Mater Society, and Campus Security to analyze the types and locations of specific graffiti at the University of British Columbia and to plan an effective strategy for reducing the incidence and costs of the phenomenon from a harm reduction perspective.
2) To educate the public and to increase awareness (for example, by establishing a feeling of competent guardianship – addressing the issue of under-reporting and the high frequency at UBC) through an electronic distribution of our reports.
3) To look in reforming graffiti artists especially those of hate and bias.

Research Questions:

1) What is the link between our background research and our field findings?
2) How much graffiti was found in each "type" category?
3) Where are the concentrations of hits located?
4) What new developments occurred since the last project?

Process:

Twelve students from Anthropology/Sociology 201A-002 (Spring 2005) gathered at the first graffiti group meeting in early January. Since the group did not have much knowledge of the phenomenon and wanted to "catch-up" from the work established last term, we decided that before beginning the fieldwork we would gain a deeper understanding of the subject matter by looking into academic sources. All members were also expected to study the previous report to establish a broad knowledge base on the subject in question.

We passed a motion to maintain the topics from the winter semester; these were history, deviance, art form, popular culture, communication, gender differences, racism; we also added a political aspect. Four groups of two and four groups of one formed. Each group took on one of the topics as their research theme. The individuals within each group

analyzed a minimum of two articles on their given topic and incorporated their work into the reports from last term. Lori Leung distributed CD-RWs – containing all the work completed last term – to each member. Drafts of the background research write up were sent to Lori by January 31st, 2005. Lori complied the main report together and e-mailed a final copy to the group members on February 16th, 2005 for further deliberation.

Steve Bohnen (Community Relations Officer, Campus Security) assigned the exterior block on campus for photographing. This was the area 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. And Jane Barry (Facilities Manager, Alma Mater Society) assigned the interior block, which includes all floors of the Student Union Building.

Lori divided the entire outside and inside blocks into smaller mini blocks. In the end, three blocks made up the entire exterior aspect of the area and three blocks made up the interior of the SUB. She then divided the group into partners; six mini groups formed each containing two members and a digital camera.

The mini groups were responsible for photographing all graffiti in their designated block. All surfaces within the area were to be checked at least once (preferably two times). The e-mailed excel spreadsheet (complied by Steve) was to be printed off prior and filled out during the fieldwork. This experiment did not include any sort of time sequencing.

The mini groups then submitted a CD containing all photographs taken with the proper labeling conventions and a complete spreadsheet to Lori during the week of February 21st to 25th. These pictures and spreadsheets then underwent an editing process by Lori to ensure some consistency and coherency.

Each mini-group also had to complete a minimum two-page analysis or discussion of their findings based on the above research questions and findings from last term's report. Drafts of the fieldwork analysis write up were sent to Lori by March 18th, 2005. Lori complied the main report together and e-mailed a final copy to the group members on March 25th, 2005 for approval.

The group also sought consultation. For example, Lori and Steve attended the City of Vancouver's Anti-Graffiti Task Force Meeting on March 3rd, 2005. Without over-simplifying, the meeting gave us an idea of how different stakeholders within the city have been approaching the phenomenon. In addition, there were two meetings with Constables Valerie Spicer and Elizabeth Miller from the Vancouver Police Department on March 3rd and 8th, 2005. They made a presentation on their work on graffiti and this was followed with a discussion on possible solutions at the end. Meeting times (March 14th and 15th, 2005) were also established to complete the policy recommendations report. All group members attended and contributed to the final proposal. And Lori polished off the end write-up.

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 at least 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

January – background research
February – fieldwork/photographs
March – analyses/discussion ad policy
March 31st – presentation and report

Required Resources

6 digital cameras
Computer and Internet access
Paper, pens, and clipboards

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 fieldwork. 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 are not being heard? Is graffiti thus used as a key form of expression for certain individuals, groups, or issues? The database of pictures has increased to over three hundred and an accompanying report has also been updated.

The group also devoted substantial efforts into learning about the possible solutions to the graffiti phenomenon and sought to implement this knowledge into a feasible policy recommendations/suggestions report.

The Sociology/Anthropology 201 group's 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
Unfortunately, time limitations made it impossible for the group to touch on every area of the graffiti debate. For example, time sequences may be an interesting entity for future examination (in other words how much new graffiti developed per week/month).

Tracking and photography techniques were also flawed. We should place emphasis on tracing the patterns of repeated hits by the same graffiti artist; this process would enable the group to identify the names of specific taggers and their associated crew. Moreover, pictures were not taken straight on; relative sizes hindered our ability to accurately analyze the results. The next group must place a pen, watch, or other another item next to the graffiti piece when taking pictures, and thus revealing absolute sizes. Finally, hyperlinks were not established in this study due to the late notice and time restraint. Hyperlinks would enhance the project, by making the database/CD easier to use and access as evidence.

Another weakness is the fact that we are students. And new students who come into the project will always have to catch up with the work established already. For example, time restrictions do not allow enough time for us to learn the wide-ranging behaviour of different graffiti artists, thus making tracking difficult.

Addressing Graffiti at UBC: Policy Recommendations Report

OBJECTIVES:
-To provide recommendations for education and awareness and a plan of implementation
-To enhance community development at UBC in order to decrease the physical, economic, emotional, and ecological cost of graffiti
-To offer suggestions for an effective strategy for reducing the incidence and the costs of the phenomenon from a harm reduction perspective

PREAMBLE:

We have come to the consensus that the graffiti question at the University of British Columbia does not constitute a major problem; however, we must address the issue now. The situation must be managed effectively and proactively in order to reduce the risk of a future increases. As evidenced in our background research and fieldwork analyses, the phenomenon entails a cyclic chain: graffiti breeds graffiti. Thus, UBC should critically assess the matter and attempt to break that chain reaction. It is also important to note that examining the subject of graffiti reduction also requires an examination of community citizenship.

In the following report, we have laid out a simple outline of possible solutions. Some of these proposals require larger budgets while others on smaller ones. Many of these recommendations overlap and positively reinforce each other when completed in tandem. Moreover, these suggestions can only be achieved if the affected parties are willing to participate in a cooperative manner.

METHODS USED BY THE VPD (Vancouver Police Department):

The Vancouver Police Department, or more specifically, the Anti-Graffiti Unit focuses on "Education, Eradication, and Enforcement" – all components labelled as "Leadership and Preventive Strategies." We are introducing their solutions because we believe that UBC can adopt some of them in its own path towards effective graffiti reduction.
The following list includes some of their initiatives.

- **Partnership Projects** (for example, the "Spread the Paint" campaign) with local agencies and businesses. With the distribution of free clean-up kits, they have recently achieved a 90% compliance rate for the removal of graffiti by businesses.
- **Hotline** deployed for a twenty-four hour policy removal of hate-based graffiti. This is similar to the policy of UBC Plant-Operations.
- **Intelligence Gathering, Database Updates, and Surveillance**
  For instance, the unit pays attention to potential graffiti-prone events (such as raves) and monitors Internet websites featuring the work of graffiti artists.
- **Restart** is a four-day program, done in partnership with Simon Fraser University, and emphasizes the importance of restorative justice. Approximately twelve people (usually youth aged fifteen to twenty-five) will undergo the program at a time with the assistance of specialized therapists for addiction. One of their projects includes murals, which are completed by legal artists.
- **Crime Prevention through Environmental Design** concentrates on the architecture of building structures in Vancouver that are vulnerable to graffiti hits.

For example, by replacing a brick wall with a transparent fence increases visibility and therefore decreases graffiti.

- **Advertisement** has been attempted by British Columbia Automobile Association (also known as BCAA). One eye-catching ad features various tags and the message, "Don't be stuck here".

(Information from this section was taken from the City of Vancouver Anti-Graffiti Task Force Meeting on March 3rd and the Presentation from Constable Valerie Spicer and Elizabeth Miller on March 3rd, 8th, 2005.)

A PROPOSAL FOR UBC

INSIDE:

WASHROOMS
- Maintain clean **stall partition surfaces**
  -Do not give students or the public an opportunity to respond to graffiti messages
- Reduce **advertising**, only allow for public service and social marketing ads
  -Offensive and/or controversial posters should be not permitted
  -(Model policies taken up by the University of Toronto, Mississauga)
- Place **chalkboards** by the entrance and sinks for possible dialogue conversations
- Provide free **clean up equipment** in stalls for students or the public

WITHIN BUILDING STRUCTURES
- Reduce isolation and vulnerability, especially by stairways
  -Place **security warning stickers** making false claims that monitoring cameras are stationed in the premise
- Get rid of **blank solid walls** through the strategic placement of **murals**
  -Put up artworks on the walls (model the murals in Buchanan A)
  -Hold a competition among the different buildings (for example, SUB, Macdonald, Macmillan, Woodward, Cunningham, Angus, etc.)
  -This would simultaneously divert faculty rivalries into productive venues and recognize the works of legal and approved graffiti artists
- Student clubs to ban **sticker ads** for various causes/campaigns
- Regulate clubs' **use of chalk** on the grounds surrounding the outside
  -However, we can also promote the use of chalk as a medium on campus because this would deter the use of other more permanent tools and cleanup is relatively easy given the rainy weather of Vancouver. While removing chalk graffiti is a nuisance, it is relatively less expensive in comparison to other mediums.
- **Sunken lounges** (for example on the main floor of SUB) to be raised
  -Reupholster couches and chairs with cloth or **rough material**
  -Cover up wood surfaces (which are susceptible to scratchings/engravings)

OUTSIDE:

PLANT-OPERATIONS
- Sustain a friendly, positive, and supportive relationship
  -Maintain effective **policy on twenty-four hour removal** of hate, sexist, or racist graffiti throughout campus

- Establish a **hotline** to increase report; allow people to be watchful

CRIME PREVENTION THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN
- Employ the principles of CPTED to address UBC's soft layout
  -Send out cautionary notes to managers of recent developments
  -Engage in the architectural design of future infrastructures
  -Increase transparency, visibility, and centralization
  -Building structures should be aesthetically appealing
- Buildings (especially new ones) should not consist of **blank, solid, flat cement walls/surfaces**, because these become excellent canvasses for graffiti artists
  Increase usage of **vines, plants, or murals** on such surfaces
  -Restrict access to walls (for example, plant bushes surrounding buildings)
  Or use of **stucco**, which can prevent the use of markers and other mediums
- New **pavement** should not be made of blank, solid cement
  Pattern grounds to reduce graffiti done on campus pathways
  -Reduce the number of **pathways** to get to various buildings on campus
- Improve **lighting** (increase visibility) throughout campus, especially in alleys

EVENT MANAGEMENT
- Deploy effective **security measures** for social gatherings on campus, particularly in the evenings (for example, pay attention to Wednesdays' PIT nights)
- Develop a system where a **calendar** of major upcoming events can be passed on to Campus Security beforehand; this measure would increase community awareness and increase communication
  -Keeping community members updated and informed is also a safety precaution

BUS LOOPS
- Regulate **posters** on Translink structures
  -Not only a problem that fosters graffiti but also promotes garbage accumulation
  (Do not give students or the public a reason to respond to messages on the posters or present them with something to take down and thus litter)
- In the spirit of sustainability, clubs should institute poster regulations
  -To reform the postering system, establish rules on the size and amount
  The removal of old posters must also be reinforced
  -Develop **online forum** for clubs to communicate and promote their events

ADVERTISING
- Make use of the **large banners** on the outside of the Student Union Building
  -Ads should make people more aware of the harm of graffiti
  -Reveal the cost and statistics of clean up
  For instance, the university spends X amount on vandalism and graffiti removal every year (emphasize that this affects student tuition; moreover, graffiti increases on buses and mailing/newspaper boxes in the city contribute to higher prices for Transit fares and postage stamps)
  -Submerge the graffiti problem among issues, which students have a vested interest in (make comparisons specifically on where student dollars go to)

-Encourage students to think about the phenomenon
- Model the BCAA advertisement to achieve shock value

GARBAGE BINS
- Relocate to high **visible and clean areas**
- Run a **paint event**
  Fine art students to paint murals on the dumpsters
- Place **wood fencing** or plant low lying bushes around them
  The different surfaces and lack of access to the garbage bins themselves would significantly reduce graffiti/tag hits or deter potential artists
- Place **security warning stickers** making false claims that monitoring cameras are stationed in the premise

THE BIGGER PICTURE:
In order to realize the above-mentioned initiatives, we must keep in mind that addressing the issue of graffiti requires resources and collective action. To ensure that we develop and adopt sound policy suggestions, we have maintained two assumptions: one, we believe that UBC needs a multi-solution approach in order to target specific groups. In other words, students who write on desks and in washroom stalls behave differently than prolific graffiti artists coming in from Vancouver. Therefore, our attempts to counter graffiti cannot be too broad. Second, we presume that all citizens of the UBC community are stakeholders in this matter. Our approach will ultimately become a large political project over a long-term. First, we must…
- Reform the **budgets** of all stakeholders
- Increase **awareness** by educating (make classroom presentations, increase student projects on the phenomenon, fund art programs, etc.)
- Build multilateral **partnerships**
  Encourage respect, citizenship, and a sense of ownership and caring
- **Baseline** the entire campus by organizing a paint out
  Establish an 'Adopt a Street Program'
- Consider **restorative justice measures** (for example, caught artists should complete the cleanup procedures and serious offenders should be referred to the appropriate reform programs offered by the government)
- Improve **removal techniques**
  -Take the following case study: the faded presence of the 1996 APEC graffiti messages in SUB should be cleaned up by now, considering that chalk was used – a relatively easy medium to wipe off
  -Note that many of the photographs from this term include those from last term
- Deter the **motivations** to do graffiti
  -Keep students busy, for instance
- Eventually move away from enforcement and eradication to **responsibility**

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