CLEANING UP: GRAFFITI REMOVERS' PERCEPTIONS OF ORDER, PLACE AND IDENTITY

Submitted for a MA Degree by Research

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CONTENTS

SUMMARY

A common response to illegal graffiti and street art is to 'remove' it by painting, applying chemical solvents, high-pressure spraying or another method. At the municipal level, removal is done by paid council staff members, contractors, and/or volunteers who live within a local government area and are resourced by their council. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with 23 voluntary and paid graffiti removers from six Adelaide councils, this thesis explores how these individuals understand the creation and erasure of illegal graffiti and street art, and investigates the role of place in these meanings. To respond to these questions, purposive sampling was used to select the councils from which interviewees were recruited. Interviews were designed to encourage graffiti removers to recount stories of their experiences. This provided detailed accounts of their place of residence or work, entry to graffiti removal, emotional responses to graffiti, techniques of removal, identity management and images of graffiti writers.

The thesis argues that, for Adelaide graffiti removers, the erasure of graffiti is important in maintaining a sense of place and managing a civic identity. The argument proceeds in three stages. First, I critically review the 'disorder' framework that has characterised much of the analysis of graffiti in criminology and sociology. I demonstrate how an important part of this disorder literature - the 'broken windows' thesis – has influenced police and policy makers, but has conceptual limitations, a narrow focus and little empirical support. I also draw on work showing how powerful groups have used ideas of disorder to define improper uses of space.

The second part of the argument contends that the ways graffiti removers in Adelaide talk about graffiti writing and erasure suggests an implicit belief in the 'broken windows' thesis. From this belief flows a collective hope that graffiti removers can reduce or prevent graffiti in their community and, by doing so, maintain the clean, original and proper condition of 'socially visible' places. Graffiti removers seek to

maintain this sense of place in five main ways: overcoming graffiti writers, restoring surfaces, monitoring their area, curating graffiti and resolving complaints.

The final part of the argument suggests graffiti removers can only produce the orderly and proper places they imagine if graffiti continues. To develop these arguments, the thesis draws on the concepts of signal crimes, routine activities, dirty work and generativity to explore themes of the sacred, profane and mundane; care; cleanliness; isomorphism; and a dialectic of hope and futility.

The thesis concludes that the ways in which local governments manage graffiti removal programs can be differentiated on the basis of their flexibility, directness and the extent to which they are bounded. These variations may be important to the experiences of graffiti removers, but no single approach emerged as the most effective at controlling graffiti.

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

and talking. I hope that eventually this research will be an inspiration for them to study.

1. INTRODUCTION

If you allow graffiti in the area it … shows nobody cares … It can also … create an atmosphere where crime is tolerated and … nobody cares so nobody's watching … I think if it's removed quickly and there's none there, people get the idea that people are watching.[1]
(Lee, City of Marion graffiti removal volunteer)[2]

And so the walls where the colours once played,
Were replaced by the buff, now a sullen blunt grey,
White washed, shitty, all grey, all black,
Waiting for the kids of this city to take their walls back.
- *City of Light, Hilltop Hoods*[3]

Particular social groups see and use public spaces in distinct ways. These ways of seeing may be different to the 'original' and 'proper' meanings of such places, producing conflicts in relation to their use. One widespread, ongoing and visible struggle over how the built environment is seen and used has been between those who do graffiti and those involved in its removal. People who 'write' graffiti see walls, fences, trains, road signs and so on as sites of possibilities, places that invite a graffiti tag or something more detailed and extensive. For those who wish to remove graffiti, the built environment is viewed in more fixed terms as either dirty with graffiti or 'graffiti-free'. The removal of graffiti refers to the painting over of or erasure of graffiti through chemical solvents, high-pressure spraying or some other method. At the municipal level, removal is generally done by paid council workers, contractors, and/or volunteers resourced by the council.

Drawing on detailed, semi-structured interviews with volunteers and paid workers engaged by six Adelaide councils, this thesis explores the ways graffiti removers see

and experience the urban and suburban environment. By doing this, it provides insights to the motivations, practices and identities of a group that has been relatively marginalised in public debates about graffiti. While the thesis explores the attitudes and narratives of people engaged by local councils to remove graffiti, it recognises that property owners, the graffiti removal industry and other graffiti artists are also involved in the covering up of graffiti (Iveson 2014).

This thesis argues that for graffiti removers in Adelaide, the erasure of graffiti is important in maintaining a sense of place and managing a civic identity. The argument proceeds as follows. First, I review the 'disorder' framework that has dominated analyses of graffiti in orthodox criminology and sociology in the United States, Australia and elsewhere. My focus is a critical assessment of the influential 'broken windows' thesis, which claims that the persistence of graffiti and other forms of disorder is a sign that 'no one cares' about a place, and is an antecedent to feelings of fear, avoidance behaviours and, eventually, violent crime. The 'broken windows' thesis suggests that rapid removal or repair of disorder can prevent a community sliding into a state of violence and decay. I outline four problems with the 'broken windows' thesis relevant to this study – its lack of empirical support, its view of urban and suburban areas as fixed and static, the way powerful groups have used a 'discourse of disorder' to define graffiti writing as an improper use of a place, and its assumption that disorder generates fear.

The second part of my argument contends that the ways graffiti removers in Adelaide talk about graffiti writing and erasure reflects an implicit belief in cultural resources such as the 'broken windows' thesis. I argue that the faith they place in the claims of disorder theories instils in them a collective hope that they will reduce or eradicate graffiti in their community and, by doing so, help to rebuild order, civility and a particular community aesthetic. I show how Adelaide graffiti removers manage the

abundance and repetition of graffiti through a place-based hierarchy of values. These individuals seek to restore 'socially visible' surfaces to a clean, original and proper condition by engaging in practices that resemble 'dirty work'. By doing work that some others consider to be tainted, graffiti removers also develop and protect their identity through various techniques.

Finally, I argue that graffiti removers can only 'clean' those surfaces that have been 'dirty' with graffiti. As such, graffiti removers can never produce the orderly and proper places they desire unless graffiti continues. I describe this tension as a dialectic of hope and futility. Associated with this dialectic is a discourse of repetition and a sense of generativity.

Outline of the thesis

The next chapter begins by describing the origins of hip hop graffiti culture in the United States and its later emergence in Australia. This is followed by an analysis of the social construction of graffiti as a form of disorder. Then I discuss how various geographic analyses of graffiti have eschewed this disorder framework, examining the spatial distribution of graffiti and illustrating how reactions to it can make visible the boundaries of normality. This chapter also identifies the limited literature on graffiti removal. I argue that an important issue is what the *removal* of graffiti can tell us about social and spatial orders, informal social control, and work processes and identities. The final section documents the study's methodology, detailing how its sampling and analysis were guided by a grounded theory approach.

In Chapter Three I describe the spatial, historical and social context of the area where this study was situated. It outlines characteristics of the Adelaide metropolitan area, before profiling the six local government areas from where interviewees were drawn. I also discuss the importance of urban morphology, the 'routine activities' of graffiti removers, symbolic boundaries and the structure of council programs in defining the

spaces where graffiti is removed.

Chapter Four shifts attention to the motivations and emotional responses of voluntary and paid graffiti removers in Adelaide, the meanings of their work practices, and how they imagine their identities. The chapter is structured with the use of a three-stage model of the volunteering process comprised of antecedents, experiences and consequences. It shows how the entry of the interviewees into graffiti removal revolved around the themes of life circumstances, responding to a problem and the appeal of bounded civic engagement. It also observes how many of these accounts are similar in the way they use the language and logic of the 'broken windows' thesis. I also note differences between council programs based on the dimensions of autonomy and commitment. The next section draws on the concepts of 'dirty work' and 'edgework' to discuss the emergence of the theme of cleaning and to analyse how important this understanding is to the ways graffiti removers manage their identities. This section shows how cleanliness can have moral implications.

The fifth chapter begins with an outline of how different authors have defined place and contrasted it with the concept of landscape. It also describes how a sense of place can be connected with the ways people experience crime. A dominant conceptualization of graffiti writing has been as an illegal activity with a corrosive impact on a place. According to this view, illegal graffiti has no 'place'. This chapter discusses the different ways that graffiti removers maintain a sense of place, addressing the question of what graffiti removers are saying to the city when they erase graffiti. The chapter concludes by considering the barriers to maintaining a sense of place that graffiti removers in Adelaide experience. This chapter's discussion of place and graffiti contributes to work that has extended the boundaries of place beyond the idea of a 'neighbourhood', which has been prevalent in social disorder research. By doing this, it provides a nuanced understanding of how individuals

experience place through their responses to graffiti.

Chapter Six moves from the practices, identities and sense of place of graffiti removers to the ways they imagine graffiti writers. This chapter investigates interviewees' perceptions about graffiti writers' age, appearance, place of residence, skill levels, and propensity for violence and other crime. It also outlines how graffiti removers perceive the writing of graffiti to be: connected to a desire for recognition, a form of vandalism perpetrated to destroy or damage property, a response to social problems, a claim on physical space, and a senseless act. I argue that the ways Adelaide graffiti removers imagine graffiti writers can be understood in terms of intergenerational conflicts, but it also illustrates isomorphism between these two groups on several dimensions. This is the platform for a discussion about generativity and different forms of hope that appear to be significant to graffiti removers. The thesis concludes by summarizing the main findings and arguments, and showing how these points contribute to research on graffiti, theories of law and order, the spatial dimensions of crime and disorder, and concepts of dirty work and signal crimes. Finally, I discuss the implications of this study for organisations and individuals that respond to graffiti and exploring how prosocial practices that celebrate different aesthetic orders and are characterized by hope can play a role in the way communities react to graffiti.

Graffiti removal is about erasure, loss, destruction and forgetting, but it is also concerned with cleansing, restoration and integrity (cf. Douglas 2002). Unlike a stylish and identifiable tag, a skillful graffiti removal is unrecognizable to most people. It eradicates graffiti and recreates a particular aesthetic. Yet erasure has been such an enduring, widespread and often immediate response to graffiti that it is also integral to graffiti writing culture. It has maintained graffiti's impermanence and been essential to the development of different forms of graffiti. Furthermore, as this thesis will

demonstrate, graffiti removal can help to understand how notions of 'proper places',

cleanliness and orderliness are defined, maintained and interrupted.

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[1] Transcripts have been edited to improve clarity by removing words, phrases and utterances such as 'you know', 'oh', 'well', 'like', 'um' and 'mmm hmm'.
[2] Pseudonyms have been used for all interviewees.
[3] City of Light is a song from Adelaide hip hop group Hilltop Hoods' fourth full length album.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In the past 40 years, the social sciences have increasingly analysed illegal graffiti and the reactions it stimulates. Graffiti also receives large amounts of attention from government authorities and the news media, and its removal and control attracts considerable state and private expenditure. The term graffiti commonly refers to a broad range of illicit public writing: scratching in Pompeii, other forms of historical graffiti, racist graffiti, graffiti depicting genitalia, gang graffiti, writing in toilet facilities known as 'latrinalia', the scratching or etching of surfaces such as polycarbonate or glass windows known as 'scratchiti'', and political slogans. This thesis is mainly concerned with graffiti variously known as 'hip hop graffiti', 'aerosol art', 'subway art' or 'graffiti art', particularly the 'tags' that are one form of this type of graffiti. Hip hop graffiti originated in cities in the United States in the 1960s before spreading to other parts of the developed world, including Australia. Its history will be briefly described below, but other authors (e.g., Austin, J 2001; Castleman 1982; Stewart, J 2009) have discussed this aspect of the culture in more detail. The main concern of this review is to discuss aspects of the social reaction to graffiti, particularly its removal.

Depending on the perspective of the observer, graffiti can be highly visible or barely noticeable in the urban environment. For some people, graffiti is viewed as a 'natural' aspect of the cityscape, almost undistinguishable from the multitude of signs placed in urban spaces. However, for others, the sight of graffiti is salient. For these people, graffiti can signal the current or expected presence of a criminal figure whose identity and practices are considered threatening. National social survey data suggest about 20% of the Australian adult population believe graffiti is a large problem in their local area (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] 2011b).

The idea that graffiti is a threat dates back to the ways it was framed in the United

States in the late 1970s and 1980s. One well-known analysis of graffiti and other forms of 'disorder' is Wilson and Kelling's (1982) 'broken windows' thesis. According to this thesis, rapid responses to disorder can prevent a community sliding into a state of violence and decay. Thus, the response to graffiti on New York's subway system in the mid-to-late-1980s, as part of the 'Clean Car Program', was to erase it as soon as possible after it appeared (Sloan-Howitt & Kelling 1997). Policies of rapid removal have since become a common response to graffiti in the United States, Australia and elsewhere. These practices are designed to restore places to an imagined 'original' condition and to show graffiti writers that their tags will not be tolerated in spaces where they are washed off or painted over. If graffiti 'takes place' (Austin, J 2010), graffiti removal reclaims a place through a process of struggle and negotiation between the graffiti writer, property owner and graffiti remover.

This chapter begins with a review of the literature on graffiti writing and the responses it provokes. The review describes the origins of hip hop graffiti culture in the United States, some of its key characteristics and its emergence in Australia. The next section analyses the social construction of this form of graffiti, arguing that criminology, the mass media and politicians have often placed it within a disorder framework. This section gives particular attention to the 'broken windows' theory because graffiti removers interviewed for this study frequently alluded to it. I critique the broken windows theory by identifying four problems relevant to this study – its lack of empirical support, its view of metropolitan areas as fixed and static, the way that powerful groups use a 'discourse of disorder' to define graffiti writing as an improper use of a place, and its assumption that disorder generates fear.

The chapter also discusses how some geographic analyses of graffiti have eschewed a disorder framing. These analyses have examined the spatial distribution of graffiti and illustrated how reactions to it can reveal the boundaries of normality. I also review

the limited literature on graffiti removal, and identify where further research is warranted. I suggest that an important issue is what the *erasure* of graffiti can tell us about social and spatial orders, informal social control, and work processes and identities, particularly among volunteers. Finally, I describe the study's methodology. In this section I detail how the study drew on a purposive sample and outline the ways that a grounded theory approach guided its analysis.

The writing of graffiti

Hip hop graffiti originated in US cities Philadelphia and New York in the mid-1960s. In these urban areas, graffiti 'writers', most of them young, inscribed their marks on public structures such as buildings, bridges, school walls, playgrounds, buses and delivery trucks (Ley & Cybriwsky 1974; Stewart, J 2009, p. 23). Although they desired an audience for their graffiti, these writers did not seek permanence. They knew what they were doing would be erased and, thus, that their claims on a space were temporary (Ley & Cybriwsky 1974). By the early 1970s, New York graffiti writers were tagging the subway station walls and the interior and exterior surfaces of subway cars. Although they were aware what they were doing was illegal, these writers also believed they were beautifying the trains (Stewart, J 2009).

From this graffiti culture, three basic forms of writing emerged. The first and perhaps most well-known form is the 'tag' (Figure 2.1). A tag is a graffiti writer's signature or logo – a name with stylised letters hastily written with ink or paint. It was the form of graffiti that interviewees in this study most frequently mentioned. A second and more complex form of graffiti is a 'throw-up' - a graffiti signature, abbreviation or set of initials that is also quickly written (Figure 2.2). A throw-up tends to be bigger than a tag, but serves a similar function in that it is used more often to saturate a spot or a city with graffiti, than to exhibit style or technical competency (Austin, J 2001, p. 117).

Figure 2.1. Graffiti tags, City of Adelaide[1]

Figure 2.2. A throw-up, City of Adelaide

Tags and throw-ups are quicker to produce and less sophisticated than the final form of graffiti, a 'piece' (Figure 2.3). An abbreviation of masterpiece, a piece is a large-scale name with stylised letters, usually painted with a range of colours and sometimes incorporating characters. In this study, graffiti removers talked mainly about tags and 'graffiti murals'/'graffiti art', the latter of which were terms they used for pieces and legal graffiti 'productions' (Snyder 2009).

A related but distinct form of illicit image-making that interviewees in this study occasionally mentioned is street art (Figure 2.4). Young (2012, p. 298) writes that while graffiti is centred on the tag, street art is not constrained by the same sort of focus. As Young (2012, p. 298) documents, street art refers to a variety of techniques, but the most relevant to the graffiti removers interviewed were stickers, 'paste-ups' or 'wheatpastes' (self-made posters glued onto surfaces) and stencils (images or words spray-painted on to surfaces with a template the stencil-maker cuts out). For example, Adelaide City Council workers talked about the proliferation of stickers in their area. In contrast to the responses of criminalisation and censure that graffiti has tended to receive, street art has enjoyed a more mixed reception (Young 2012, p. 299).

In the early- to mid-1980s, music video clips such as that for Malcolm McLaren's 'Buffalo Gals' and books including Cooper and Chalfant's *Subway Art* exposed Australians to graffiti and other elements of hip hop culture (Cubrilo, Harvey & Stamer 2010; Iveson 2007). Australian audiences accessed these cultural products through independent record shops, alternative media publishing photos of graffiti and, occasionally, more mainstream media, such as television program *Countdown* (Cubrilo, Harvey & Stamer 2010; Iveson 2007). Others were introduced to the graffiti culture by friends (Young 2005b, p. 64). This cultural knowledge provided inspiration for aspiring graffiti writers to begin tagging and piecing in Australian cities (Cubrilo, Harvey & Stamer 2010; Iveson 2007; Young 2005b).

Figure 2.3. A piece, City of Marion

Figure 2.4. Street art, City of Adelaide

As had been the case in New York City, rail networks were important for the early Australian graffiti writers. Different 'crews' of graffiti writers staked their sometimes fleeting claims to specific urban rail lines, bombing and piecing on carriages, stations and the walls and fences facing on to rail corridors. A crew is a group of acquainted individuals (Phase2 & Schmidlapp 1996) that can be quite casual, loose and informal, drawn together by its members' motivation to do graffiti (Ferrell 1996). In Sydney, Burwood Park in the city's inner west attracted break-dancers involved in hip hop culture from along the railway line that linked the central business district to the outer west of the city (Iveson 2007). Melbourne's metropolitan railway network was also affected by the city's nascent graffiti scene. The city's Epping, Frankston and bayside rail lines were among those hit by the city's pioneering writers (Cubrilo, Harvey & Stamer 2010). Similarly, in Adelaide, graffiti became visible to the public in the mid-1980s at sites such as the rail corridor in Goodwood, south of the central business district (Halsey & Pederick 2010, p. 84). In addition to rail networks, crews in Australia were also drawn to abandoned buildings, some of which became 'halls of fame' for graffiti writing (Cubrilo, Harvey & Stamer 2010).

Within graffiti culture, writers can earn status, and eventually 'fame', on the basis of criteria such as the inaccessibility of the locations targeted, and the size and complexity of the graffiti (Castleman 1982; Ley & Cybriwsky 1974). To achieve fame and acceptance, graffiti writers must also continually write their name on visible surfaces. Described as 'getting up' by graffiti writers (Castleman 1982), this practice is important to ensure an audience can see a writer's work, thus increasing opportunities for recognition, admiration and respect. Writers also gain respect from their peers for their ability to work carefully and diligently in difficult conditions and under the threat of capture (Castleman 1982, p. 24).

Graffiti writers can increase the visibility of their name through the quantity of tags or

throw-ups they produce, and the use of 'style'. A writer's style refers to how one's tag or piece looks, and how it is produced. The name of a graffiti writer and the letters spelling out the name can both convey a sense of style (Ley & Cybriwsky 1974. p. 494). As Stewart (1991, p. 211) has noted, style has 'only occasionally to do with the referent or legibility of graffiti'. The skills required to gain style are developed though practice in 'black books' (sketch pads or notebooks) and on other more publicly visible surfaces. Writers evaluate the work of their peers generally on the basis of 'originality of design, a smooth integration … of letters, brightness of colour, smoothness of paint application…, sharpness and accuracy of outlines, and the effective use of details…' (Castleman 1982, p. 25).

Although originally described as 'graffiti loners' (Ley & Cybriwsky 1974), writers in the hip hop graffiti culture have long valued intergroup relations. One of the reasons writers cite for becoming involved in graffiti is to participate in shared peer activities through which they might develop friendships (Halsey & Young 2006, p. 279). These activities include sharing knowledge of safe or exciting spots to write, discussing websites, showing their photographs and going out to write as a group (Halsey & Young 2006, p. 281). In New York in the early 1970s, groups of writers were known as 'graffiti clubs' and the clubhouses for some of these collectives were the subway stations designated as 'writers corners' where groups met and tagged together (Stewart, J 2009, pp. 35-8). More recently, groups of acquainted individuals who write graffiti have tended to describe themselves as crews (Phase2 & Schmidlapp 1996). Writers who paint with the permission of property owners also tend to operate in groups (Kramer 2010b; Snyder 2009).

Graffiti writers often attach significance to the feelings associated with graffiti production. In Schacter's terms, graffiti can be '"for-the-moment", for the *experience,* for the *freedom'* (Schacter 2008, p. 46). Writers may experience feelings of pride upon

completing a work, pleasure from holding a spray can, enjoyment from sharing an activity with friends, and recognition from becoming known by other writers (Halsey & Young 2006). Ferrell (1996) describes the excitement graffiti writers experience as a moment of 'illicit pleasure', an adrenalin rush produced by the activity's illegality and the collective creativity of the writers. Halsey and Young have also observed that the illicit nature of graffiti can give the activity a charge, but they suggest the form of pleasure produced by the act of writing 'is not exclusively bound to nor a function of transgression' (Halsey & Young 2006, p. 292). Halsey and Young (2006, p. 283) write that, perhaps most importantly, 'something in the act of writing feels "right" to the graffiti writers … [and] that motivates most writers to continue in the activity, in the face of possible arrest, security dogs and possible injury'.

Contrary to their reputations for property damage, graffiti writers can maintain respect for specific places and particular groups of people. Many writers adhere to codes governed by complex rules and values dictating the types of surfaces graffiti writers should and should not target (Ferrell 1996; Halsey & Young 2006). Those who respect such ethical taboos tend not to write on churches, cemeteries, cars, war memorials and other monuments, and trees. Interpersonal respect is also important to graffiti writers. Levels of respect can vary on the basis of the status of different writers such that less experienced writers will tend to show 'famous' writers great respect (Castleman 1982, p. 84). A dispute – known as a 'beef' – may erupt when a graffiti writer shows disrespect towards another writer by crossing out or writing over his or her name (Phase2 & Schmidlapp 1996).

Since 1990, the production of 'commercial' and 'legal graffiti' has become more common (Kramer 2010b). Writing about New York City, Kramer (2010b) notes how individuals and groups creating legal graffiti murals must request and obtain written consent from the owners of property where they wish to paint. In Australia, city

councils such as Melbourne and Adelaide have developed systems requiring individuals or groups to apply to the relevant council for a permit and/or development approval to paint murals and produce other art (Adelaide City Adelaide City Council ; Young 2010). The practice of legal graffiti provides writers with an opportunity to produce large-scale, planned, aesthetic and sometimes time-consuming murals that can bring recognition from their peers (Kramer 2010b; Snyder 2009). Some property owners have provided ongoing access to graffiti writers to legally paint in particular spaces, such as the former 5 Pointz site in New York City borough Queens, the old Graffiti Hall of Fame at a meatworks in Sydney, and May Lane in St Peters, Sydney (Iveson 2015; Snyder 2009). In 2012 Adelaide City Council designated a space beneath the abutment of a bridge crossing North Terrace as a 'free wall' (Figure 2.5) where 'street artists' and graffiti writers could legally produce work (Adelaide City Adelaide City Council 2012).

Figure 2.5. 'Free wall', City of Adelaide

The framing of graffiti

Despite such complexities within graffiti culture, the mainstream media, criminology and public authorities have frequently constructed graffiti as a sign of disorder, reflecting a sense that 'no one cares' about a particular space. Although the definition of disorder is contested, the literature tends to distinguish between social and physical forms of disorder, and emphasises its potentially threatening nature, public location and visibility (Sampson & Raudenbush 1999; Skogan 1990; Taylor, RB 2001). Emerging from environmental criminology and its forbear in the Chicago School of Sociology, disorder theories propose that behaviours such as graffiti writing, public drunkenness and young people hanging around can worry residents and contribute to a generalised sense of fear and insecurity. The catalogue of incivilities collectively known as disorder tends to be quite small and can change depending on the context, but invariably it includes illegal graffiti.

The framing of graffiti as a sign of disorder began in the 'homeland' of graffiti, New York City. In 1972, the city's major newspaper *The New York Times* portrayed graffiti written on the subway as a 'problem', contextualising it in a 'crisis' framework (Austin, J 2001). By the late 1970s, the graffiti problem was reframed as symbolising a city that was 'out of control', a rhetoric that drew on Nathan Glazer's article about New York's subway system (Austin, J 2001). Glazer's (1979) article connected graffiti on the subway with a sense of fear among its passengers. It did this by identifying graffiti writers with the world of uncontrollable predators committing more serious crimes on the subway, such as robbery, rape, assault and murder. Three aspects of Glazer's argument were particularly important to the framing of graffiti. The first notable aspect was the argument's situated context – New York City's subway system. A second important aspect was its focus on the subjective perceptions of train passengers that their city was 'out of control'. Finally, Glazer argued the authorities 'were helpless and/or uncaring about the overwhelming fear this "uncontrollable" situation produced'

(Austin, J 2001, p. 145).

The influential 'broken windows' thesis developed Glazer's arguments. First described by Wilson and Kelling in 1982, the thesis proposed that unchecked disorder and minor offences would breed fear among a neighbourhood's residents, escalate into serious crime, and eventuate in urban decay (Wilson & Kelling 1982). According to Wilson and Kelling (1982, pp. 32-33), property and other private possessions that were left unrepaired were a signal that 'no one cares' about these spaces and objects. The sign of incivility was not important per se; it was the length of time the property remained unrepaired that was critical (Taylor, RB 1996, p. 68). Wilson and Kelling (1982, p. 31) suggested that such 'untended behaviour' could quickly lead to a breakdown in community controls and 'communal barriers – the sense of mutual regard and the obligations of civility'. These signs that no one cares were thought to embolden young people in public spaces, leading them to become rowdier and to loiter for longer. The broken windows thesis proposed that under these conditions, residents would begin to perceive crime, particularly violent crime, to be rising, inducing fear and discouraging them from using public spaces and interacting with others. Wilson and Kelling wrote that, in time, such circumstances could invite more serious offenders to invade an area. They suggested this connection between disorderliness and fear 'helps one understand the significance of such otherwise harmless displays as subway graffiti' (Wilson & Kelling 1982, pp. 32-33).

The contention that disorder is causally related to crime has been influential within police organisations and among policy-makers in United States, Australia and elsewhere. However, a problem with the broken windows thesis is that critical research has found little empirical support for its major propositions (Kramer 2012). For example, Sampson and Raudenbush (1999) concluded that once particular neighbourhood characteristics were taken into account, there was no connection

between disorder and various types of crime. In Sampson and colleagues' studies, disorder and most predatory crimes were explained by the same factors, particularly the concentration of disadvantage and low 'collective efficacy', which refers to a combination of social cohesion and shared expectations for the social control of public space (Sampson & Raudenbush 1999; Sampson, Raudenbush & Earls 1997). Kramer (2012) also notes that the core categories of the broken windows concept lack construct validity. For instance, many people cannot differentiate between 'disorder' and 'crime' and thus, in Kramer's (2012, p. 233) words, if 'both concepts [are] reducible to an underlying construct, it becomes problematic to posit a causal link between the two'. Exploring the question of why the broken windows thesis has been embraced by New York City's political and economic elites in the face of little empirical evidence, Kramer (2012) argues that it has served the interests of 'growth machines', loose coalitions of actors with a shared interest in the maximisation of profit from the commercial exploitation of urban space.

Graffiti and geography

Graffiti research has frequently converged around geographic ideas. As noted above, New York City was a key aspect of Glazer's anti-graffiti argument, and the initial broken windows thesis emphasised the importance of the context of place in shaping how residents responded to disorder (Sampson 2013, pp. 16-17). Geographers have also explored the spatial politics of graffiti, interpreting it as a 'spatial practice that draws attention to the complex processes at work in the social, cultural and political construction of urban space' (McAuliffe & Iveson 2011, p. 129). In a pioneering geographic study of graffiti, Ley and Cybriwsky (1974) conducted a spatial analysis of the distribution of graffiti in public spaces in Philadelphia in the 1960s and early 1970s. They observed how 'lone writers' sought to 'make a claim on the world' by conquering particular spaces and inscribing a territorial marker (Ley & Cybriwsky 1974, pp. 492-493).

Ley and Cybriwsky contrasted the 'linear' and fluid graffiti produced by these lone writers with that written by street gangs, which had more fixed claims to the ownership of territory or 'turf'. The fluid nature of lone writers producing this 'hip hop' graffiti is at odds with the static way the city is imagined in much disorder research. Thus, a second problem with research based on the broken windows thesis is that it frequently conceives of the city as fixed and discrete spaces - typically 'densely populated residential "neighbourhoods" or "blocks" near the city centre', which are of 'dubious quality' (Phillips & Smith 2006, p. 883). Phillips and Smith (2006, p. 883) suggest this vision is 'formulated around the rather problematic belief that where people sleep is the pivotal factor shaping their experience of the city, their imagined geographical identity and the morphology of urban form'.

Concepts of space and place have also played an important role in the reactions of individuals and institutions to graffiti. Cresswell (1992) showed how *The New York Times* and other media in the 1970s described graffiti as 'out-of-place' through a 'discourse of disorder'. According to Cresswell, this discourse used metaphors and descriptive terms to imply that graffiti did not belong in New York's public places and was associated with other contexts. Cresswell argued that the art establishment put graffiti back in its 'proper' place by redescribing it as art, a commodity belonging in galleries or living rooms. He concluded that powerful groups worked to reinstate a 'geography of normality' by restructuring the 'normative landscape of "proper" places' (Cresswell 1992, pp. 342-343). In contrast, the broken windows thesis pays little attention to the influence of the media and other powerful groups in identifying the place of graffiti. More recently, these 'moral geographies' have been unsettled by the rise of creative city discourses that have given graffiti and street art a dual valuation as a violation of property rights and as a productive creative practice (McAuliffe 2012).

Perceptions and visibility

For disorder theorists, perceptions matter. Disorder research has tended to define

perceptions as the beliefs of residents that give meaning to signs of disorder. The dominant method this research has used to measure such perceptions has been to ask residents to assess 'how much of a problem' a particular disorder is in their local area. In this sense, 'perceptions' refer to what is visible to people and how they evaluate it. People see graffiti or street art on a surface, usually from a distance while driving their car, commuting in a train carriage and so on. They may be 'enchanted' by it in the sense they have seen something that defies expectations, is new to a space or is out of place (Young 2014a). Some may regard it as a serious problem, perhaps imagining the potentially dangerous stranger who has written it and worrying that she or more likely he will return to the same place and pose some threat to them or people close to them. Others who see the same graffiti may not 'notice' it. Young (2014a, p. 155) notes that 'a raft of social, political and legal measures exist in order to efface or obscure the visibility of uncommissioned cities and their inhabitants. "Unnoticing" becomes habitual and commonplace.' Thus, what is intensely visible to one person may be invisible to another. As Lowe (1982, p. 80) has written, 'seeing is never a mere reception; it anticipates and projects, in terms of what culture has taught'.

Disorder theories frame graffiti and incivility as a signal that local residents and outsiders 'read', contributing to their beliefs about an area and how they act in relation to it (Innes and Fielding, 2002). The 'signal crime' concept builds on this insight to suggest that some crimes and disorders are particularly powerful in informing people's beliefs about an area (Innes and Fielding, 2002, Innes, 2004). In research exploring this idea, Innes (2004) found that residents in Surrey and South London in England were concerned about crime and disorder incidents that were especially visible to them – such as racist or abusive graffiti. As one resident who was interviewed said:

> *Yes it is daft, it is almost daft, but graffiti is the thing that sort of bothers me, more because it is in my face every day. I mean obviously rape and murder are more horrendous crimes, but it is graffiti that I see. (Innes 2004, p. 348)*

Of significance here is the respondent's emphasis on the visibility of graffiti. Rape and murder were recognised as more serious offences, but they were not salient in this resident's daily life. Innes suggested that people constructed their understandings of crime, disorder and risk on the basis of the 'signal value' or the 'social visibility' of particular criminal and anti-social behaviours. The resident's comments also help to illustrate that people may not necessarily 'fear' graffiti, but rather they may feel angry, annoyed or bothered when they see it. Thus, a final problem with the broken windows thesis is that its causal connection between disorder and fear ignores empirical links between graffiti and other emotional responses (Ditton et al. 1999; Dovey, Wollan & Woodcock 2012; Innes 2004).

As the signal crimes concept emphasises, people's perceptions of crime and disorder are shaped not only by what they experience in their everyday lives, but also by what they see on television and read in the newspaper and on the internet. In a key cultural criminology text, Ferrell (1996) analysed the impact of the news media and anti-graffiti campaigners on public perceptions in Denver in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Ferrell adopted Becker's concept of 'moral entrepreneurs' to show how members of an anti-graffiti campaign constructed graffiti as a social problem and shaped public perceptions. He argued that this construction of graffiti had a greater impact on community attitudes towards graffiti than the graffiti itself.

Erasing graffiti

Since the early 1970s, illegal graffiti has been 'cleaned' or 'buffed' from subways, walls, fences and other surfaces.[2] In research on the initiatives and strategies targeting graffiti at a municipal level in four Australian states, Halsey and Young

(2002) identified removal as one of the four main aims of local councils' responses to graffiti. The other aims were criminalisation, 'welfarism' or engagement with graffiti writers, and acceptance of graffiti culture. Halsey and Young (2002, p. 175) argue that removal is 'a way of *re-appropriating* the [social] space, both taking back the space from the graffiti writer, and returning the space to a condition of propriety'. In his analysis of the response of New York City's political elite to graffiti, Kramer (2012, p. 237) notes that graffiti removal can also signify something broader about the city: 'in concealing or removing graffiti, public officials are attempting to convey, initially in a symbolic manner, that specific groups are the rightful occupants of urban space'.

Municipal authorities have justified removal by describing graffiti as disorder and dirt, in the sense that dirt is 'matter out of place'. This line of reasoning suggests dirt and disorder are destructive, and must be erased if existing 'patterns', to use Douglas' term, are to be maintained. As Douglas (2002, pp. 2-3) writes: 'Dirt offends against order. Eliminating it is not a negative movement, but a positive effort to organise the environment … making it conform to an idea.' Drawing on Douglas's work, Stewart (1991, p. 216) writes that 'graffiti can be seen as a *permanent* soiling of the environment simply in [its] constant replicability … emphasis upon repetition and replacement'. Yet, as Stewart (1991, p. 219) argues, municipal governments must claim that graffiti is removable so they can legitimate the vast resources they spend on 'graffiti maintenance'.

The extent of graffiti in the urban environment presents a problem of prioritisation for those who report and remove it. Some authorities have responded to this problem by developing policies to prioritise the removal of 'highly offensive' graffiti within 24 hours of its reporting (Taylor, MF, Cordin & Njiru 2010). However, as Taylor, Cordin and Njiru (2010) have written, the fundamental flaw with such a policy is that people who report graffiti have a diverse understanding of what constitutes highly offensive graffiti.

Taylor, Cordin and Njiru (2010) investigated how people understood different types of graffiti in an experimental study with 40 participants directly involved in the reporting or removal of graffiti in Perth. The researchers concluded that people who removed or reported graffiti could effectively distinguish between different forms of graffiti. Groups such as university students, other young people and focus groups comprising residents have also been found to react differently to distinct categories of graffiti (Austin, DM & Sanders 2007; Campbell 2008). For example, university students showed more concern about their safety in response to gang-related graffiti than other forms of graffiti (Austin, DM & Sanders 2007).

Studies such as Taylor, Cordin and Njiru's are limited to an analysis of the content of graffiti, overlooking other characteristics such as the graffiti's location. As Schacter's (2008) fieldwork in London found, graffiti removers may consider more than just the graffiti's content when they assess how to deal with it. Schacter observed that the role of graffiti removers included making creative distinctions between graffiti that was and was not 'acceptable'. These decisions went beyond identifying whether graffiti was highly offensive, and were informed by aesthetic values, the graffiti's content and its practical function, such as the prevention of graffiti tagging. Furthermore, Schacter noted the graffiti removers had a symbiotic relationship with graffiti writers, providing them with space for the creation of new graffiti and, at the same time, depending on them to produce work that would keep them in gainful employment.

An objective of graffiti removal is the eradication or reduction of graffiti. Thus, it is often understood as a mode of crime reduction, deterring or 'displacing' those who write graffiti. This is the message of disorder theories that suggest graffiti spreads via a 'contagion effect' if it is not quickly erased (Skogan 1990). However, removal has been such an enduring, widespread and often immediate response to illegal graffiti that it has also become integral to graffiti writing itself. Removal maintains graffiti's

impermanence - perhaps the only rule in graffiti's 'game of fame' (Halsey & Pederick 2010, p. 96) – and it has been important to the development of different forms of graffiti such as throw-ups (Austin, J 2001, pp. 115-119). If graffiti is not removed, it is permanent; it has been either explicitly or tacitly permitted to exist, and graffiti is only '*permitted* to exist when it ceases to be itself' (Halsey & Pederick 2010, p. 97). Thus 'it is caught in the paradox of authority and authenticity: if graffiti is authentic then it cannot be authorized and once authorized it cannot be authentic' (Dovey, Wollan & Woodcock 2012). Yet despite this recognition of the importance of erasure, graffiti research that has shown a sensitive and multidimensional interpretation of graffiti writers has not sought the same understanding of graffiti removers (O'Brien 2005).

Interpreting graffiti removal

When performed by individuals or groups volunteering with councils, graffiti removal may be understood as a form of community social control, part of a set of behaviours that Carr (2005) describes as 'the new parochialism'. In developing Hunter's typology of private, parochial and public levels of control, Carr (2005) defines the new parochialism as crime control behaviours facilitated by public sector institutions and enacted by civically-engaged volunteers who, in effect, self-regulate their residential area. Ideas of interconnectedness and self-regulation are also crucial to Garland's (2001) 'preventative partnerships'. Garland (2001, p. 17) observes how such partnerships have developed through 'patient, ongoing, low-key efforts to build up the internal controls of neighbourhoods and to encourage communities to police themselves'. As Crawford (1997), has detailed, contemporary practices and discourses of criminal justice often make appeals to 'community', 'prevention' and 'partnerships'.

Another potentially useful way to analyse graffiti removal is as a form of 'dirty work'. Hughes (1958, pp. 49-50) defined 'dirty work' as tasks that were physically disgusting, were a symbol of degradation, or were 'counter to the more heroic of our moral

conceptions'. Developing Hughes' original conceptualisation, Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) describe dirty work as tasks that are physically, socially and/or morally 'tainted'. As noted above, graffiti is a form of dirt in Douglas' use of the word to mean something out of place. In these terms, graffiti contravenes ordered relations designating classifications such as art/crime, public/private, appropriate/inappropriate and dirty/clean (Dick 2005). The graffiti remover's job is to erase graffiti so as to 'return the social space to its proper condition' (Halsey & Young 2002, p. 175) and deal with the confusion graffiti poses to cherished classifications (Dick 2005, p. 1366). Thus, graffiti removal may be understood as physically tainted due to its direct connection with dirt and its association with the 'improper'. The limited research on graffiti removal also suggests it may be socially tainted in the eyes of people who associate it with stigmatised graffiti vandals. For example, Schacter (2008) found that graffiti removers and graffiti writers in London were so similar in appearance, language and 'performance' that the public often treated removers with suspicion on the assumption they were graffiti writers.

Organisational literature has shown how people who work with dirt are stigmatised and can become 'dirty workers'. As Simpson et al. (2012, p. 8) have noted, the negative qualities associated with dirt are projected on to dirty workers, making identity management problematic. Investigating how dirty workers seek and secure social affirmation in the face of stigmatisation, Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) found that these workers can draw on strong occupational and workgroup cultures to enhance the meaningfulness of their work. The concept of dirty work has also been extended to those working in the criminal justice sector (Dick 2005; Worrall & Mawby 2013). For example, Dick's (2005) research on police work showed that what is identified as dirty within a particular role can vary according to the observer's perspective.

Methodology

Reactions to graffiti can provide an insight to the ways people attach meaning to different spaces. This study aims to 'grasp' some of the details of graffiti removal and its role in the creation of places, in the context of different local government areas in an Australian city. This exploration of geographic variation is consistent with McAuliffe and Iveson's (2011) emphasis on the importance of understanding the ways that issues related to graffiti operate across time and space.

A potentially useful way to approach the study of people removing graffiti from distinct locations is through narrative. As Entrikin (1991) has suggested, narratives are well suited to the study of the nature of place. The 'narratives of place' (Entrikin 1991) of graffiti removers may provide an improved understanding of place as the context of attitudes towards graffiti. This approach can also potentially provide access to the 'betweenness' of place – incorporating what Entrikin (1991, p. 25) describes as elements of 'the objective "facts" of place' and the 'intentional connection between actor and environment'. To gain access to the narratives of graffiti removers, I used a qualitative interview study. In narrative approaches to interviewing, one aim of the researcher is to allow the interviewee to become a story-teller rather than a respondent (Hollway & Jefferson 2000, p. 31). Hollway and Jefferson (2000) suggest the agenda for the interview may be developed or changed, depending on the experiences of the story-teller. Consistent with this approach, I provided interviewees in this study with opportunities to adjust the course of the interview and gave them latitude to tell stories about experiences they believed were relevant.

The study entailed semi-structured interviews with 23 voluntary and paid graffiti removers from six purposively selected Adelaide councils: the City of Marion, City of Salisbury, City of Charles Sturt, Adelaide City Council, City of Unley and Mount Barker District Council (see Appendix A for a list of all interviewees). I designed the interviews

to gain a specific understanding of the contextual nature of people's attitudes towards graffiti. From a theoretical standpoint, graffiti removers are potentially rich sources of information about the nature, extent and meaning(s) of graffiti in particular locations. They tend to be out looking for graffiti, and often know the names and styles of writers, where they have written and what variety of graffiti they write (Schacter 2008, p. 55). Graffiti removers are also important because their materials and labour costs can result in substantial expenses for local councils, transport authorities and other property owners. In addition, voluntary graffiti removers are often residents of the area where they work and therefore provide a sample of people living in a given community. The individuals interviewed for this study removed graffiti from geographically distinct parts of Adelaide, which also provided an opportunity to explore the ways people doing removal work in different areas perceived graffiti and talked about its erasure.

A further, practical reason for selecting graffiti removers was their accessibility. This project recruited participants by contacting council officers responsible for graffiti management and/or volunteer coordination at selected councils. I asked these council officers to provide information about the project to all graffiti removers and to invite them to participate. I responded to difficulties recruiting sufficient interviewees by asking these officers to remind their volunteers and staff members of the opportunity to participate in the study.

The sample included 19 males and four females. Respondents were from a range of age groups, but most (*n=16*) were 60 years or over. The majority were volunteers (*n=21)*, had removed graffiti for less than five years (*n=13*), and had lived at their current place of residence for 10 years or more (*n=17*). The length of residence of the interviewees can to a large extent be explained by their age. These individuals were in a later stage of the life cycle and were thus less likely to need to move for reasons

such as employment or changes in household composition. Interviews lasted up to one hour and 40 minutes. They explored the meaning of graffiti writing and removal for these individuals, particularly as it related to its situated context.

I considered other methods of data collection, but rejected them for different reasons. For example, this project did not use a content analysis of newspaper articles as the views of people who remove graffiti have not been prominent in the news media.[3] In addition, I did not pursue observational methods because the objective of the research was to understand narrative accounts of graffiti removers rather than their behaviours. A survey was also inappropriate because the research aimed to gain an in-depth and nuanced understanding of the stories of graffiti removers in a small number of distinct settings, rather than measuring the attitudes of a representative group.

The selection of councils was directed by the aims of the project, the willingness of the councils to participate and the capacity to access the volunteers/employees of the council. The study used a purposive sample created on the basis of geographic location, demographic characteristics and the way the councils organised their graffiti removal resources. Not all councils that I invited to participate agreed to be involved so I selected two additional local government areas, the City of Unley and City of Marion. As I discuss below, these councils were different to other participating councils in terms of geography, demographic characteristics and type of graffiti removal program and thus provided variation in my sample that would enable comparisons in my analysis.

Adelaide City Council is the financial and administrative heart of Adelaide, encompassing the city's central business district and neighbouring suburb of North Adelaide. In 2013, the council employed three staff members to remove graffiti and, in 2010-11, budgeted $338,000 to graffiti removal. It does not use volunteers to

remove graffiti, but has a network of 'spotters' who voluntarily report incidents of graffiti (e.g., Perri 2016). The City of Charles Sturt stretches from the western edge of the Adelaide City Council to the Gulf St Vincent. It relies on mainly volunteers to remove graffiti, costing the council about $70,000 annually in 2011 (Kemp 2011). Mount Barker is a fast-growing 'treechange commuter town' about 30 kilometres southeast of the Adelaide city centre (Salt 2012). Mount Barker District Council operates a program to control graffiti that uses volunteers, local businesses, an employment provision service, a Neighbourhood Watch group and the police. In 2010-11, the council spent $61,000 on vandalism and graffiti removal. The City of Salisbury, located about 25 kilometres north of the centre of Adelaide, uses a team of graffiti removal volunteers and employs two full-time graffiti cleaners. The Cities of Unley and Marion both south of the city centre, have recruited volunteers to remove graffiti in their districts, but they take a different approach to organising their labour as compared to other councils. Whereas Salisbury, Charles Sturt and Mount Barker coordinate teams of volunteers to remove graffiti on particular days, the volunteers of Unley and Marion remove graffiti at times they choose. Volunteers from both of these councils also tend to remove graffiti from a geographic area close to their homes, but the boundaries of their 'patches' are sometimes blurred. Chapter Three discusses the socio-demographic differences between all of these councils.

The focus of the interviews derived from notions of place, order/disorder, aesthetics and identity. To respond to my first research question concerning how graffiti removers explain/talk about graffiti, the interviews asked participants how they viewed various forms of graffiti and graffiti writers, how they interpreted the meaning of the places where they had removed graffiti or chose not to remove it, the impact graffiti had on different places and the people who used it, and so on. To respond to the second research question on the roles/functions graffiti removers ascribe themselves, I asked participants about their motivations, value judgements and decision-making

processes. Interview guides oriented the interviews towards such issues, but I maintained the flexibility to ask questions about any context-specific issues that arose.

Interviews generally adhered to Hollway and Jefferson's summary of the four principles of the biographical-interpretive method (2000). This method aims to facilitate the production of the interviewee's 'meaning-frame'. The first principle is to use open-ended rather than closed questions, sufficiently broad to gain access to the meaning of the topic of interest to the interviewee. Interviews in this study asked open-ended questions to encourage graffiti removers to reflect in detail on their experiences of seeing and removing graffiti, and to recollect their attitudes towards these experiences. For example, I asked interviewees: 'What are the signs that you have done a good job?'

The second principle of the biographical-interpretive method is to elicit stories. As Hollway and Jefferson (2000) write, eliciting stories has the advantage of providing accounts rooted in events that have actually happened. Interviews in this study comprised mainly questions relating to concrete events, such as: 'Tell me about the most recent time you removed graffiti.' To gain an understanding of the role of place in their narratives, questions encouraged respondents to describe material places where they noticed graffiti and where they chose to remove or leave it. For example, respondents were asked: 'Tell me about some locations in your area affected by graffiti.' In all interviews, abstract questions were minimised.

The third principle is to avoid 'why' questions. Hollway and Jefferson suggest such questions can produce abstract responses, disconnected from the everyday lives of respondents and bereft of concrete meaning. Although I tended to avoid 'why' questions, I also recognise that asking these questions can be important. For example, 'why' questions can help to 'show' how reasons for behaving in specific

ways may be unknown to the actor. The final principle is to follow up using respondents' ordering and phrasing. To achieve this, I took notes to summarise themes emerging from the respondents' narratives. Then I asked respondents to elaborate on these themes in their narrated order. Questions were phrased using the respondents' own words and phrases, such as 'tags', 'runs', 'hot spots' and 'shadowing'. Where possible, the meaning of these terms to the respondent was clarified, often with open questions to elicit further narratives.

A grounded theory approach guided data analysis. Grounded theory refers to the discovery of theory from systematically-obtained data (Glaser & Strauss 1967). It emphasises the importance of generating theory that can 'fit the situation being researched, and work when put into use' (Glaser & Strauss 1967, p. 3). As Patton (2014, p. 110) writes, grounded theory is based on a set of systematized, prescriptive and contextually adaptable steps and procedures. These steps and procedures are useful for 'connecting induction and deduction through the constant comparative method, comparing research sites, doing theoretical sampling (Morse, 2010), and testing emergent concepts with additional fieldwork' (Patton 2014, p. 110). An important aspect of ground theory is the joint collection, coding and analysis of data (Glaser & Strauss 1967).

The first stage of my analysis was to read the interview transcripts, searching for important, recurring words, comments, stories and references. I also identified any unusual or unexpected data. I looked for repetition both within particular interviews and across different interviews. Then I systematically labelled these pieces of data using verbatim descriptions to enable me to maintain the fine detail of what I was hearing and reading (Silverman 2011, p. 69). This line-by-line coding enabled me to create labels that I compared, evaluated and changed when necessary. Memos were written to summarise these labels, and were attached to examples from the data. I

paid particular attention to the sequence of events interviewees described and the context in which they recounted particular events to gain an understanding of connections between the categories I had developed, and how they overlaid each other. As suggested by Silverman (2011, p. 72), I then engaged in more focused coding and memo writing. As new data was collected and transcribed, I continued to code and write memos. Finally, I assessed different ways the memos were interrelated by identifying connections between categories, developing concepts and formulating a theory. Data analysis also involved the creation of matrices to compare classification schemes and produce new ways to describe the graffiti removers for further analysis of the data (Patton 2014).

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how processes of graffiti writing and graffiti erasure are wedded together, dependent upon each other for their existence. As Dovey, Wollan and Woodcock (2012, p. 39) write, graffiti removal ensures the transience of most graffiti and the ongoing provision of wall surfaces: 'Erasures …. stimulate both new work and a higher quality of work that will not be quickly erased. Inevitably all work is erased in time … Graffiti cannot be fully defined or preserved without becoming purified and killed' (Dovey, Wollan & Woodcock 2012, pp. 39-40). Schacter (2008, p. 49) makes a similar point about the importance of erasure, whether it be at the hands of graffiti removers or other graffiti writers or street artists: 'For the artists … destruction is thus not only predicted, but fundamental to their process and an inherent part of the art-form; it is seen to be both accepted and expected that this cycle of production and destruction will occur.' Policies of removal have also contributed to the development of forms of hip hop graffiti such as throw-ups. Thus, for graffiti writers, erasure generates spaces to paint, and stimulates innovation and development of style and technique. It also gives rise to graffiti's impermanence, one of its defining characteristics.

For graffiti removers, erasure can provide a means of developing skills such as 'can-control' and methods to navigate and see the city (Schacter 2008). Their work also relies on graffiti writers to continually create graffiti (Schacter 2008). These aspects of erasure suggest removing graffiti is not 'a negative movement, but a positive effort to organise the environment' (Douglas 2002, p. 2). As Douglas (2002, p. 3) writes: 'There is nothing fearful or unreasoning in our dirt-avoidance: it is a creative movement, an attempt to relate form to function, to make unity of experience.' Yet the doing of graffiti removal has not received the same attention from scholars as has the doing of graffiti. Commenting on this analytical asymmetry in Ferrell's work on Denver graffiti, O'Brien writes:

> *If the perpetration of the graffiti warrants such detailed and celebratory empirical attention – if the aesthetic, interactional and sensual qualities of doing graffiti are deemed necessary to a critical criminological project - why does not the same requirement apply to those who resist the writers and motivate themselves to produce alternative aesthetic motifs in the same urban environment? (O'Brien 2005, pp. 603-604)*

Analysing the narratives of graffiti removers provides an opportunity to gain an understanding of responses to graffiti as they are expressed in the practices and decisions of graffiti removers. Shifting attention to these aspects of graffiti removal may enable the emergence of more detailed and contextual accounts of municipal responses to graffiti. The stories of graffiti removers can take us beyond municipal policies to provide an insight to how graffiti removal works on the ground and 'at the wall' (Brighenti 2010).

The stories of Adelaide graffiti removers may also respond to questions about aspects of the relations these individuals share with graffiti writers, council employees, local residents and other property owners and managers. For example: How do graffiti removers imagine graffiti writers? What are the politics of graffiti removal? Are graffiti removers reclaiming a place for the majority or are they negotiating with graffiti writers

and property owners over the appearance of a place? If graffiti is a conversation with the city, what are graffiti removers saying when they erase it? The concept of dirty work may provide a framework to help understand aspects of graffiti removal. In symbolic terms, graffiti is dirt and thus the erasure of graffiti may link graffiti removers to this notion of dirt. Similar to street cleaners and rubbish collectors, the work of graffiti removers is visible in the sense that they do it in public places during daylight, and yet the fruits of their labour – if done well – are largely 'invisible'.

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[1] All photographs were taken by the author between 2011 and 2016.
[2] The word 'buff' originally referred to the cleaning of subway cars by American transit authorities (Phase2 & Schmidlapp 1996, p. 4).
[3] However, in recent years, graffiti removers have been the focus of internet news stories that have reported instances of street artists mocking graffiti removers through their art (Dalton 2015; Gardner 2013).

3. A GEOGRAPHICAL, HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL PORTRAIT OF METROPOLITAN ADELAIDE

Introduction

This chapter discusses the spatial, historical and social context of the responses of voluntary and paid graffiti removers in Adelaide. The stories of these graffiti removers revealed how aspects of place such as its spatial dimensions, its history and its meanings were reflected in the ways they did their work. Many interviewees were long-term residents of the areas where they removed graffiti, accumulating knowledge of how local spaces, places and routes normally appeared and were used. The 'look' of these sites was ingrained in these individuals. For them, the need to maintain a particular aesthetic was so obvious that they frequently left these details in the background of their stories. Their accounts tended not to critically discuss the material surfaces on which graffiti was written, such as the drabness of Stobie poles and utility boxes, and uniformity of Colorbond fencing.[1] These were surfaces that were so common in the Adelaide metropolitan landscape that many people would not notice them.

Adelaide is the capital city of South Australia. With a population of 1.3 million people, it is South Australia's largest city and the nation's fifth largest city. Adelaide covers 326,000 hectares between the Gulf of Saint Vincent in the west, the Murray Mallee region in the east, the Barossa Valley in the north and the edge of the Mount Lofty ranges in the south. This chapter will describe the greater Adelaide region, placing attention on its planning and layout, age structure, industry and employment, housing and levels of crime. Then it will identify the study's six research areas, describing various geographical and socio-economic aspects of each of these areas. The next section will discuss the spots where interviewees removed graffiti and where they left graffiti as it was. This section will argue that a hierarchy of values was implicit in these

decisions. The final part of the chapter will examine how the graffiti removers interviewed described their relationship to the places where they lived and worked. It will give particular attention to the smaller locales that were important parts of their narratives – the parks, walking paths, roads, and so on. This section will discuss how particular sociological and criminological concepts relating to crime and place can be applied to the working lives of graffiti removers in Adelaide. However, first, a historical perspective on Adelaide's post-European settlement will be provided. Hip hop graffiti is a predominantly urban phenomenon and, as such, the analysis will begin with the English colonization of South Australia, when plans for the city of Adelaide and its suburbs were drawn up.

Adelaide

Adelaide was settled in 1836, the final state capital city founded in Australia. In contrast to earlier settlement experiences in Australia, Adelaide was colonized without convict labour and according to the 'principles of systematic colonization' (Bunker 2007). Adelaide was seen by people in England as a place of opportunity and redress, a 'place where they could live and prosper materially, socially and spiritually' (Bunker 2007, p. 7). Surveyor-General Colonel William Light prepared the first urban plan for Adelaide. His design of a city grid with wide streets, town squares and the River Torrens, surrounded by a belt of parklands, has been recognised as a significant example of early colonial planning and had an enduring impact on the city. The areas beyond the city centre were also planned by Light in grid formation, a design that, according to Bunker (2007, pp. 16-17): 'has proved an admirable organizing element for the spread of suburban Adelaide over the years. It has accommodated and eventually welded together urban growth.'

Open spaces and aesthetics have also played key roles in the growth and development of metropolitan Adelaide, contributing to its distinctive character. Since

settlement, Adelaide's growth has been structured around a group of well-defined open spaces: the original parklands ring, the Hills Face Zone, the River Torrens linear park and the Metropolitan Open Space System (Hutchings & Kellett 2013, p. 379). In various residential developments, 'themes of aesthetics and amenity have been expressed in the layout of streets, parks, open spaces and dwellings' (Hutchings & Garnaut 2009, p. 50).

For a long period, the most rapid growth in Adelaide has been in the peripheral areas to the north, south and, to a much lesser extent, the Hills area east of the city centre (Hugo 2013, p. 168). Hugo (2013, p. 168) writes that the city's central and inner suburbs have also shown significant growth, whereas outer-middle suburbs in the north and south have experienced population decline. The peripheral areas of suburban Adelaide are connected to the city centre by a network of bus routes and three metropolitan railway lines. In addition, a tram line extends from a beachside suburb, through the city centre to the inner north-western suburbs where high-density housing is being developed on formerly industrial land. Despite these public transport connections, Adelaide remains a car-orientated metropolitan area. Only 9% of journeys to work are by public transport (although 30% of journeys to work in the central business district are by public transport) (Hutchings & Kellett 2013).

Age structure

In 2012, the median age for Adelaide was 38.7 years compared with the national median of 37.3 years. Between the 2006 and 2011 Census the number of people in age groups over 45 years grew further as the baby boom generation moved into older age groups (aged 45-64 years in 2011) and the pre-war generation (aged 65 years or over in 2011) enjoyed greater survival (Hugo 2013, pp. 165-166). Coastal areas outside of Adelaide such as Victor Harbor tend to have the highest concentrations of people aged 65 years or over. Within Adelaide, Fulham and West Lakes, both in the City of Charles Sturt, have high proportions of people aged 65 years or over. In

metropolitan Adelaide the outer areas of Playford and the Adelaide Hills have the largest proportion of people aged 15 to 19 years. The largest proportions of children under 15 years of age are also found in the northern metropolitan area and in outer southern suburbs and the Hills.

Industry and employment

Adelaide has been substantially impacted by profound changes in Australia's economy in the past decade. Beer writes that, in Australia, 'the new economic environment has resulted in the decline of many industries and the loss of employment from high profile enterprises, including Bluescope Steel, Toyota, General Motors Holden (GMH), Bridgestone Tyres, Ford Australia and Mitsubishi Motors' (Beer 2015, p. 22). Three of these enterprises, GMH, Bridgestone Tyres and Mitsubishi, have closed plants in Adelaide – in Elizabeth, Salisbury and Tonsley Park respectively. In the wake of this decline, the city has witnessed a 'gradual and significant shift away from employment in the industrial/manufacturing sector to the service sector' (Baum & Hassan 1993, p. 156). Between 2000-01 and 2009-10, the state's manufacturing industry showed negative growth in both employment and production (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] 2011a). The decline in the manufacturing sector has been linked to an increasing unemployment rate (Baum & Hassan 1993). Furthermore, the impacts of this economic restructuring have been unevenly distributed in Adelaide, such that relatively poorer local government areas experienced the greatest rise in unemployment and shifts from manufacturing to service occupations (Baum & Hassan 1993).

In recent years, the state's unemployment rate has tended to be marginally higher than the national average (Spoehr & Ranasinghe 2013), reaching a 15-year high of 8.2% in June, 2015. For young South Australians, unemployment rates have been even higher, ranging between 10% and 20% for people aged 15-19 years since 2006 (Spoehr & Ranasinghe 2013). At the same time, participation rates for this age group

have declined from 62.5% in 2006 to 50% in 2012. As Spoehr and Ranasinghe (2013, p. 267) write: 'This is a reflection of changing labour market conditions where employment opportunities for young and inexperienced workers become scarce as older and experienced workers compete for the same jobs.' This competition from older workers is evident in data showing large recent increases in the number of employed males and particularly employed females aged 60 years and above in South Australia (Spoehr & Ranasinghe 2013). For people aged 15-25 years, the unemployment rate in Adelaide was 14.0% in December 2014 (LMIP 2016). Young people who lived in the northern suburbs were the most severely affected, experiencing an unemployment rate of 17.5%.

Housing

As with most of Australia, Adelaide housing prices increased rapidly after the year 2000 (Beer & Horne 2013). Over the same period, South Australia has witnessed a declining proportion of people owning their home outright, and growth in the proportion of people paying off a mortgage and in group and renting households (Hugo 2013). There has also been an increase in the proportion of households with children being single parent families (Hugo 2013). Additionally, as Badcock (2001) has written, occupational change, property investment trends and government spending in Adelaide's inner suburbs has also led to a 'middle-class recapture of Inner Adelaide', resulting in a concentration of prosperous middle-class home-owners circling the city centre.

The public housing authority for Adelaide and the rest of the state, the South Australian Housing Trust, was established in 1936. It was founded with the task of 'building sound but inexpensive workers' housing so that rents in Adelaide, and therefore living costs and wages, would be lower than in Melbourne and Sydney' (Forster & McCaskill 2007, p. 86). The stock of rental public housing in South Australia grew until the early 1990s, before it began to decline in 1992 as governments in South

Australia and elsewhere sold off stock (Beer & Horne 2013, p. 357). Another major change has been to the structure of the population accommodated in public housing in South Australia. As Beer and Horne (2013, p. 361) put it: 'Where once public rental housing in South Australia was intended for "working men and their families" (Marsden, 1986), increasingly social housing is a form of accommodation only available to the most disadvantaged in society'. In Australia and elsewhere, neighbourhoods where public rental housing is concentrated can develop negative reputations and be stigmatised. One of the most significant causal factors for this stigmatisation has been the underinvestment in social housing, and government policies that have prioritised high needs and vulnerable households, thus reducing social diversity (Jacobs, K et al. 2011).

Crime

In the past 10 years, police-recorded violent crime and property crime in South Australia has declined. Police-recorded offences against person and property (including graffiti offences) in South Australia dropped by 34.9% from 2004-05 to 2013-14 (South Australian Police 2014). However, in the ten years since 2004-05, police-recorded offences against good order (such as drug offences) have increased 67.7%, from 33,327 offences to 55,895 offences (South Australian Police 2014). In the Adelaide metropolitan area, reductions in crime overall have been experienced by all council districts in recent years, but to different degrees.

Local government areas

As the data above suggests, the spatial distribution of income, employment, older and younger people, and crime is uneven in Adelaide. South Australia has 69 councils, including 19 in metropolitan Adelaide. Relative to cities such as Sydney and Brisbane, most of these councils are small proportionate to the city's overall population. This study selected five metropolitan councils and one Adelaide Hills council on the fringes

of the city for theoretical and practical reasons outlined in Chapter Two. The next section describes these six council areas.

Table 1.1. Characteristics of local government areas within the study

	Local government area					
	Marion	Salisbury	Charles Sturt	Adelaide	Unley	Mt Barker
Location	Middle suburbs	Outer suburbs	Inner/middle suburbs	City centre	Inner/middle suburbs	Peri-urban
Population	88,983	138,535	114,209	23,169	39,324	32,558
Median age (years)	39.3	35.5	40.8	31.3	39.5	38.6
Unemployment rate (%)	7.2	9.8	6.6	9.8	4.9	8.6
Median weekly household income ($)	1,064	1,021	1,019	1,144	1,428	1,254
Property crime offence rate per 1,000 population	54.4	67.3	75.1	218.3	36.0	27.7
Dwellings owned outright/with mortgage (%)	67.2	69.1	64.7	37.2	65.3	73.9

Source: Population: ABS, 2016, Regional Population Growth. Median age: ABS, 2016, Data by region. Unemployment rate: SA Department of Employment, Small Area Labour Markets, March 2016: https://www.employment.gov.au/small-area-labour-markets-publication. Median weekly household income, tenure type: ABS, 2011 Census QuickStats., Property crime offence rate: Office of Crime Statistics and Research, 2013, Crime Mapper 2009-2013.

City of Marion

The City of Marion sits on 5,564 hectares south-west of the city centre. Surveyed in 1838, the district experienced rapid population growth after World War Two, as large companies such as Hills and Chrysler established manufacturing plants in the area and the South Australian Housing Trust bought parcels of formerly horticultural land for industrial development and the establishment of rental housing. As shown in Table 1 above, Marion's population is almost 89,000 people and has a median age of 39.3 years, two years above the national median. The council includes the major suburbs of Clovelly Park, Mitchell Park, Glengowrie, Marion, Hallett Cove and Sheidow Park.

In March 2016, the city's unemployment rate was 7.2%, higher than the national rate of 6.0%. According to Census data, the three most common occupations for employed people were professionals (21.3%), clerical and administrative workers (17.1%) and technicians and trades workers (14.8%). Median weekly household income was $1,064, less than the national average. In 2013, the City of Marion property crime offence rate was 54.4 per 1,000 population.

Marion has been described as a generally disadvantaged area that is home to 'battlers' (Baum, O'Connor & Stimson 2005). The northern and central regions of Marion are what Baum, O'Connor and Stimson (2005) define as 'battling suburbia'. These are areas in the mortgage belt in the middle and outer suburbs 'likely to be places that have an association with old-economy manufacturing-based employment, but are not quite as disadvantaged as the most disadvantaged places in our cities' (Baum, O'Connor & Stimson 2005). An example of Marion's manufacturing-based employment, the Tonsley Park assembly plant built by Chrysler in the late 1960s and sold to Mitsubishi in 1979, was closed in 2008, leading to a loss of 400 jobs.

City of Salisbury

Located 25 kilometres north of the city centre, the City of Salisbury has a population of almost 139,000 people, the highest population among the local government areas included in this study and the second highest of South Australian local government areas (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] 2016). The City of Salisbury has a median age of 35.5 years, the second lowest in the study areas. It covers 15,800 hectares, comprising mainly residential and industrial land use, but also includes an abundance of parks and recreational facilities, according to the council's website. The city includes the suburbs Salisbury, Paralowie, Para Hills, Mawson Lakes and Edinburgh.

In March 2016, the city's unemployment rate was 9.8%, greater than the national rate and equal highest with the Adelaide City Council in this study. The unemployment

rate for people aged 15-24 years in the northern suburbs of Adelaide, which includes the City of Salisbury, was 17.6% in November, 2014 (LMIP 2016). The median weekly household income was $1,021, lower than the national average. Most of Salisbury has been characterised as an 'old-economy extremely disadvantaged locality' (Baum, O'Connor & Stimson 2005). According to Census data, the manufacturing industry employs the largest percentage of people (15.8%), followed by the retail trade (12.4%) and the healthcare and social assistance industry (12.1%). Between 2008 and 2013, the number of manufacturing jobs in Adelaide's northern suburbs declined by 25%, from 27,000 to 20,100 (Bishop 2013). In the same period, the number of healthcare and social work jobs increased by 30%, from 20,800 to 25,900 (Bishop 2013).

Salisbury also includes the first South Australian Housing Trust development in the northern regions of Adelaide, built in the early 1950s to 'attract and service the growth in manufacturing industry' in these regions (Arthurson 2008, p. 492). According to one Salisbury interviewee, the area had a reputation among outsiders as a 'crime area'. But its 2013 property crime offence rate of 67.3 per 1,000 population was lower than the rate in Adelaide City Council and the City of Charles Sturt. Clark's (2009) doctoral research on the City of Salisbury observed that residents perceived the area's social problems to cohere around the presence of groups of young people. In particular, the sight of 'Aboriginal people, "gangs" of young people, those thought to have drug and alcohol problems and be unemployed "hanging around" the main bus and train station led Salisbury residents to feel unsafe and deterred them from using public transport (Clark 2009, p. 173).

City of Charles Sturt

The City of Charles Sturt spans an area of 5,500 hectares and has a population of more than 114,000 people. It includes the 'middle-class suburbia' (Baum, O'Connor & Stimson 2005) of Henley Beach and Grange on the coast of the Gulf of Saint Vincent; the inner suburbs of Bowden, Brompton and Hindmarsh; and middle suburbs

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Woodville, Cheltenham, West Croydon and Fulham Gardens. A railway line cuts across the north-eastern section of the district, splitting at Woodville, and continuing to Grange along one line and the Outer Harbor shipping terminal on the other line. Substantial amounts of graffiti have been painted along this rail corridor (Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1. Railway line, City of Charles Sturt

In the early twentieth century, the suburbs of Hindmarsh and Brompton – together with other inner city areas – 'had slum conditions approaching those in the cities of Europe or in the capital of the older colonies along Australia's eastern seaboard' (Hutchings 2007, p. 41). In recent decades, these inner western areas have experienced a surge in housing investment and a rise in income levels (Badcock 2001). The median age of Charles Sturt's residents is 40.8 years, making it the oldest area within this study. Its unemployment rate in March 2016 was 6.6%, similar to the national rate, but its median weekly household income was the lowest in this study at $1,021. According to the Census, the top three industries employing people in the city

were healthcare and social assistance, retail trade and manufacturing. The percentage of people who lived at a different address five years ago (25.8%) was less than the national percentage (31%), suggesting reduced residential mobility. Among the non-city-centre local government areas in this study, Charles Sturt had the highest property crime offence rate at 75.1 per 1,000 population.

Adelaide City Council

Adelaide City Council is the economic and cultural heart of Adelaide, comprising the central business district and neighbouring residential, retail and entertainment area of North Adelaide. Situated on 1,600 hectares, the Adelaide City Council's population is more than 23,000 people. In 2016, it was the second fastest growing local government area in metropolitan Adelaide (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] 2016). Adelaide City Council residents have a median age of 31.3 years, the lowest in the study. According to Census data, its percentage of residents aged 15-24 years (27.8%) was more than twice the national rate (13.3%), reflecting its large number of university students. Households are mostly lone person or group households and many of its dwellings are rented. The highly educated nature of the city's residents is shown by the high percentage (65.8%) of residents with post school qualifications. For people living in Adelaide, the most common occupations were professionals (39.1%) and managers (13.1%), both of which were greater than the respective national rates. In 2013, Adelaide had a property crime offence rate of 218.3 per 1,000 population, reflecting the large extent to which the city centre is used for entertainment and work purposes.

City of Unley

The City of Unley covers 1,427 hectares immediately south of the city centre and includes the suburbs of Parkside, Goodwood, Wayville, Myrtle Bank, Fullarton and Unley. Its population is more than 39,000 people, making it one of the most densely populated local government areas in South Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics

[ABS] 2016). The City of Unley has a median age of 39.5, more than two years higher than the national median. In March 2016, Unley had an unemployment rate was 4.9%, the lowest in this study, and its median weekly household income was the highest in this study at $1,428. Census data shows that, in 2011, more than a half of Unley's population were employed either as professionals (38.1%) or managers (14.6%), compared with national rates of 21.3% and 12.9% respectively. The largest percentages of people were employed in the healthcare and social assistance industry (16.2%). Different parts of Unley have been characterised as 'middle-class suburbia' and as a gentrified 'latte-set' locality (Baum, O'Connor & Stimson 2005). It includes three main shopping, dining and entertainment streets, Goodwood Road, King William Road and Unley Road. Parts of the council are based on grid street patterns that are pedestrian-oriented environments with relatively high density and accessibility (Soltani & Allan 2004). Furthermore, the co-existence of commercial establishments and housing in suburbs within Unley promotes 'local trips' and reduces the need for residents to drive (Soltani & Allan 2004).

Mount Barker District Council

Mount Barker District Council is situated on 59,000 hectares in the Mount Lofty Ranges, about 33 kilometres south-east of the city centre. Settled in the mid-nineteenth century, it comprises farming land and several mostly historic townships. It has a population of almost 33,000 people and a median age of 38.6 years, about a year less than the national median. Mount Barker is a rapidly growing 'treechange commuter town', known as such because of the high proportion of residents travelling to central Adelaide to work (Salt 2012). As transport links have improved, more people have begun commuting to the city, and the district has been absorbed within 'Greater Adelaide' (Salt 2013). Despite improved connections with metropolitan Adelaide, unemployment in Mount Barker in March 2016 was relatively high at 8.6%. But its property crime offence rate of 27.7 per 1,000 population in 2013 was the lowest in

this study.

To summarise this section, the six research sites are diverse in terms of their location, size, socio-demographic profile and approaches to graffiti removal. I have sketched a picture of these areas to help orient the discussion about aspects of graffiti writing and erasure later in the thesis. Where they are relevant, I will draw out major differences between areas. I will also show that, despite this heterogeneity across the local government areas, graffiti removers residing in all areas had similar attitudes, motivations, graffiti removal practices, desires and techniques of identity management. These reflected ideas of proper/improper places, cleanliness/pollution and order/disorder that had been inculcated in them over their lives. As I will demonstrate next, graffiti removers also showed relative homogeneity in the ways they selected the spaces where they removed graffiti.

Graffiti removal spots

Across all of the local government areas described above, graffiti removers did not have the resources or the desire to remove every instance of graffiti. As one interviewee put it, graffiti was 'never-ending … they just keep doing it'. Thus, graffiti removers selected and prioritised the spaces where they erased graffiti. One important consideration was the design and morphology of an urban or suburban area. Some volunteers working in the cities of Unley and Marion defined the areas where they removed graffiti according to particular boundary streets. Others who participated in Unley and Marion's programs worked only in specific places, such as a local park or a shared pedestrian and cyclist path. For both groups, the spaces where they removed graffiti were often the streets, paths, parks and railway corridors along which they would routinely walk, drive, ride their bicycles or catch public transport. The boundaries of these areas were not always fixed, but sometimes shifted over time, according to how land was used and on the basis of the extent of

graffiti.

For graffiti removers who worked in the cities of Salisbury and Charles Sturt, the boundaries of the council area delimited their work space. The priority for volunteers in these council areas was to respond to reports of graffiti. However, many of these volunteers also talked about removing graffiti from sites that they or their networks of family and friends had noticed in their everyday lives. For example, when asked how he chose the areas he and his colleagues targeted, City of Salisbury graffiti remover Gerald said:

> *Mainly if we see something during the week … I've [also] got family*
> *... and friends from Burton to Elizabeth up to Pooraka … plus doing*
> *the home support [service] I've got a fairly large area that I cover so I*
> *notice things as I'm driving the bus for that.*
> *Interviewer: … and do you take a log or just remember it?*
> *Gerald: Just remember. Something that really stands out, and you*
> *think, 'oh, that needs doing'.*

For this volunteer, graffiti that 'stands out' for people engaged in such routine legal activities as driving a bus is likely to be noticed and removed, echoing the logic of 'routine activity' theory (Cohen & Felson 1979). This theory would suggest that the writing of illegal graffiti feeds on the visibility afforded to graffiti by legal activities, such as commuting by car, train or bus. The spatial organisation of the daily activities of graffiti removers (such as driving a bus or walking the dog) were significant in the locations they saw and chose to remove graffiti. However, the temporal structure of their activities meant that they rarely saw people doing graffiti. In their daily 'rhythms', graffiti removers passed through public spaces in daylight hours, contrasting with what they noted were the night-time rhythms of graffiti writers.

Interviewees also talked about inferring from what they saw – and from their accumulated knowledge of graffiti - the likelihood that an instance of graffiti was illegal, whereby removal could be justified. For example, graffiti tags are seldom authorised

and thus graffiti removers often inferred they could paint over them or wipe them off without seeking the authority of council supervisors or property owners. The il/legality of other forms of graffiti, such as pieces and street art, was less clear cut. This emerged as a particular problem within Adelaide City Council, where Adelaide's street art is concentrated. For example, in 2012 an Adelaide City Council graffiti removal team erased a 'mural' from a city footpath a day after it had been painted by six artists commissioned by the same council (Cain 2012). In an interview for this study, Adelaide City Council worker Harry described how he had felt about the experience:

> *It was a shame because that was really good work ... That one was a bit of a touchy one ... I was the first one to spot it and ... it was fantastic stuff but we just weren't made aware of it being a program.*

Harry's comments suggest a tension between his job expectations to remove (unauthorised) graffiti/street art and his appreciation for the mural. McAuliffe (2012) has written that some city agencies in Australia have given graffiti and street art a dual valuation as both transgressive and a productive creative practice, producing profound ambivalences for graffiti writers. This ambivalence 'blurs the moral boundaries of creative practice' (McAuliffe 2012, p. 203). The story above shows how graffiti removers can also work within and across boundaries of moral geography. Municipal authorities grant their paid workers and volunteers discretionary powers to remove illegal graffiti, but they are also expected to recognise and preserve legitimated murals and street art. This blurring of moral boundaries was not as evident in other councils as it was in Adelaide City Council, which may have related to its concentration of street art and its engagement in 'creative city' discourses (McAuliffe 2012).

Hierarchy of values

Chapter Two noted how graffiti writers have aesthetic standards and codes of conduct. As Iveson (2014) writes, the graffiti and street art community has its own

orders and related conflicts, providing evidence of graffiti writing 'counter-publics' in action. This section explores how these graffiti writing 'rules' concerning the 'proper' and 'ímproper' place for graffiti compare with the values that graffiti removers assign to particular places. To measure the value graffiti removers' attached to different spaces, I asked interviewees to rank a list of 12 places and objects in the order in which they would remove graffiti from them (see Appendix B for the full list). The results suggested that a hierarchy of values seemed to guide the way graffiti removers understood different places. Interviewees were most likely to prioritise a war memorial (11 people ranked this as their first priority), church (two people ranked it as their top priority), public sculpture (two people ranked it as their first priority) and cemetery (one person ranked it as his/her first priority). The sites that received the lowest priority were an abandoned building (seven people ranked it as their last priority), skate park (four people ranked it last) and a tree (five people ranked it last). As one interviewee said, the extent to which each person prioritised a particular space may depend on the proximity of their home to such a space. However, I have two points to make about these results.

First, the results showed how the interviewees valued certain spaces – such as a war memorial, church, public sculpture and cemetery - to a similar degree. In this way, the results mirror to some extent how graffiti writers understand locations such as war memorials, residential properties, cemeteries and churches as taboo spots for graffiti (Ferrell 1996; Halsey & Young 2006). For both groups, these taboo surfaces and locations seem to assume a 'sacred' status in Durkheim's sense that they cannot co-exist with anything 'profane' such as graffiti. Most graffiti removers saw no place for the 'dirtiness' of graffiti at sites widely considered sacred. In the words of Douglas (2002, p. 9): 'There is nothing in our rules of cleanness to suggest any connection between dirt and sacredness ... For us sacred things and places are to be protected from defilement.' Interviewees who prioritised the removal of graffiti from war

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memorials said:

> *Patrick, City of Salisbury volunteer: Anything to do with this sort of thing - cemeteries and war memorials - I don't agree ... That's something you've got to have respect for.*

> *Harry, Adelaide City Council paid worker: … they're highly offensive to a lot of people … It will become a public issue and I personally take that as an offence myself … It's really hurtful*

> *Simon, City of Marion volunteer: I think it's disrespectful for them to trash.*

The second point is that the results suggested the graffiti removers tended to interpret abandoned buildings and skate parks as 'profane' spaces, where graffiti writing was more acceptable. Interviewees suggested abandoned buildings were unused and not socially visible:

> *Patrick, City of Salisbury volunteer: Abandoned buildings aren't used anymore. It's just a thing that no people are living near anymore.*

> *Wesley, City of Charles Sturt volunteer: Why would you bother? … It's not in the public eye.*

In relation to skate parks, interviewees said:

> *Colin, City of Salisbury volunteer: You have to accept no matter what the council thinks or feels about it, it's a culture that you have tags all over the place.*

> *Stewart, City of Unley volunteer: I think [removal] would be a waste of time because that's ... the habitat of the graffiti artist so it'd be a total waste of time ... Let them go on there ... They're the people that see it.*

One anomaly was the ranking of trees as a low priority. Several graffiti removers explained they were often reluctant to work on trees because of the damage they feared they could do to them.

From their stories, a picture of 'ideal' sites for graffiti removal emerged. The spots they selected tended to be visible to the public, accessible, and had surfaces that were relatively easy to work upon and were thus 'repairable', such as re-painting Stobie poles (Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2. Stobie pole, City of Charles Sturt

Many of the places interviewees described were also situated on the routes of their everyday activities and had unclear or weakly protected ownership rights. One such space was a vacant allotment adjoining Ocean Boulevard, a busy dog-leg stretch of road in the City of Marion linking Adelaide's south-western suburbs with the southern suburbs. Two Marion volunteers had removed graffiti from this allotment and a third recalled seeing graffiti there. When I visited, the space was deserted and littered with household rubbish. The edge of the allotment was bounded by fences painted with graffiti tags, throw-ups and pieces, some of which had been covered over with patches of paint (Figures 3.3 and 3.4).

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Figure 3.3. Graffiti on an Ocean Boulevard fence, City of Marion

Figure 3.4. Removed graffiti, Ocean Boulevard, City of Marion

This was how one Marion volunteer described the space:

> *Lee: It's an ideal site, set back from the road … so they can paint it at night with very little fear of being detected … The residents pay no attention to it. The ownership of the land is a bit unknown …*
>
> *Interviewer: Ok. And you said it's 'high profile'. What makes it high profile?*
>
> *Lee: … it's visible from Ocean Boulevard, coming down from Hallett Cove … you look straight at it. It really stands out so it's a very attractive road for them.*

Rather than thinking of these visible, accessible and repairable spaces as sacred, they could be described as 'mundane' spaces, in Lynch's (2012, p. 49) sense of the 'mundane logics, practices, emotions, and aesthetics of everyday life'. These were spaces graffiti removers often noticed while they performed their routine activities.

The relations to place of Adelaide graffiti removers

Criminology has explored how people's attachment to a place relates to their experiences and understanding of crime and disorder. Although most interviewees in this study were long-term residents of their communities, some showed stronger material and emotional attachments to where they lived than others. The graffiti removers who showed a stronger attachment to their home community tended to be more likely than those with weaker attachments to condemn graffiti. This attachment to place was evident in the interviewees' length of residence, residential tenure, ties with other people and institutions in their community, participation in other forms of volunteering or community groups, involvement in work to improve the appearance of their locale such as picking up rubbish, and tendency to name their suburb. This was how a City of Marion volunteer, Ian, with a strong attachment to his local suburb talked about the impact of graffiti:

> *I'm pretty proud of the area … we love the area and we don't like to see people … [doing] mindless graffiti on things … When we moved in it would've been pristine … People wouldn't have done anything like that in those days. It was unheard of.*

In this comment, Ian gestures towards a 'golden age' (Pearson 1983) when people had more respect for other people and their property, and when his suburb's built environment was 'pristine'. Some of those who were strongly attached to their home community spoke with particular venom about graffiti on specific surfaces. When asked how he had started removing graffiti, Stewart - an Unley resident aged in his 70s who had lived in his house for more than 10 years - described how he felt about graffiti writers who targeted tram timetables.

> *[I] use the tram quite a bit and it used to really irritate me – the graffiti on the tram stops … particularly when they did the timetables … It really quite offended me.*

Long-time residents with a strong emotional and/or material investment in their local area can be the most emphatic in expressing their concerns about the threat posed by young people behaving disorderly in public (Girling, Loader & Sparks 2000). Girling, Loader and Sparks (2000) suggest this attachment may occur in situations where people feel 'tied' physically to their home or area because of their age or status. For other people, such as the Marion volunteer above, this attachment 'may flow from long-standing residence and an ensuing sense that one's personal biography is deeply entwined with that of one's community' (Girling, Loader & Sparks 2000, p. 83). Girling, Loader and Sparks (2000) describe these situations as 'thick' disorder. By contrast, residents with shorter histories in an area and a relatively light attachment to place – 'where a community of place is neither the only nor the most significant repository of meaning and security for people' – may distance themselves from local disorder (Girling, Loader & Sparks 2000, p. 171). This situation has been termed 'thin' disorder (Girling, Loader & Sparks 2000). This appeared to be the experience for another City of Marion volunteer, Jared, who had lived in his home for less than five years and who spoke about graffiti in more dispassionate terms. In the following discussion, Jared was talking about the impact of graffiti on train timetables and

railway station signs:

> *For somebody who comes in who's new it's a bit of a bother … That's the first thing and [the] second thing [is] I feel that it is a utility for common good. I don't see any reason why somebody should disfigure it … I can understand roads … and walls and things. They're letting off steam and they're sending each other messages.*

This volunteer was sufficiently motivated to remove graffiti from timetables and signs, but his use of language such as 'bit of a bother' contrasts with Stewart, the Unley volunteer, feeling 'really quite offended'. For this group of weakly attached people, place of residence was important, but it did not symbolise the same sense of order, history and purity that it appeared to do so for those more strongly attached to their area. Rather than becoming infuriated by the repetition of graffiti in the same local places, these interviewees often saw it as an opportunity for them to express their autonomy by removing it and expressed hope that its erasure would frustrate those people responsible.

> *Interviewer: How do you … feel when you go to places that … you visit regularly as a graffiti remover and you see that it's been done again?*
>
> *Norman, Mount Barker District Council volunteer: [It is] just part of the process … Over time they'll either run out of money, get caught for stealing the product or grow up ... and we realise that it's a process that these individuals are getting something out of and short of catching them, we'll wear them down.*

Conclusion

The six local government areas in this study's sample have contrasting locations, socio-demographic characteristics and graffiti removal programs. Where it is appropriate in the following chapters, I will refer to differences between these areas that seem to align to themes emerging from the interviewees. But this will not always be possible. Graffiti removers residing in all areas had similar attitudes, motivations, practices, desires and techniques of identity management. These reflected ideas of

proper/improper places, cleanliness/pollution and order/disorder inculcated in these individuals. Thus, a significant finding of this research is that place may not be critical in governing the graffiti remover's view of the value or otherwise of graffiti. Thus, if a person moved from the City of Charles Sturt to Mount Barker District Council he or she may be able to pick up a paint brush and easily integrate into the graffiti removal program of his or her new council.

Whether they removed graffiti from places across their council zone or concentrated on a particular location within their district, the stories of graffiti removers tended to converge around particular kinds of spaces. Many volunteers talked about removing graffiti from public spaces they routinely used, such as roadways, parks, walking and cycling paths, tram and rail corridors and pedestrian tunnels. These were often places close to the home of the graffiti remover, but sometimes also included locations that were some distance away. They prioritised spaces according to a hierarchy of values that privileged sacred places and more mundane locations they routinely encountered.

The locations graffiti removers described are what criminologists and the police might call graffiti 'hot spots' (Sherman et al., 1989). Derived from routine activities theory, a hot spot refers to a place where crime is concentrated as a result of a convergence of events: motivated offenders, suitable targets and a lack of capable guardians. In the context described in this chapter, the locations that graffiti removers targeted might be more accurately thought of as hot spots of graffiti removal as they were places where there was a concentration of graffiti removal. This interpretation does not exclude the same place from being a hot spot of graffiti writing. Indeed, interviewees tended to work in spaces where graffiti was concentrated. However, graffiti can also accumulate in places such as skate parks and within abandoned buildings (where as Chapter One noted 'halls of fame' are sometimes located), both

of which graffiti removers generally did not target.

The removal of graffiti could be read as a form of place-making or 'doing' place. Place-making refers to 'repetitive actions directed at making places of residence', or in some cases here, places of work (Benson & Jackson 2013, p. 794). Benson and Jackson have noted that residential practices instil a sense of belonging and are integral to identification. Theories of the practice of place may provide a useful resource to help understand the stories of graffiti removers. Theories of practice suggest 'places are never complete, finished or bounded but are always becoming – in process' (Cresswell 2002, p. 20). Many of the places the graffiti removers described were neither 'clean' nor 'dirty', 'sacred' nor 'profane', 'public' nor 'private'; they were all of these things. Particular places are unlikely to ever be permanently graffiti free, and neither are they likely to always be graffiti hot spots. Rather, they are in a state of flux. This can be contrasted with the way disorder research has tended to imagine place as bounded residential neighbourhoods in some state of decay (Phillips & Smith 2006). The places described in this study were the province of people writing graffiti and people removing it. Such places could be understood as graffiti 'spots' one night by graffiti writers, remade as 'hot spots' by concerned residents and municipal authorities the following day, and transformed into 'clean' spots by graffiti removers. Thus, places have dominant meanings and uses that municipal authorities, certain residents and the police may develop and maintain, but, in practice, different groups of people understand and put these places to use in different ways.

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[1] A Stobie Pole is a post comprising a steel h-bar and a concrete core that carries overhead cables in South Australia.

4. MOTIVATIONS, PRACTICES AND IDENTITIES OF ADELAIDE GRAFFITI REMOVERS

Introduction

Chapter Three documented spatial aspects of graffiti removal practices in metropolitan Adelaide, showing how voluntary graffiti removers often targeted places that they saw in their everyday lives. This chapter turns its attention to the motivations of Adelaide graffiti removers, the meanings of their work, and how they conceive of their identities. It builds on the socio-demographic information provided in Chapter Three by discussing the ways interviewees accounted for their involvement in graffiti removal, described their experiences of erasing graffiti and managed their identities.

Criminological research has explained the mechanisms by which graffiti removal is believed to reduce or prevent further graffiti (Wilson & Kelling 1982) and documented case studies of effective graffiti removal (Carr, K & Spring 1993; Sloan-Howitt & Kelling 1997). The official reactions and politics surrounding graffiti in different places have also received attention (Cresswell 1992; Ferrell 1996; Kramer 2010a). However, the individuals who remove graffiti and their meanings have been relatively neglected. A small number of studies have investigated aspects of graffiti erasure by way of ethnographic (Schacter 2008) and experimental studies (Taylor, MF, Cordin & Njiru 2010), but they have provided limited insights to the motivations, practices and identities of these individuals. This chapter explores each of these three aspects of graffiti removers in relation to voluntary and paid workers engaged by urban, suburban and peri-urban Adelaide councils.

This study interviewed people in voluntary or paid work for municipal authorities. In Australia, almost one in three (31%) people undertake voluntary work for an organisation (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] 2015). Women are slightly more likely than men to volunteer, and rates of volunteering tend to peak among middle-

aged people (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] 2015). In recent years, organisations that rely on unpaid labour have been confronted with a shrinking pool of volunteers (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] 2015). In the face of declining volunteerism, two important issues for these organisations are to identify what attracts individuals to voluntary work and what facilitates their retention. Against this backdrop, one question this chapter responds to is how voluntary (and paid) graffiti removers talk about their motivations to erase graffiti. It considers how these individuals narrate their entry and ongoing involvement in a line of work that others may consider to be 'dirty work' (Hughes 1958). This chapter takes a critical approach towards the term dirty work, analysing whether graffiti removers understand what they do as tainted and, if so, in which contexts. It also shows how graffiti removers construct their civic identity by 'reframing' meanings of repetitive labour in terms of an effective strategy to reduce graffiti. By doing this, they reinterpret a perceived sense of futility as a source of pride and self-respect.

This chapter is organised with the use of a three-stage model of the volunteering process comprised of antecedents, experiences and consequences (Omoto & Snyder 2002). It starts with a discussion of the pathways interviewees followed into graffiti removal (the antecedents). To obtain information about their entry to this work, I asked interviewees how they became involved in graffiti removal. The three main trajectories were to be pulled in by life circumstances, pushed by a desire to fight graffiti or attracted by the bounded nature of the work. All interviewees disapproved of at least some forms of graffiti, but their emotional reactions varied with respect to the placement of the graffiti. The next section examines the experiences of graffiti removers, exploring the techniques graffiti removers employ and their practical knowledge. This section also notes the emergence of the themes of caring and cleaning, and it draws on the concepts of dirty work and edgework to analyse some of the study's findings. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the identity of

graffiti removers, developing the dirty work concept by illustrating its contextual nature. As the sample for this study included volunteers and paid workers, this chapter makes distinctions between these two groups, where they applied, for each of the three stages identified.

Pathways into graffiti removal

The entry of the 23 interviewees into graffiti removal centred on three themes. The first theme was life circumstances, such as a milestone event, that served to push older individuals into voluntary work. The second narrative revolved around a desire to reduce and prevent graffiti in a particular geographic area. The final narrative emphasised the appeal of the bounded nature of graffiti removal work. In the following section, these themes are analysed in relation to the dimensions of commitment and autonomy.

Life circumstances

Chapter Three documented how changes in Australia's economy had severely impacted the structure of Adelaide's industry and its employment levels. It also noted the effect of these changes on particular geographic areas and age groups. These issues were reflected in interviews with one group of graffiti removers who, when asked how they had become involved in graffiti removal, talked about the role of life circumstances. These six individuals - all volunteers aged over 50 years - described entering graffiti removal following a milestone life event, such as the loss of a permanent job. Patrick, a Salisbury volunteer who had worked in the manufacturing industry until his employer 'just ran out of work', was asked how he had commenced graffiti removal. He replied: 'Mainly because I lost my job.' He said that at his age, 'no one wants to sort of look at you'. Some interviewees in this group had seen a newspaper advertisement seeking participants for graffiti removal programs, whereas others had enquired with their local council about volunteering opportunities. These

volunteers tended to commit one or two days a week to graffiti removal, up to six hours at a time. For these individuals, voluntary work provided 'something to do', as one put it. The removal of graffiti also enabled them to be outdoors and 'active' but also 'relaxed' and engaged in 'hands-on' work valued by the community. Additionally, for some of these interviewees, graffiti removal fulfilled a desire to volunteer.

Four of these six volunteers were involved in municipal graffiti removal programs providing lower levels of autonomy to their participants than other programs. These were relatively structured council programs that organised teams of volunteers to remove graffiti on particular days, responding to complaints as a priority. One such Charles Sturt volunteer, Con, who was aged in his 50s and removed graffiti during gaps in paid employment, described how his team typically operated:

> *We do have a regimented schedule, sorry, a list of job programs that we have to do … They're all sequenced. These are actually reported by the community … and we respond as a member of the council's graffiti team to remove those community-reported responses first … then secondly if we have time we can deal with the ... well, for example, if we go to an area where a particular offence has been reported ... and that may be a small tag on a Stobie pole ... there may be six Stobie poles around the area …. and it would take five minutes so we do those while we're at that location ... dealing with the reported offence.*

Responding to the problem of graffiti

Research in Australia and elsewhere suggests people are often irritated by the sight of graffiti in their residential area (Dovey, Wollan & Woodcock 2012; Innes 2004). Graffiti has a high 'signal value' that can increase its visibility to the public and send warnings about the levels of risk people actually or potentially face (Innes 2004; Slovic 1992, 2000). For a second group of interviewees in this study, their entry to graffiti removal work was described in terms of an aversion to graffiti and a desire to erase it. This group of 13 interviewees talked about beginning graffiti removal as a response to a problem that violated aesthetic values and property rights. When asked how they

had become involved in graffiti removal, these individuals responded:

> *Howard, City of Marion volunteer: Where I lived at that time there seemed to be a lot of graffiti and whilst I had removed bits and pieces from around my own property I got sick of seeing it elsewhere.*

> *Genevieve, City of Marion volunteer: [Graffiti] was absolutely all over the place … and I just hated the look of it.*

> *Luke, City of Unley volunteer: We thought: 'Well, Unley council's been really good to us ... and we don't want graffiti everywhere ... and it's such a lovely public space' so we volunteered.*

This final volunteer describes how a sense of reciprocity with the council partly motivated his wife and him to begin graffiti removal. This norm of reciprocity and other characteristics of social capital, such as social networks and efficacy, were among the resources these interviewees drew upon to enter graffiti removal.

The anti-graffiti narrative evident in these accounts seemed to be implicitly tied to disorder theories, particularly the 'broken windows' concept. Chapter Two outlined how the broken windows thesis suggests graffiti is a form of disorder, which, if left untouched, signals that 'no one cares', stimulates more disorder and, eventually, invites serious offenders into an area. Several interviewees discussed the idea that graffiti was a sign of a lack of care for property.

> *Interviewer: What impact do you think graffiti has on places? Like when you see it on that fence on Raglan Avenue, for example, what impact does it have there?*
> *Genevieve, City of Marion volunteer: I think it makes our area look untidy, unkempt … nobody cares … It's about impression … It's all negative.*

> *Interviewer: You were talking about … the graffiti near the Patawalonga River. What sort of impact do you think the graffiti there has on that place?*
> *Kieran, City of Marion volunteer: .. It degrades the place, doesn't it? … And I wouldn't like to live there if every post or Stobie pole has got*

some rubbish all over it.

Interviewer: … Tell me more about what you mean by degrading.

Kieran: Well, it shows that people don't care.

Stewart, City of Unley volunteer: There was a couple of people that used to make some effort to do their fences but the vast majority they obviously couldn't care less … They've never even looked as far as I can tell.

Interviewer: ... Do you have any reasons for why they might feel like that?

Stewart: Well, I suppose you see it everywhere, don't you? Fences and whatever. And I suppose they can't see it from their place ...so maybe they can just ignore it.

Some interviewees also talked about the links between graffiti and other more serious criminal offences and anti-social behaviour. Roland, a City of Marion volunteer, recounted a story about a local park to illustrate how graffiti was connected to other undesirable behaviour:

When I first started the graffiti … I used to clean up the park and they used to come back and tag it right away in large groups to the point where the groups then started collecting ducklings and frying them alive on barbecues there for sport. Also other dead animals I'd find in the park. And it was abhorrent some of the things these people were doing. But I noticed as I started cleaning the graffiti and getting really stuck into it that gradually the gangs would not congregate down there. So every time I'd even see one tag, I'd race down there, take that one tag off and do you know now, we understand there's a group of maybe four young teenagers that go there now and again who are known as troublemakers. That's all.

All volunteers from the City of Unley and most from the City of Marion accounted for their involvement at least partly in terms of a desire to fight graffiti. The graffiti removal programs of these two councils can be differentiated from those of the other councils on the basis of their flexibility, directness and commitment. These programs were flexible because volunteers had the autonomy to manage the spatial and temporal dimensions of the work. One Unley volunteer, Oliver, contrasted graffiti removal with voluntarily driving a community bus:

65

I can do it in my own time … rather than drive the bus … I could drive the bus. I've got a heavy licence … but … it's a bit too fixed.

The Unley and Marion programs provided a direct means of dealing with graffiti by enabling volunteers to remove graffiti as they noticed it in their everyday lives, rather than assembling at a council depot on a fixed day to respond to graffiti attacks. This directness meant that these volunteers generated much of their work themselves, as opposed to volunteers and paid workers with the other Adelaide councils who responded to resident or ratepayer complaints as a priority. The levels of commitment of participants in the Unley and Marion programs were at the discretion of the individual and varied quite substantially.

Bounded volunteering

Another two interviewees discussed the appeal of the bounded nature of graffiti removal. Gerald, a Salisbury volunteer who removed graffiti one day a week, contrasted this level of commitment with 'volunteering six days a week … doing 50, 60 hours a week' while he established 'op shops' as a revenue source for a local hospital. This volunteer participated in Salisbury's structured graffiti removal program, whereas the other volunteer who was attracted to bounded volunteering participated in Marion's more flexible program. Carr (2005) has argued that the bounded nature of some contemporary forms of civic participation is attractive for many people, in contrast with a more ongoing form of commitment such as supervising local young people. This 'new parochialism' is attractive in part because it can fit into the hectic schedules of those who do it (Carr, P 2005).

Although it was not a part of their narrative about entering graffiti removal, other interviewees also discussed the ways they engaged in bounded civic participation. Some talked about it in the context of a desire to work within their borders of their 'patch' and an unwillingness to take on anything 'too onerous'. For example, Luke, an Unley volunteer noted:

The Unley Shopping Centre is graffitied enormously and ... we would double our work if we did that … so we don't.

The two paid Adelaide City Council employees had both filled vacancies that became available when the council expanded its graffiti removal operations. One worker said he had gained experience running a cleaning contract for the council, 'did a few odd jobs and just ended up in graffiti removal'. His story suggested his work history had made him suitable for the position, and that he had shown a relatively low level of autonomy to get the role. The other worker's entry to graffiti removal suggested a greater level of autonomy. She recounted: 'I started in different departments … and then they wanted to make two [graffiti removal] teams so I actually put my hand up … and got put into it.'

Annoyance, fury and ambivalence

Graffiti removers thus narrated their entry to graffiti removal in distinct ways. Whichever route they had taken, all interviewees had a distaste for at least some forms of graffiti in particular places. Many expressed their aversion by saying they were annoyed, irritated or bothered by graffiti. According to social psychologists, these emotional responses are comparatively low intensity forms of anger (Scherer, Wallbot & Summerfield 1986). Although commonly experienced in everyday life, annoyance has been neglected in contrast to research concerned with more intense variations of anger (Gordon 1990). Environmental health studies have explored the antecedents to annoyance and its measurement, defining it as 'a feeling of displeasure' (Lindvall 1973). In addition to displeasure, feelings of annoyance can emerge when experiences are unpredictable, and when there is certainty they will end but uncertainty as to when (Palca & Lichtman 2011). All graffiti removers interviewed understood at least some forms of graffiti to be unpleasant, and some seemed to have developed a 'social allergy', a hypersensitive disgust or annoyance, towards graffiti (Cunningham, Barbee & Druen 1997).

Some interviewees were particularly annoyed by graffiti on certain objects, such as trees, and tram and bus stops. When graffiti removers encountered or thought about graffiti on sacred spaces such as war memorials, they described more intense feelings of anger, such as outrage and fury. However, several interviewees annoyed and infuriated by graffiti were also ambivalent towards it, as this exchange with a Marion volunteer shows:

> *Interviewer: When you saw graffiti on the sign at the Hallett Cove station … a few weeks ago how did it make you feel?*
>
> *Jared: … I don't feel anything at all. I just feel maybe a little disturbed that … all these amenities and facilities … [when] somebody disturbs it I feel: 'okay, I can't stop him or her but I can definitely undo the damage so that people can continue to use things that I can.' … [It] didn't bother me much.*

This volunteer notes how graffiti disturbed him a little but, at the same time, did not bother him. In part, this ambivalence may be accounted for in terms of the empowerment interviewees reported when they removed graffiti, a feeling that seemed to be important to help them manage their emotional responses to graffiti. Unlike other residents and business owners who failed to remove graffiti from their property, these interviewees did not see themselves as having the blasé metropolitan attitude that Simmel identified. Graffiti removers may have become accustomed to graffiti, but its appearance still caught their attention and motivated them to do something about it.

Practices and practical knowledge of graffiti removers

Techniques

Adelaide graffiti removers generally used two techniques to erase graffiti: removal or painting over. To remove graffiti, volunteers and paid workers normally applied agents such as chemical solvents to the affected surface with brushes or 'wipes', and washed

the substance off with water. This method tended to be used to erase graffiti from particular surfaces, such as road signs. In addition to this form of chemical removal, paid graffiti removers used high-pressure 'washing' to erase graffiti. Others said they had used a scraper, sandpaper and a knife in an effort to remove graffiti.

The second method of erasure - painting over graffiti - was done with a paint brush, roller or spray can, often on painted or other non-porous surfaces. Graffiti removers also used this method for other types of surfaces where the graffiti was considered too large for removal agents. When painting over graffiti, interviewees tended to select a paint colour similar to that of the targeted surface - a technique they described as colour 'matching'. It was also common for individuals to choose a colour that was generally used to cover graffiti on a particular object, such as grey paint for Stobie poles. Some interviewees said if a matching colour was not available, they painted a larger section of a targeted fence or wall to reduce the likelihood their work would 'stand out', as one volunteer put it. Interviewees described learning how to remove graffiti through council-provided training, manuals and other paid and voluntary workers.

Graffiti removers contrasted techniques such as colour matching and painting sections with unacceptable forms of graffiti removal, such as a paint-over that produced an obvious 'patch' (Figure 4.1), 'block' or 'frame'.[1] Some were also critical of 'stains', 'smudges' (Figure 4.2) or 'shadowing', which one interviewee explained meant that 'the tag's gone … but if you look you can still see … the background there'. One interviewee also said he hated seeing graffiti that had been traced over with paint (Figure 4.3). Thus, a 'bad' removal was often one that was visible.

Figure 4.1. A patch, City of Charles Sturt

Figure 4.2. A graffiti piece and a paint smudge, City of Charles Sturt

Several interviewees also noted how these techniques of removal looked 'messy', the same way some described the appearance of graffiti tags. In this way, interviewees linked certain forms of graffiti removal to graffiti itself. For example, an Unley volunteer, Callie, said:

> *When … we had just the wipe stuff … and you got through to the fourth layer of stuff it looked dirty at the end of it … and I thought: 'Is this an improvement on what was there?'*

The 'reflexive' approach to graffiti suggested by this volunteer was different to the 'no-tolerance' approach taken by other interviewees, who interpreted all graffiti as unacceptable and any type of graffiti removal as a preferable alternative. One of these no-tolerance volunteers said: 'It's better that there's a patch of a slightly different colour than the actual graffiti itself.'

For the more reflexive interviewees, descriptions of unacceptable graffiti removal emerged in the context of questions about 'good' graffiti removal work.

> *Interviewer: When you do paint graffiti out what are signs that you've done a good job?*
>
> *Lee, City of Marion volunteer: Really it's got to look as though it was never there to start with … For example, I'll never patch it … If they've put a piece on a fence I paint the entire fence … I hate it when people just trace over the bloody … paint lines and the cover up is worse than what was there to start with so that's ridiculous.*

Figure 4.3. Graffiti that has been traced over, City of Marion

Thus, a 'good' removal was one that if 'you're walking past you wouldn't even notice', as another interviewee put it, and this often required skill, practical knowledge, creativity and care. The care for the urban environment that was evident in the stories of many graffiti removers could be seen to distinguish these individuals from the property owners who showed a lack of care by not erasing graffiti. Their level of care could also be understood as contrary to what interviewees perceived was the disrespect graffiti writers showed towards property. But, as Iveson (2015) has argued, graffiti writers can care a great deal about the urban environment, bringing 'dead zones' to life and adhering to rules about which surfaces are off-limits and which ones are fair game.[2]

A Salisbury volunteer, Colin, exemplified this sense of care and respect for the built environment when he detailed how he and another volunteer spent a total of nine hours erasing graffiti from an interpretive sign at a local park:

> *We had our chairs, sitting down painting ... We painted that black and then the easiest way [is to] get a brush … and then [you] get a foam roller and just do it lightly. You don't go into the hole ... and it comes up good.*

On occasions, graffiti removers unintentionally selected the 'wrong' colour or erased something the council had approved. For some, these decisions led to feelings of irritation or regret, as this Charles Sturt volunteer recounted:

> *Con: I was convinced [Member of State Parliament] Michael Atkinson's front wall of his office on Port Rd … was beige and it's not.*
>
> *Interviewer: Right. You were convinced by another volunteer?*
>
> *Con: (Nods head). And they painted it beige and it's not beige.*
>
> *Interviewer: ... Has that been remedied or is it…?*
>
> *Con: No ... It irks me because every time I drive past it I can see it's the wrong colour.*

This comment helps to show how the threshold between acceptable and unacceptable graffiti removal was not fixed, but fluid and contextual, varying between different graffiti removers and different spaces and over time. For some removers, limits of acceptability differed according to the spatial and temporal context. A Marion volunteer, Mervyn, contrasted how he painted over graffiti on the side of a particular fence that was visible to motorists on a major road, with the way that he 'just put stripes' through graffiti on the back of the same fence. This was a technique Mervyn had also used elsewhere:

> *That discourages them … they hate that … I was doing some down at Edwardstown. That's the bad place there because it's half industrial and … it's all over the place. That's where you do feel a bit fearful … because it's industrial. You don't know who's who … I was doing this wall and these cops, obviously graffiti squad, young blokes … in an unmarked police car … they saw me and asked … what I was doing and I had my yellow vest on, 'What do you think I'm doing?' (Laughs) … [A]nd he said, 'Well, you put stripes down it.'*

Places such as industrial areas may be thought of as what Tuan (1977) describes as 'back space'. These are spaces that are dark, profane, cannot be seen and, in the

modern city, are partly a product of the direction and volume of traffic flow. Tuan

contrasts back space with 'frontal space', which is primarily visual and 'illuminated'

because it can be seen.

Cleaning

Most voluntary and paid graffiti removers talked about whichever technique they

used as a form of 'cleaning'. For some interviewees, cleanliness had aesthetic and

moral connotations, ascribing positive meanings to their work. For example, an

Adelaide City Council paid graffiti remover said: 'we really have cleaned Adelaide up

… It's good.' The moral implications of cleanliness were expressed by another

Salisbury volunteer when he described the removal of graffiti in these terms: 'I think

it's good. I think it gives us something to do as well. It makes you feel important. And

it's helping the community isn't it? By cleaning the place up.'

Some interviewees also noted the paradox that cleanliness could promote more

graffiti. This point was made by a Marion volunteer, Roland, who erased graffiti at

local parks.

> *Because I clean it off, they come back and they have this attitude of*
> *tagging specifically the areas I've cleaned off. You might have a*
> *whole fence and you might have an area that's been freshly painted*
> *to remove a tag. They'll leave the rest of the fence and do that fresh*
> *area because they know I did it.*

However, the same volunteer said, with persistence, his erasure of graffiti

discouraged further graffiti and other undesirable behaviour.

> *Once the graffiti goes it looks like either the attitude goes or the*
> *people with the attitude go so that's another important thing about*
> *cleaning graffiti: it's a … clandestine way of confronting hooliganism.*

The dirtiness that this discourse imputes to graffiti is consistent with scholarly

conceptualisations of illegal graffiti as a form of 'dirt' in the sense that it is 'matter out

of place' (Cresswell 1992; Stewart, S 1991). This concept draws on the writing of

Douglas (2002), who also emphasized that the cleaning of dirt was a positive effort to re-order the environment and make it conform to an idea. For most volunteer and paid removers, graffiti removal was a positive experience, producing feelings of pleasure, satisfaction and pride.

> *Interviewer: When you removed the graffiti this morning from Findon, how did you feel after you'd finished this work?*
>
> *Wesley, City of Charles Sturt volunteer: (I) feel good because it's gone.*

> *Con, City of Charles Sturt volunteer: I personally get great pleasure in getting the tag off without damaging the surface underneath.*

> *Colin, City of Salisbury volunteer: We knew about Kaurna Park … Sometimes you have a little bit extra pride what you do up there.*
>
> *Interviewer: … What makes you have that extra pride?*
>
> *Colin: When you see the finished product from some of this crap out there … It's hard to explain. But it makes you feel good.*

Graffiti removers attributed these pleasurable feelings to factors such as the recognition they received from others, the very act of erasure and the ensuing restoration of a surface's appearance, their perceived effectiveness, and their autonomy. Such positive feelings may account for how these individuals had stayed in graffiti removal. They are also similar to the pleasurable sensations graffiti writers describe when narrating their experiences (Halsey & Young 2006), again reflecting the isomorphism between graffiti removers and writers. Several interviewees also talked about the more altruistic effects their work had on other individuals and the community. These findings are consistent with data showing that personal satisfaction and helping are two of the most common reasons Australians volunteer (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] 2015).

Dirty work

Thinking of graffiti as dirt connects people who remove it with those in other occupation groups engaged in forms of dirty work (Hughes 1958). Conceptualised by Hughes in the 1950s, dirty work refers to tasks and occupations likely to be viewed as disgusting or degrading (Ashforth & Kreiner 1999). Later developments of the concept have emphasized that dirty work is frequently viewed by societies as necessary but also, in Douglas's terms, polluting and thus threatening to the moral order:

> *Although people may applaud certain dirty work as noble … they generally remain psychologically and behaviorally distanced from that work and those who do it, glad that it is someone else. (Ashforth & Kreiner 1999, p. 416)*

According to Hughes (1958, pp. 49-50), work may be dirty in three different but interconnected ways: 'It may be simply physically disgusting. It may be a symbol of degradation, something that wounds one's dignity. Finally, it may be dirty work in that it in some way goes counter to the more heroic of our moral conceptions.' Thus, dirty work may be physically, socially and/or morally tainted (Ashforth & Kreiner 1999; Hughes 1958). At a physical level, graffiti removal can leave paint splatters on the clothing, bodies and vehicles of those who perform the work. Graffiti removal is also physically tainted by its repetitiveness, both in terms of the number of times graffiti removers paint over graffiti at the same spots, and the time they spend covering tags written by the same graffiti writers. As Charles Sturt volunteer Con put it:

> *We have five days a week, crews of four men and women … going out every day, every reasonable day during the year …covering over the same stuff … constantly, never-ending.*

This 'never-ending' aspect of graffiti removal might suggest the 'war' on graffiti is more accurately understood as an ongoing series of battles or games between writer and eraser. According to some graffiti removers, the never-ending nature of work had led

them to be asked by those not involved in removal: 'why do you bother?'

References to the repetitious nature of graffiti removal often emerged in discussions about the effectiveness of erasure as a strategy to deter further graffiti. For example, a Marion volunteer, Lee, described his efforts to prevent graffiti on the Ocean Boulevard fence described in Chapter Three:

> *I was down there consistently and then it would stretch out to being a month, and then it would stretch out to being six months and then it would stretch out to being a year … and it would be untouched.*

Interviewees believed the rapid and repeated removal of graffiti frustrated the perpetrators. To use the language of situational crime prevention, rapid removal was thought to deny the benefits graffiti writers gained from seeing their work on public display (Sloan-Howitt & Kelling 1997). As noted above, interviewees cited this sense of effectiveness as one of the reasons they experienced pleasure. Thus, graffiti removers reinterpreted what outsiders perceived as futility as a source of pride and self-respect. By doing this, they 'reframed' one of the dirty aspects tainting their work and 'infused' it with a positive meaning (Ashforth & Kreiner 1999).

Some interviewees also noted the 'social taint' of graffiti removal that emerged from its association with stigmatized graffiti writers (Ashforth & Kreiner 1999; Hughes 1958). A Marion volunteer, Roland, recounted how another resident had once seen him removing graffiti from a fence at a local park and asked him: 'What have you done? … Have you done something wrong? Or your son? … Why would you be cleaning off the graffiti?' According to Roland, the resident had thought he might be under a court order to perform community service:

> *It turns out this bloke … thought that people that put the graffiti on these fences are basically a criminal element … and anyone cleaning it off would be the same.*

For some graffiti removers, the association of graffiti removal with graffiti writers also

increased the perceived risk of performing the work, reinforcing its tainted status. Although most interviewees said the sight of graffiti did not make them fearful, many had concerns about the reprisals they could face after they removed graffiti, as Howard, a Marion volunteer, made clear:

> *Volunteers ... have said to me over these six years or so: 'I gave it up because I got a couple of threats.' Don't know if they ever would've been followed through ... but they distressed the person and they thought: 'Well, why take that risk - a brick through the window?'*

These concerns mirror the fear of reprisal Carr (2005) documented among residents of a Chicago neighbourhood. In Carr's study, residents sought a more secure activism than the personal intervention that informal social control has historically entailed. Similarly, volunteer graffiti removers in this study had chosen to erase graffiti in their neighbourhood rather than taking what was perceived to be the more dangerous action of confronting graffiti writers.

In the face of these threatening aspects of graffiti removal, some interviewees identified a sense of control they held over their working environment, which served to minimise the threat. As Howard, the Marion volunteer quoted above, went on to say:

> *I keep myself out of harm's way by avoiding being seen as much as possible and I don't really feel under any great threat.*

Howard describes how the skill of staying out of sight enabled him to maintain control over his work environment. He did this by selecting the times he removed graffiti so as to reduce the likelihood of any encounters with graffiti writers. These strategies bear similarities with the ways people participate in 'edgework' (Lyng 1990). Edgework refers to voluntary risk-taking activities that 'involve a clearly observable threat to one's physical or mental well-being or one's sense of an ordered existence' (Lyng 1990, p. 857). It includes activities such as skydiving (Lyng 1990), rescue work

(Lois 2005), delinquency (Miller 2005) and graffiti writing (Ferrell 1996).

The removal of graffiti may not have obvious parallels with these pursuits, but, as noted above, some interviewees believed their intervention in an illegal activity put them at some risk. To minimise this risk, these interviewees managed their work to keep 'out of harm's way'. These techniques resemble the way that edgeworkers use specific individual capacities and place an emphasis on skilled performance. People who engage in edgework also experience self-realisation, self-actualization, emotions of fear, exhilaration and omnipotence and alterations in perception and consciousness – a hyperawareness (Lyng 1990). For Lyng (2005, p. 5), edgework is a 'response to the over-determined character of modern social life'. The ways in which graffiti removers narrate the riskier aspects of their work may reflect how fighting crime and providing community support can be understood as a 'carnival of doing good' (Fishwick & Mak 2015). As one graffiti removal volunteer put it: 'I get a great buzz out of it … and I enjoy covering over … some little shit's bloody vandalism.'

Developing an identity as a graffiti remover

Adelaide graffiti removers generally saw themselves as civically engaged through their erasure of a form of 'dirt' from their communities. However, the ways they described the status of their work were also pluralistic and context specific. Recent research has shown how the concept of dirty work is fluid and how its social and cultural meanings can vary in different contexts (Dick 2005; Simpson et al. 2012). As Dick (2005: 1368) writes: 'Dirt, whether physical or moral, is essentially a matter of perspective, not empirics.' This fluidity can be important in how these 'dirty workers' define their identities.

For graffiti removers, demographic characteristics helped to define the contexts in which their work was understood as tainted. Many interviewees talked about the gratitude they received from other 'local residents', contributing to their sense of

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satisfaction and building their identities as civically-engaged individuals.

> *On Maude St there'd been a graffiti on a Stobie pole before the program started and we were doing the Stobie pole and the people who lived right there … were so pleased … They said: 'Oh. You're taking that off. That's annoyed us. That's been there for years'… so that response is good. (Luke, City of Unley volunteer)*

> *People show me through the Marion council or others that they care for me. I've had a few people stop and say, 'Hey, thanks a lot for doing that … It's a dirty damn job, but you know to see someone like you doing it is really good.' So those things make a big difference for me. (Roland, City of Marion volunteer)*

The attachment of such positive meanings to graffiti removal sometimes appeared to be linked to questions of gender and age. For example, a male Salisbury volunteer, Patrick, recounted two separate occasions where female residents had expressed their pleasure in response to the removal of graffiti from their properties. He said each resident had been so grateful, they had offered nominal financial rewards to him and the other volunteers, which they had declined. In these stories, people interpreted graffiti removal as a civil and neighbourly act, rather than dirty work.

However, within the context of an individual's family, graffiti removal was sometimes viewed in disapproving terms. One City of Unley graffiti remover said his wife would get annoyed when he went out to paint over graffiti as she felt it took too much of her husband's time and could attract vandalism to their own house. Another interviewee, a female who removed graffiti with her husband in the City of Unley, also expressed concern about the effect graffiti removal had on aspects of her life:

> *Callie: One of the problems that's come from this is I'm mostly the driver … and I'm driving along watching the traffic and [my husband] is going: 'There's graffiti there' … and I think: 'Oh, for goodness sakes. Stop … (laughs). Don't find anymore' (laughs).*
> *Interviewer: … So it tends to stick out for him now?*
> *Callie: Yes … and it does for me too … but not when I'm driving.*

For these individuals, graffiti and its removal had encroached on elements of their

personal lives and, as such, illuminated the boundaries of moral and social orders marking out the 'appropriateness and "correctness" of social action and practice' (Dick 2005, p. 1368). This is not to suggest the families of all graffiti removers perceived their work in disapproving terms; several interviewees said their families encouraged their work by routinely informing them of new local tags. But it helps to illustrate the contextual nature of perceptions of graffiti removal work.

Age also played a role in responses to graffiti removal. Several interviewees had received threats and abuse, many from young people they presumed were graffiti writers. A Marion volunteer, Roland, said four members of a graffiti 'crew' in school uniforms 'went past in a car one day and threatened to kill me'. Such a response could be interpreted as revealing the dangerous aspects of graffiti removal, underlining its status as dirty work. This was the view of Roland's wife, who had expressed concerns to her husband that he could be attacked by graffiti gangs.

Other interviewees' stories suggested that although not all young people were as threatening towards graffiti removers, this demographic group often viewed graffiti removal as dirty work. For example, one Marion volunteer, Kieran, told how a boy aged about 15 years had approached him while he worked and asked whether he was paid to remove graffiti.

> I said: 'No.' He says: 'Oh, I was going to apply for it.' He reckons he's applied for every type of job … and he couldn't get a job.

.In this instance, the boy was not abusive towards the volunteer, but he suggested graffiti removal may have been last type of job for which he would apply. It appeared to be a form of dirty work he was not particularly willing to do himself.

Conclusion

Interviewees accounted for their involvement in graffiti removal in one of three main

ways. The first explanation related predominantly to life circumstances. This explanation tended to be drawn on by men aged over 50, a group disproportionately impacted by the 'turbulent times' South Australia has endured in recent years (Spoehr, 2013). The second explanation revolved around an aversion to graffiti and a desire to eliminate it. This pathway was more commonly mentioned by individuals from particular geographic areas, some of whom were enabled by their stocks of social capital. For other interviewees, the bounded nature of graffiti removal programs was appealing. Regardless of how they entered the work, all interviewees described their displeasure towards at least some forms of graffiti in particular places.

Most interviewees talked about the removal and painting over of graffiti. For many, graffiti removal produced feelings of pleasure and satisfaction, which they attributed to recognition they received from others, the very act of erasure and the ensuing restoration of a surface's appearance, their perceived effectiveness and their autonomy. Interviewees tended to believe the extent of graffiti in the areas where they removed it had been reduced, often through strategies of rapid and persistent removal. Yet these success stories were tempered by acknowledgement from some that the erasure of graffiti also provided taggers with a 'clean canvas' to produce more graffiti. Some graffiti removers also experienced physical and social tainting. Their stories of gender and age differences in responses to graffiti removal contribute to earlier research showing the contextual nature of dirty work.

Adelaide graffiti removers generally saw themselves as civically engaged through their erasure of a form of 'dirt' from their communities. By erasing graffiti that other local residents could not be 'bothered with' or did not even notice, graffiti removers were performing work that others resisted. Although the sight of illegal graffiti may irritate and anger many people, only a committed few were prepared to deal with it. Those who did had assumed an identity most of their neighbours had rejected, and

they were acknowledged and respected by many in their communities for doing so. In this sense, they built an identity as ''different', as 'special', as the 'Other'' (Bolton 2005: 171). Both voluntary and paid workers celebrated their erasure of graffiti as 'good' work, even though the physically and socially tainted aspects of graffiti removal conflict with socially structured notions of 'good work' (Ashforth & Kreiner 1999; Bolton 2005). Their role was similar to those of 'real-life superheroes' in the sense they set 'an example for active citizenship, which in turn they hope will challenge individual apathy and promote social cohesion and caring' (Fishwick & Mak 2015, p. 353).

While developing this identity as civically engaged, graffiti removers also maintained a cloak of invisibility. For many, the sign of a good job was that the completed paint-over or removal was undetectable, except perhaps by the graffiti writer. Unlike a stylish and prominent tag, a skilful graffiti removal is unidentifiable. The work of the graffiti remover is also tied to a sense of loss. It can be understood as the 'destruction' of an image (Schacter 2008), a 'powerful metaphor for liberalism's dependence upon forgetting' (Stewart, S 1991: 220). As a consequence, a history of localized styles, techniques and meanings are erased. Moreover, the removal of graffiti suggests that a practice concerned with the identity and existence of graffiti writers is illegible and illegitimate (Young 2005b, p. 71). In Young's words, the tags – or the 'projected selves' - of graffiti writers are erased 'and the labour, pleasure and love that wrote the graffiti is replaced with blank space'. However, as some scholars have noted, this cycle of illicit writing and authorised removal is also a defining feature of graffiti culture (Dovey, Wollan & Woodcock 2012; Schacter 2008).

This chapter has shown that those who erase graffiti understand it as a prosocial action that can evoke positive personal feelings and make a difference in their community. To that extent, graffiti erasure affirms their identity as valuable and contributing members of their communities. Thus, both the writing and the erasure of

graffiti are serving to develop and to reflect the identity of the people who practice

those respective activities.

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[1] These patches, blocks and frames are the subject of Matt McCormick's short film 'The subconscious art of graffiti removal' (2002). The film satirizes the erasure of graffiti as a continuation of abstract expressionism, minimalism and Russian constructivism, and as an 'important step in the future of modern art'.

[2] Iveson (2015, p. 81) argues that both those who write and those who remove graffiti care for the urban environment: 'The point … is that those authorities and property owners who are busy painting urban surfaces various shades of brown and beige don't have a monopoly on caring for the city. Graffiti writers care too – deeply, in many cases.'

5. MAINTAINING A SENSE OF PLACE IN A DISORDERLY WORLD

Introduction

This chapter explores the different ways Adelaide graffiti removers maintain a sense of place, and describes the barriers they face to preserve their feelings about their home communities. In doing so, it links several of the themes discussed in earlier chapters. These include notions of place and space, dirt and cleanliness, visibility and invisibility, and conflict and isomorphism. Maintaining a sense of place refers to the practices graffiti removers engage in to preserve emotional and subjective attachments to a location that have developed through lived experience. The barriers are conceptualized as the factors that constrained the abilities of graffiti removers to maintain a sense of place.

This chapter draws on analytical matrices based on the study's main areas of enquiry. As this study explores the *what* and *how* questions of graffiti removal, the matrices' design was derived from Miles and Huberman's (1994) work on descriptive approaches to cross-case analysis. A cross-case matrix display presents data mapped on to vertical and horizontal axes according to key variables. On the vertical axis, I placed all interviewees sorted by the council with which they worked. This enabled analysis by individual graffiti removers, councils and groups of councils, such as those with structured or more flexible volunteer programs. The horizontal axis included measures of three variables: how interviewees talked about graffiti, how they maintained a sense of place, and which barriers they experienced. Although the analysis identified distinct methods and barriers discussed separately in this chapter, all interviewees engaged in more than one method and experienced multiple barriers. The accounts of the interviewees also suggested some methods overlapped with others, such as responding to a complaint and restoring a surface.

In the first part of this chapter, I outline how different scholars, such as Relph, Lippard, Agnew and Massey, have defined the notions of 'place' and 'sense of place', and contrasted it with the concept of landscape. This leads to a description of how a sense of place can be connected with the ways people experience crime. The next section discusses five ways graffiti removers maintain a sense of place: overcoming, restoring, monitoring, curating and resolving. The chapter concludes by considering the barriers graffiti removers in Adelaide experience, and identifying how these barriers constrained particular ways of maintaining a sense of place.

Place

The concept of place has diverse meanings and uses. According to Relph (1976), a major component of the identity of place is the experience of an 'inside' distinct from an 'outside'. The notion of an 'inside' is also significant in Lippard's (1997) definition of place: a 'portion of land/town/cityscape seen from the inside, the resonance of a specific location that is known and familiar… it is about connections, what surrounds it, what formed it, what happened there, what will happen there' (Lippard 1997, p. 7). Lippard contrasts place with 'landscape', which is a set of surfaces that can only be seen from the outside. Landscape is an 'intensely visual idea' mostly defined in terms of a viewer outside of it (Cresswell 2004, p. 10). '[Landscape] is about appearances and the look of places; it de-materialises place' (Urry & Larsen 2011, p. 94).

A widely-used definition of place is John Agnew's conceptualization of it as a 'meaningful location' (Cresswell 2004). Agnew's (1987) definition of place comprises three key elements: (1) location (2) locale, and (3) a sense of place. Location refers to a geographical area where social interactions take place and that is impacted by social and economic processes in other geographical areas. For example, the City of Salisbury is a location that has been adversely affected by the movement of particular kinds of manufacturing work away from South Australia, and from Western countries more generally. According to Agnew, a locale is the material setting for social

interactions and where particular routines and rituals are followed. For the City of Salisbury, these concrete forms include factories, roads, parks and shopping centres. Finally, Agnew suggests a sense of place is a subjective orientation produced by living in a place. For Agnew (1987, pp. 26-27), this emotional attachment to a particular place and time 'reinforces the social-spatial definition of place from *inside'.* Lippard also writes about a sense of place. She defines it as a 'serial sensitivity to place' or 'virtual immersion that depends on lived experience and a topographical intimacy' (Lippard 1997, p. 33). Several graffiti removers in this study referred to this sense of place as a pride in their area or being 'community focused'. Massey (1994) makes a distinction between a reactionary sense of place, such as one that relates to obsessions with 'heritage', and a progressive or global sense of place, entailing 'an understanding of "its character", which can only be constructed by linking that place to places beyond' (Massey 1994, p. 156).

Drawing on the work of Massey and others, Girling, Loader and Sparks (2000) suggest a complex and entangled relationship between place and questions of crime and order/disorder. Girling, Loader and Sparks (2000, p. 46) write that 'people's sensibilities towards crime depend on their sense of place, and … their orientation towards place is – in part at least – determined by considerations of crime and order'. The idea of situational context was recognized in Wilson and Kelling's (1982) original expression of the broken windows thesis in the sense that the same sign of disorder – for example, an abandoned car – could stimulate different responses in different neighbourhoods (Sampson 2013). Yet, as Sampson (2013) writes, the broken windows thesis has not problematized the context and production of shared meanings concerning order and disorder. This is important as 'physical cues in themselves are ambiguous' (Sampson 2013, p. 16). With respect to how people respond to graffiti in particular, the question of 'where' it is located is crucial (Cresswell 1992).

How graffiti removers maintain a sense of place

This section discusses the different ways that Adelaide graffiti removers maintained a sense of place. Interviewees described five main methods: overcoming, restoring, monitoring, curating and resolving.

Overcoming

The first method, overcoming, refers to the deterrence effect that interviewees believed rapid and repeated graffiti removal had on graffiti writers. As Chapter Two noted, this deterrence effect is a key message of the broken windows thesis. According to interviewees, rapid graffiti removal effectively reduced local graffiti by discouraging and frustrating graffiti writers to the point where they stopped or reduced the amount of graffiti they did, or targeted other areas. Mount Barker interviewee Norman provided an example of how he and other volunteers had frustrated a writer by repeatedly painting over graffiti on a local overpass:

> *Norman: I think about the third time we painted it out they actually wrote a little thing on the side: 'Please do not paint this out' (laughs). So [we] painted over the top of that [and] had great pleasure in doing it.*
>
> *Interviewer: … What about doing that gave you great pleasure?*
>
> *Norman: … We had got to the stage of frustrating to the point of [them] saying: 'Oh, is it worthwhile?' And … if we did it long enough we would wear them down.*

To illustrate their effectiveness at overcoming, interviewees talked about a reduction of graffiti in their local area. As a Salisbury volunteer put it: 'When I first started it was bad [but] I believe we have made an improvement.' These interviewees also contrasted the amount of graffiti in their home community with that in other parts of Adelaide. This geographical distinction served two functions. The first function was to suggest a failure of another municipal authority to control local graffiti. For example, an Unley volunteer said: 'Once you go across into the Mitcham council who obviously don't have a graffiti buster thing ... graffiti's everywhere.' The second function was to

impute negative characteristics to the people who lived in areas with relatively more graffiti. For example, another Unley volunteer, Callie, differentiated her area with that of Adelaide's disadvantaged northern suburbs when she reflected on the landscape she had seen while aboard a metropolitan train:

> *The graffiti … was so much worse when you got into the northern suburbs … and I thought: 'To me, it's a symptom of people who … haven't got … any achievements, any abilities … and this is their only outlet …' It makes me worried … It's sad… I mean that sounds really patronising of me …*

This volunteer was a former teacher, now aged in her 60s and semi-retired, who had lived in a cottage in the Unley council for more than 10 years. For her, the extent of graffiti along the train line through the northern suburbs, and perhaps also its nature, signalled the types of activities (or inactivity) that occurred and the sorts of people who lived in or used the place. In this way, graffiti resembles the symbolic clues that lawns and yards can provide as to 'who lives here' (Lippard 1997, p. 250).

The method of overcoming seems consistent with the 'war' discourse frequently attached to graffiti (Ferrell 1996; Iveson 2009, 2010). Adelaide graffiti removers talked about 'fighting', 'taking on' and 'defeating' writers. These localised contests can be understood as part of a broader 'battle for control over public space' that is concerned with semiotics as much as it is concerned with power (Valverde 2006, p. 151). Adelaide graffiti removers appeared always to be in a state of overcoming, rather than in a state of triumph. They did not claim victory in the wars on graffiti, but instead suggested they were winning small battles. They were confident their efforts to repeatedly erase graffiti from particular spots had been effective at warding off graffiti writers, but they understood that more graffiti may be imminent and thus maintained their vigilance. A Marion volunteer, Boyd, said that he had not removed any graffiti for four months:

> *It's been quiet … [But] I'll go home tonight and there might be some*

up there (laughs) … You never know.

Restoring

While the graffiti writer was the target for interviewees who talked about overcoming, the tagged surface was the target for the method of 'restoring'. The desire to restore is based on the idea that graffiti erasure can re-situate a surface from a 'dirty' or 'damaged' condition to a 'clean', 'original' or 'normal' condition. To effectively restore surfaces, graffiti removers emphasized the importance of matching colours when re-painting surfaces and avoiding the creation of patches (Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1. Patches and tags, City of Charles Sturt

When using chemicals to erase graffiti, it was similarly important to remove stains and smudges. Collectively these techniques constituted a 'proper' or good removal, as this Marion volunteer, Roland, outlined:

Sometimes you will get to a spot and maybe it's a black … [or] timber

> *coloured item … and you have silver paint or white paint and you can't really do anything about it. Well, I'll spray that with silver or white, and then after a day or two I'll get black from home and I'll come down – black or khaki – and I'll just go over lightly so gradually over time it will go back to that sort of shade or texture … and when I see it doesn't stand out anymore, and in fact it just looks all natural, then I'll say that's a good job.*

Restoring was more important in some locations than in others, such as publicly visible fences and prominent utility boxes. Mount Barker volunteer Norman discussed the links between restoration and visibility in response to a question about how he judged the quality of his work.

> *I was going to say where possible match the colour, but that's not necessarily a criteria … It certainly is on some of the … high-visual places because the council have had reports back saying: 'Well, that colour's not really the same' … so we actually then made sure that we've actually got the Colorbond paint and gone and re-painted it in one instance.*

Norman had a no-tolerance approach to graffiti, saying that he would remove all of the graffiti, including a piece, pictured in photographs shown to interviewees. For him, patches were acceptable in some contexts as he considered them to be preferable to graffiti. However, colour matching was important at 'high visual places' as these surfaces perhaps had a stronger 'signal value' than other less visible surfaces (Innes 2004; Slovic 1992, 2000). In this sense, the appearance of a publicly visible surface following the proper removal of graffiti intimated the tone of a place to a wider audience of people on the *outside,* such as passing motorists. The appearance of a surface following a 'good' graffiti removal may also give those on the *inside* an enhanced sense of place.

Monitoring

Monitoring relates to an individual's familiarity with the 'normal appearances' (Goffman 2010; Sacks 1972) of his or her area, and the detection of any graffiti that disturbed these appearances. In some instances, interviewees said graffiti was so

obvious it 'hit you in the face', as one volunteer put it. In other cases, graffiti was unobtrusive and detectable only with knowledge about local 'hot spots'. For Adelaide City Council paid graffiti removers, the geography of their monitoring work was defined substantially by routine 'runs' that focused on graffiti hot spots and major roads. For volunteers, the spatial dimensions tended to be more elastic. Most volunteers said they or their family and friends observed graffiti in their local areas while performing other activities and returned to these spots to remove it at a later time. A few individuals also conducted special 'runs' or patrols to identify any new graffiti.

Interviewees who talked about monitoring can be understood as 'eyes on the street' (Jacobs, J 1961) in the sense they had expectations for a place and were alert to any event, person or object that was out of place. It also illustrates what Valverde (2006) describes as a transformation of the everyday citizen's gaze to become a whole new way of seeing – in this case one that was particularly sensitive to the sight of graffiti. For some, this new way of seeing had been noticed by other people in their lives, such as Salisbury volunteer Patrick:

> *Before I was never mixed up with graffiti, I didn't … take much notice*
> *of it … but I'll be driving along with my wife in the car [and I will say],*
> *'Oh, there's something.' [And my wife will say:] 'Oh, you always got to*
> *talk about the graffiti' … You notice it because you're doing it.*

The sense that 'you notice it because you're doing it' bears similarities with the graffiti writer's constant search for writable surfaces and spaces, reiterating the isomorphism of graffiti removers and writers.

Graffiti removers talked about their local area in terms of a 'territory of normal appearances' (Sacks 1972). Their gaze was trained on particular spaces in the urban landscape at particular times, whereas they paid less attention to other locations - 'private' and 'dangerous' spaces, such as abandoned buildings, and 'public' spaces

legitimately used by young people, such as skate parks. As Sacks (1972) suggests in relation to police officers on the beat, learned normal appearances form the 'background expectancies' shaping how an area is observed while it is patrolled. Sacks discusses these expectancies in terms of interactions between the police and possible criminals. However, the maintenance of public order also concerns issues that do not involve face-to-face contact between people. As Goffman (1963, pp. 8-9) writes, regulating public order can also refer to maintaining roadways and discarding noxious refuse. More recently, hip hop graffiti has been constructed as a disruption of public order. For Adelaide graffiti removers, background expectancies included a familiarity with how locations in their area normally looked and with the spots where graffiti was often written, such that they were aroused by any variations that justified some attention.

References to 'normal' appearances implies that particular individuals, groups and practices have 'proper' places in the city and suburbs. Thus, graffiti removers can be viewed as one of the actors who police urban areas, according to Iveson's (2014, p. 85) use of the term to denote a 'set of procedures which seek to allocate and contain certain bodies and behaviours to their "proper" places in the city'. Authors such as Iveson and Dikeç have based their conceptualisations of policing on Ranciere's theorization of politics, particularly his 'logic of the proper'. For Ranciere, '"The police" refers to an established social order of governance with everyone in their "proper" place in the seemingly natural order of things' (Dikeç 2005, p. 174). Iveson (2014, p. 96) argues these actors who police are involved in an effort to '*naturalize* a particular form of authority over urban surfaces which denies and/or restricts graffiti writers a place on those surfaces'.

Curating

The role of curation entailed determining whether graffiti should be erased or retained. Central to these decisions were the perceived aesthetics and legality of graffiti. In

terms of aesthetics, some interviewees were more likely to leave graffiti they deemed to be 'artistic' than other forms of graffiti. Such aesthetic judgements revealed subjectivities and conflict among graffiti removers. This was illustrated by Salisbury volunteer Patrick in relation to some 'artistic' graffiti that his team had encountered and which one of his colleagues had wanted to scrub off:

> I said, 'No, leave it … That's quite okay. We're happy with that.'
> …This bloke was going to go and do it because he was pretty keen at the time … but we kept away from that sort of thing … It doesn't worry me. I can put up with that.

Patrick, aged in his 60s, had become involved in graffiti removal after he lost his job as a trades worker in the manufacturing industry. While he used to hate graffiti 'totally', he had since developed a better understanding of it. He said although tags were just 'scrawly stuff', he believed some graffiti could be artistic.

Curating was also connected with perceptions of whether an instance of graffiti was legal. Many interviewees suggested they would remove any graffiti they considered to be illegal, but either leave or seek direction from their manager or coordinator about graffiti they thought had been done with the permission of the property owner. This point can be illustrated with the response one Marion interviewee, Roland, made to a photograph of a piece. After he said he would not remove the piece, I asked what had made him respond that way. He replied:

> There's a sort of artistic approach to it … That is better to look at than graffiti and if you took that off I think someone would come back and maybe do something that wouldn't be as nice as that.
>
> Interviewer: Ok. So you don't see this one as graffiti?
>
> Roland: Well, I can't say that … Let's say it's a form of tagging … but how do I know that someone hasn't paid to have that done? … Say it's a local coffee shop behind that wall. They may have paid someone to do that and that's perfectly legitimate.

For this interviewee, how something looks appears to be interwoven with its legal status. These notions are also interconnected with the placement of graffiti in the

sense that the volunteer thought graffiti on the wall of a coffee shop wall was in-place, whereas graffiti on the fence or wall of a house may be more likely to be viewed as out-of-place.

Curating graffiti was connected to the subjective attachment people had to places. The graffiti removers who curated had a sense of the norms of acceptability for particular places, the quality of life people enjoyed in these places and the factors contributing to and detracting from this quality of life. The curating of 'appropriate' and 'inappropriate' graffiti is compatible with the general approach of the literature on crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) (Valverde 2006). Valverde (2006, p. 151) has noted that CPTED aims not only to fix broken windows and design out unsupervisable large courtyards, but also promote 'replacement activities that are semiotically agreeable to those who feel they own the city'. A problem with this approach is that norms of acceptability can be ambiguous and contested, which gives rise to the question: who decides which graffiti is legal and which is illegal? According to Millie (2011), the answer often depends on context and power.

Resolving

Millie (2011) has noted that municipal law is frequently complaint-driven, and this includes laws and policies related to graffiti (Schacter 2008). In this study, complaints from residents and other property owners were a major source of work for interviewees from particular councils. At Adelaide City Council, these 'pathway' requests were included in the graffiti removers' routine work. One Adelaide City Council worker, Harry, explained that he would erase any instance of graffiti if a property owner requested its removal and it was not officially approved. In some cases, this approach could give rise to regret:

> *I mean we've seen some really good stuff that we've been forced to remove that we don't want to but … if it's the request of the property owner ... it is their property, they pay the rates, we're there for them.*

The imperative to resolve complaints was also illustrated in other council areas where graffiti that had been reported was prioritised. However, volunteers in flexible municipal programs appeared less likely than other volunteers and paid workers to remove graffiti based on a complaint. Instead, most of their work was to erase graffiti they or their networks had noticed in their everyday lives.

Resolving graffiti complaints can valorise the ways that certain people understand places. People who complain about graffiti may interpret it as a violation of their sense of place for a particular location and contact their municipal authority to erase it, regardless of whether they have any ownership rights to the property. Subject to efforts being made to gain the authority of a property owner, the council will duly remove it. This approach again raises the questions of who complains and where the power to decide the fate of graffiti lies. A Charles Sturt volunteer, Con, made this point in relation to a mural he had removed from a river outlet after the council had received a complaint.

> *Con: If I had seen that as a person walking over the bridge … I would've looked at it, appreciated it for what it was and done nothing more … If it was … a mishmash of tags … I would've thought to myself, 'Well, that is an eyesore and ugly and shouldn't be there. Somebody should do something about it.' … Somebody did that because they rang up and they didn't appreciate the actual art that was there … so they rang up and complained … But I'm getting ... what is it? Philosophical?*
>
> *Interviewer: No it's good. I'm interested in that … interpretation of whether a piece is legal or illegal. It can be difficult sometimes to tell.*
>
> *Con: Well, yeah … Who decides? That's the thing.*

Barriers

Interviewees also discussed constraints on their capacity to maintain a sense of place. These barriers can be categorized as: insufficient resources, technical difficulties, physical boundaries, community perceptions, risk, aspects of graffiti culture, and laws

and policies.

Insufficient resources

A significant barrier for many graffiti removers was a lack of resources. Interviewees said they had insufficient time or materials to erase large instances of graffiti or engage in time-consuming methods such as using chemical solvents. Both voluntary and paid graffiti removers cited a lack of resources as a barrier. It was most likely to be discussed in the context of 'overcoming', 'restoring' and 'monitoring'. For example, Stewart, an Unley volunteer aged in his 70s who was an initiator of his council's graffiti program, talked about how his efforts to overcome graffiti were constrained.

> ... [T]he more I've done it, the more I see it now and when I walk the streets … seeing the graffiti it irritates me ... and you think: 'Oh, you can't do it.' There's only a limit to what you can do.

A lack of time and materials was also a barrier to the graffiti remover's work of restoring. To illustrate, another Unley volunteer, Callie, told how the removal of a tag from the dark grey wall of a local business would have been beyond the capabilities of her and her partner as they used only green and light grey paints. Insufficient resources could also make it difficult to monitor all local spots for graffiti, although networks with others in the community sometimes reduced this barrier, as Marion volunteer Howard suggested:

> Your question about what generates action - 99 times out of a hundred I would say it's me seeing it … or like the daughter or son-in-law … they might drive down and say: 'I see someone's done a bit up the road.' [I say:] 'Ok. I didn't see it but I'll deal with it.'

Technical difficulties

Technical difficulties were experienced in relation to the tools and materials associated with graffiti removal and the types of surfaces on which graffiti was written. For example, Unley volunteer Luke spoke about his experiences with spray cans:

> *They used to give us spray cans but they weren't very good in my opinion ... they didn't last very long and they were difficult to use ...*

Some of those interviewed suggested there was a 'right person' for particular tasks, such as a detailer to remove graffiti from a car and a paid council worker to remove graffiti from stone surfaces.

Technical barriers were frequently raised in the context of the graffiti remover's 'restoring' of a place. For example, interviewees described the difficulties of removing tags from murals to restore these artworks. This was how an experienced Adelaide City Council paid graffiti remover, Diana, recounted her team's efforts to 'maintain' murals:

> *We used to … try and maintain their mural. Now it's up to the artist to … because … you've got to be careful what coating's on it and depending how the chemical reacts to it … If we stuff their work up, they're not happy so now basically if it gets tagged … you've just sort of got to leave it now.*

Physical boundaries

Different sets of physical boundaries were also a barrier for many graffiti removers. Interviews frequently talked about boundaries between 'public' and 'private' spaces delimiting their responsibilities. As a Salisbury volunteer put it: 'We don't go on private property … We haven't got any right whatsoever to go into private property.' Discussions of public/private spaces often focused on houses and businesses. However, public/private boundaries were often blurry and contingent. For example, the surface of a privately owned building or fence accessible from a public space, such as a park or footpath, was considered to be public by some interviewees but private by others. Visibility and accessibility had important roles in these definitions, as Mount Barker volunteer Norman discussed in relation to property of the local Steam Ranger train service:

The council is more than happy to do council property… and private property that I suppose faces the road … but they have … some reluctance to do the Steam Ranger because they see the Steam Ranger is … not their responsibility … but we've taken it on because it is high visual and it's easy to get to.

Definitions of public/private property also differed across council boundaries. In Unley, graffiti-covered electricity boxes were routinely painted by volunteers but, in Salisbury, the council had told its volunteers to leave the painting of these boxes to the company that owned them. An Adelaide City Council worker said the public/private boundary was not a barrier for him and his colleagues as his council had the authority to enter private property to remove graffiti. Interviewees also noted that physical municipal boundaries could be a barrier to the removal of visible graffiti, such as the Unley graffiti removers who decided not to paint over graffiti in neighbouring Mitcham. Furthermore, within particular councils, some interviewees were more committed than others to adhering to boundaries. For example, some Marion volunteers said they were not authorized to enter rail and tram corridors, but other individuals told how they had removed graffiti from these spaces.

Community perceptions

Perceptions about the acceptability of graffiti writing and removal were another barrier interviewees faced in maintaining a sense of place. For instance, a small number of interviewees had experienced negative responses towards their work, either from groups they believed were doing graffiti or people with authority over particular property. The latter perceptions related to the erasure of graffiti from certain spaces rather than the erasure of graffiti in itself. For example, a Marion volunteer who had removed graffiti from a rail corridor said he had been verbally abused by people working in the space.

A larger group of interviewees, who were sensitive to variations in community attitudes towards the value of graffiti, discussed how these variations made their job

difficult. Some of these interviewees identified a sense of indifference among residents and business owners about whether graffiti was removed from or remained on their property. For example, in response to a question about the impact graffiti was having on the owner of a local fence that had been constantly targeted, a Marion volunteer, Genevieve, said:

> *I don't think the property owner could care a fig … because the house is around the corner on the other street and … I don't think they actually care … or they can't be bothered.*

Interviewees also pointed to the apathy of particular councils in the battle against graffiti, such as the City of Mitcham, and some among those interviewed talked about police and judicial indifference towards graffiti. For interviewees who described curating graffiti, variations in community perceptions emerged as a prominent barrier. For example, Con, the Charles Sturt volunteer who removed the mural from the river outlet, recalled feeling regret: 'The selection of colours and the style and the content had been thought through so somebody had … used a skill that they've got and produced this and it was a shame that we were actually covering it up.' Yet, as Con said, someone else had not appreciated the same graffiti and had filed a complaint about it with the council, triggering its removal.

Chapter Four noted how community perceptions and responses are an important aspect of defining dirty work. 'Dirty workers' are often concerned about their relationships with outsiders such as clients, family and neighbours (Ashforth & Kreiner 1999). The sensitivity of many Adelaide graffiti removers to the perceptions of outsiders provides further evidence of the stigma of graffiti removal work. However, the stories of these graffiti removers also suggest a pluralistic and context-specific response from outsiders towards graffiti removal. Although many 'outsiders' that these graffiti removers encountered believed their work was necessary and important, interviewees said others thought their work was pointless. One Marion volunteer

recalled being asked by his wife: 'Why do you bother? Because they're just going to come back.' This question of 'why do you bother' – which appears to be related to the perceived futility of the outcome of the work – is different to the question dirty workers often face: 'how can you do it' (Ashforth & Kreiner 1999) – which seems more concerned with the process the work involves rather than its outcome. The question of 'why bother' suggests a perception of futility or triviality uncharacteristic of dirty work. According to Ashforth and Kreiner (1999), the stigma of dirty work is derived from a view of the work as both necessary and polluting. Thus, the pluralism of responses graffiti removers described indicates a more differentiated experience than other categories of dirty workers. Context and the audience frequently had a role in the stigma graffiti removers experienced.

Risk

The personal risks associated with graffiti removal were also a barrier for many interviewees. The threat of retaliation from graffiti writers, either through graffiti or a physical assault, was salient for several interviewees. Some also said their physical safety could be put at risk if they entered particular places, including roadways, tram and rail corridors and bicycle paths. Furthermore, the risk of falling from high places was a concern because of the large amount of graffiti done on surfaces many metres above the ground.

Some interviewees also said they could not access property where its physical characteristics made it dangerous or difficult to erase graffiti. An Adelaide City Council paid worker cited the example of a property with substantial amounts of graffiti that he and his colleagues had not entered because of its uneven surfaces and overgrown grass. This dualism of 'safe' and 'dangerous' spaces based on the material form of the space can be contrasted with the safe/dangerous dialectical position based on the risk of crime victimisation that is more commonly associated with graffiti. This latter position suggests people are at greater risk of crime and violence in spaces with

graffiti than they are in spaces without it.

Aspects of graffiti culture

Characteristics of graffiti writing culture also made it difficult for graffiti removers to maintain a sense of place. The graffiti writer's imperative to 'get up', frequently in spots where others would see their tag, meant that graffiti removers faced the problem of the same tags continually appearing in prominent places. Asked about the places where he frequently removed graffiti, a Charles Sturt volunteer said surfaces on long arterial roads were targets. Some among those interviewed also noted that graffiti removal could facilitate more graffiti. These individuals said erasure promoted more graffiti by providing writers with a 'new', freshly-painted surface for their tags. A Salisbury volunteer, Patrick, cited an example:

> *Stobie poles are their favourite ... because we paint over them and that gives them a new surface for them to spray on again … We did this street one day and we'd just finished. This mob of louts turned up, it was about four of them in this Commodore … One sticks his head out the window … [and] says: "Oh, you've done a good job there fellas' … We'll wait 'til you're gone … [and] we'll come back again."*

Adelaide City Council paid workers were more likely than volunteers to mention this barrier. They believed that while the facilitation of graffiti was a negative aspect of their work, it was also a necessary part of the job.

For some interviewees, aspects of graffiti writing culture, such as the imperative to 'get up' frequently, frustrated their 'monitoring' work:

> *Interviewer: When you were out last Friday doing the tags, what were you thinking when you saw the graffiti and removed it? Does anything in particular go through your mind?*
>
> *Gerald, City of Salisbury volunteer: Only there's certain places, like the underpass … which are continuously tagged. …. [They are] fairly hard to monitor.*

Laws and policies

Laws and policies were another barrier graffiti removers discussed. Many interviewees mentioned that their council had set height limits above which volunteers and paid workers could not remove graffiti. Some, such as the two Adelaide City Council workers, also said that they avoided places deemed dangerous for graffiti removers, such as vacant allotments with pot holes.

For graffiti removers who resolved complaints, the barrier of laws and policies was salient. This connection emerged against a backdrop of tensions between policies designed to protect approved works of graffiti and aesthetic expectations for particular places. For example, Adelaide City Council grants 'development approval' permits to graffiti and street art that it authorizes. One of its paid workers, Harry, illustrated the conflict between the council's policies and aesthetic expectations in response to a question asking whether he would remove graffiti pictured in a photograph presented to him in the interview:

> *If requested (I would)… quite often they actually write the development approval that was applied with the Adelaide City Council. If that's there, (we) don't even hesitate, we leave it.*

Interviewees also said that according to legislation relating to graffiti offences, an individual or group must have been seen doing graffiti in order for them to have been convicted. One volunteer noted that while fair, it was annoying 'when you know' someone has done graffiti. This threshold increased the difficulty of identifying and punishing graffiti offenders, which, as some among those interviewed said, was what people in their community wanted.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how the ways that people interpret and respond to graffiti can deepen an understanding of how they experience place. The graffiti removers

interviewed in this study aimed to maintain their sense of place by reducing the amount of local tags through overcoming graffiti offenders. For these individuals, reductions in graffiti in a given area contributed to a sense of satisfaction and pride associated with residing in a low crime, largely graffiti-free, aesthetic and pleasant place. Graffiti violated their sense of place by defacing an 'original' surface, creating a 'messiness' that interviewees had difficulty in defining. The method of restoring - a re-placing of a surface - empowered graffiti removers to re-establish their sense of place. It presumed that objects and spaces had an original condition that could be recreated with paint, vigorous scrubbing or high-pressure cleaning. It also presumed that the origins of a particular space could be traced to the transfer of ownership of an allotment of land or to the construction of a building.

Stories of restoration reflected an attachment and commitment to particular places, suggesting a sense of 'rootedness' (Relph, 1976). This rootedness implies a care and concern for places, which, for graffiti removers, was embodied in their practices, such as their selection of materials, and was evident in their imaginings of places. Graffiti removers also monitored particular places. These monitoring activities were concrete, everyday practices that played a role in the sense of place of graffiti removers. Curating graffiti entailed making decisions about whether graffiti should be erased on the basis of aesthetics and legality. These graffiti removers transcended symbolic boundaries between complaining and maintaining to become de facto curators of illicit writing in their communities. They volunteered with councils that had both flexible volunteer programs and more structured programs.

Each of these methods was constrained by different sets of barriers. A lack of resources was most frequently discussed in the context of the methods of overcoming, restoring and monitoring. For interviewees who described curating local graffiti, differing interpretations of the acceptability of graffiti emerged as a barrier. In

this context, the question of 'who decides' was important. The work of monitoring could be frustrated by the imperative within graffiti culture to 'get up' as often as possible. For graffiti removers who resolved complaints, laws and policies often served as a barrier.

The sensitivity graffiti removers showed towards places could be understood as a rather fixed and, in Massey's words, 'reactionary' sense of place by virtue of the significance they placed on 'normal appearances' and an intolerance of 'abnormal' graffiti tags. It could also be read as a conservationist and custodial or stewardship view of place. Indeed, many interviewees showed a high level of care and respect in their choice of method, their selection of paint colours, the way they applied paint or chemicals, and so on. Signs of tolerance - a sense that 'I can put up with that' - were also evident among some graffiti removers, which suggested a more 'progressive' sense of place. Thus, place was individual, and was experienced in particular ways that were interwoven with the biographies of graffiti removers, and different spatial, cultural and economic contexts.

6. DRAWING HOPE FROM ERASURE: IMAGES OF THE GRAFFITI WRITER

Introduction

For most graffiti removers, the writer of graffiti is invisible and unknown. Graffiti removers notice the product of the graffiti writer - the tag, throw-up or piece - but they rarely see the writer in action. Yet the erasure of tags gives a graffiti remover specialised knowledge about the preferences, tools and practices of graffiti writers. This knowledge is not acquired in a vacuum. Graffiti removers can also gain information relevant to their work from sources such as the mass media; other volunteers; work colleagues; managers, supervisors and volunteer coordinators; and family members and friends. This chapter shows how the image that Adelaide graffiti removers had developed of the identities and motivations of the graffiti writer was relatively homogenous and similar to stereotypical conceptions. But it also shows how the image is characterised by exceptions and ambiguities. The dominant image of the graffiti writer that emerged was of a young and local individual, whose work was often interpreted by others as an act of violence. Interviewees suggested graffiti writers were motivated mainly by a desire to gain recognition, destroy or damage property, respond to boredom and frustration, or claim physical space. Graffiti removers situated these drivers within rapid social, cultural and economic changes that had provided fertile ground for the appearance and spread of graffiti in Australia.

Although graffiti is often conceptualised in ways comparable to a noxious weed, graffiti removers also talked about thoughts, feelings and behaviours that may be understood as signs of their belief in the future lives of graffiti writers. This belief was expressed in the context of the presumed youth of most graffiti offenders and their identity as 'our' young people. Most graffiti removers viewed young people as essentially 'good' individuals who could be deterred from graffiti and 'reformed'. Their optimism may be

linked to the isomorphism observed between graffiti writers and graffiti removers. Examples of this isomorphism were the skills both groups had in the use of paint, spray cans and brushes, and a desire to be recognised for their abilities. This desire to be recognised was linked to another parallel between the groups, the importance of visibility and aesthetics. For graffiti writers, recognition depended on their tags being seen and appreciated by others, whereas, for graffiti removers, recognition and appreciation was more likely to flow from an invisible erasure.

In this chapter I argue that the 'invisibility' of the graffiti writer was partial in the sense that certain groups of (older, more experienced and 'authorised') writers were more publicly visible, providing some graffiti removers with evidence of the developmental opportunities available to young graffiti offenders. Additionally, I show that while graffiti removers tended to identify local young people as the perpetrators of graffiti, some interviewees maintained boundaries between themselves and graffiti writers by locating the latter group within particular socio-demographic groups and geographic spaces. Yet, for the majority of interviewees, the graffiti writers remained 'our' young people. In this sense, it may be easier for graffiti removers to place faith in those people seen as part of 'our communities', as compared with those perceived to be 'outsiders'.

This chapter begins with a discussion of how interviewees imagined graffiti writers – their age, dress, place of residence and other attributes. Moving from the identity of graffiti writers to their motivations, the next section considers the different ways that interviewees accounted for graffiti. I show how the perceived drivers of graffiti were sometimes linked to the observation that Australia had undergone rapid social, cultural and economic changes in the lifetime of the interviewees. The final two sections discuss how a sense of belief in young people also emerged from the interviews, and how this belief in future generations may be one component of a

broader sense of generativity. I conclude by arguing that graffiti removal may be rooted in a collective hope, but may also contains elements of a more harmful public hope.

Imagining the identity of graffiti writers

Young (2005b) has observed that most people have never seen a graffiti writer spray a tag or slogan on a wall. By the time someone notices graffiti, '*the writer* is unseen, long gone' (Young 2005b, p. 62). Most interviewees in this study had never seen anyone writing illegal graffiti, and some said it was unlikely to ever occur given that graffiti writers tended to work late at night or early in the morning. These were times when graffiti removers were unlikely to be using public spaces. Against this backdrop of an 'invisible' perpetrator, many interviewees had constructed an image of the person responsible for the graffiti they removed. Generally speaking, their image was of a young, local and skilled individual, though there were exceptions to each of these characteristics.

Age and appearance

Interviewees suggested most graffiti they removed was done by young people. One Unley volunteer said 'teenagers going to school' did much of the graffiti in his area, and another said he assumed 'local kids' did particular tags that regularly appeared. For these interviewees, spikes in the amount of local graffiti during school holiday periods were evidence young people were responsible. In terms of how they dressed, a Salisbury volunteer, Patrick, was one of several who linked the carrying of backpacks with graffiti writing:

> *I see a lot of them walking with backpacks on … You can guarantee the backpacks ... are full of spray cans … They look pretty obvious when they've got a backpack on (laughs) … and they're not school kids.*

Not all interviewees were this categorical, but many were suspicious of young people

who wore a backpack, interpreting it as a 'sign' of a vandal. Thus, backpacks attached a sense of criminality to a particular group of individuals, similar to the way 'hoodies' (hooded jumpers) have become a symbol of urban and often criminal young people (Bell 2013).

Although young people dominated interviewees' stories, older and more experienced graffiti writers were also occasionally discussed. Some interviewees had seen older people writing legal graffiti on the abutment of the bridge in the Adelaide central business district described in Chapter Two. The visibility of older graffiti writers at this 'free wall' could be explained by the increased physical mobility and accrued skills and knowledge that enables these individuals access to sites to legally produce graffiti (McAuliffe 2013). Adelaide's 'free wall' is also located in a predominantly commercial and entertainment district, rather than residential, reducing the number of young local graffiti writers with easy access. As the 'free wall' stands within Adelaide City Council, legal graffiti writers were particularly visible to graffiti removers in this municipality. Graffiti removers also differentiated between younger and older graffiti writers based on the size and aesthetic quality of the graffiti and the apparent skill of the writer.

Place of residence

Most graffiti writers were also presumed to live within the local area, as indicated by these comments: 'I think they're fairly local', 'most of it is done by locals', and 'they live in the area'. For some interviewees, the repetition of particular tags was evidence of the writers' place of residence:

> Interviewer: What gives you that impression that it's local people?
>
> Norman, Mount Barker District Council volunteer: Because of the repetitive nature of it … and that really came about because once we had gone through and cleaned up all the graffiti that had been … put there over the years ... then the repeat ones … were similar tags.

Some interviewees suggested graffiti writers tended to reside in sections of their

communities where public Housing Trust homes were concentrated, thus maintaining boundaries between those who wrote graffiti and those who removed it. For these interviewees, Housing Trust accommodation was associated with particular socio-demographic characteristics, such as unemployment, as this exchange with a Charles Sturt volunteer shows:

> *Interviewer: What makes you think they're locals?*
> *Wesley: I probably shouldn't say this, but they live in public housing … most of them haven't got a job … and this is how they while away the time.*

Negative stereotypes about public housing tenants have a historical foundation. In South Australia, public housing has become a form of accommodation predominantly occupied by the most vulnerable members of the population (Beer & Horne 2013). This shift in the structure of its population has seen public housing and those it accommodates become stigmatized (Palmer et al. 2004).

The presumed geographic proximity of graffiti removers and graffiti writers implies a sense that, in Girling, Loader and Sparks (2000) words, graffiti writers were mainly '"our kids" … "belonging" to "our community"'. Thus, similar to the participants in Girling, Loader and Sparks' research on crime and disorder in an English town, graffiti removers sometimes suggested measures that might '"re-incorporate" the young, thereby restoring to local social life a lost cohesion, discipline and civility' (Girling, Loader & Sparks 2000, p. 94). An example of this form of re-incorporation was to 'have a word to kids', as one volunteer put it. For some interviewees, older writers who painted murals and street art also provided evidence that young graffiti writers could navigate a path to legal forms of painting. Yet, for others, older graffiti writers remained a mystery. According to one volunteer: 'It's not something I want to go around doing ... It baffles me a bit.'

Unskilled and skilled graffiti writing

Public discourse on graffiti suggests it is illegible because it is an unskilled activity

performed by people who lack ability (Young 2005b, pp. 55-56). Graffiti removers

reflected this understanding in the way they described much of the graffiti they erased:

> *Jared, City of Marion volunteer: Most of it is unintelligible. It's just*
> *scribbles … It doesn't make any sense to me.*

> *Genevieve, City of Marion volunteer: I can't see the point in their tag.*
> *I just think it's … can I use the word? Crap … To me, it's got no value*
> *whatsoever to it … It's just a scrawl of letters and half of them don't*
> *make sense.*

> *Diana, Adelaide City Council paid worker: This morning we went*
> *down Grote St and there was ... [I] couldn't really tell you the name of*
> *it because it's hard to read some of them because it's just like*
> *squiggle-thing.*

Young (2005b, p. 56) argues that 'scribble', 'scrawl' and 'squiggle' are deliberately

critical representations of graffiti, implying the completed writing looks inept or

negligently done. However, many interviewees were careful not to characterise all

graffiti in such terms. They represented graffiti *tags* in this negative way, but they also

said certain forms of graffiti exhibited skill, describing such work as 'art' or 'murals'.

The skills of graffiti writers were frequently mentioned in response to a question about

whether graffiti removers would erase graffiti pictured in photographs they were

shown during their interview. One of these photographs was a wall of tags (Figure

6.1), and another picture depicted a large piece (Figure 6.2). The photograph of the

piece prompted several interviewees to talk about graffiti writers' skills, as these

examples show:

> *Oliver, City of Unley volunteer: It's a bit more stylised, a bit more*
> *thought into it ... It's got … two colours, shadows, crisp edges.*

Alana, City of Marion volunteer: That one's got talent … and it actually adds something because it's interesting and it's public art.

Con, City of Charles Sturt volunteer: To me that has a little bit of an abstract nature about it. … It's well done, well performed, thought out … there's some detail in there that's actually quite clever.

Figure 6.1. Tags, City of Charles Sturt

As noted above, some of these interviewees who represented graffiti pieces as art connected the skill of these writers with their older age. Yet, for some of those interviewed, a tension existed between the concepts of art and graffiti. For these individuals, ambiguity was evident in their responses to the photograph of the piece:

Ian, City of Marion volunteer: It's almost sort of artistic but it's not.

Stewart, City of Unley volunteer: To me that's not art, that's just a glorified tag.

Figure 6.2. Piece, City of Charles Sturt

In addition to technical skills, interviewees imagined graffiti writers to have great physical strength and agility. For instance, graffiti writers were noted for their ability to work 'amazingly quickly' and to access seemingly inaccessible spots:

> *They climb up on buildings and hang themselves over the side and spray … I think: 'How the hell did they get that up there?' It's amazing the way they do it. (Patrick, City of Salisbury volunteer)*

This sense of wonderment can be compared with the construction of the graffiti writer as superhero, someone with superhuman abilities (Campos 2013). For graffiti removers, the graffiti writer was perhaps more comparable with a supervillain, putting their skills to work in the form of crime and anti-social behaviour rather than for the good of the community.

Violence and other crime

A common perception of graffiti writers is that they are somehow connected to other, often violent, forms of crime. This link was suggested by several interviewees, such

as Howard, the Marion volunteer who associated graffiti and violence in a discussion about threats that former graffiti removal volunteers had received:

> *These were quite young that issued the threat to them … when you read of some of these 'king hits' and punches, it's not the guys in their 50s who are doing it … sad to say it's guys in their teens who are dying, and guys in their teens are doing it.*

In another respect, the majority of interviewees talked about graffiti as a physical attack on material property. One Adelaide City Council paid graffiti remover talked about 'team hits', whereby an organised group wrote graffiti 'like a little whirlwind'. A smaller number of interviewees also suggested graffiti could metaphorically 'hit' people. For example, Callie, an Unley volunteer, described how she would cross into the neighbouring City of Mitcham 'and it hits me, their graffiti compared with ours … it's just horrendous … it's everywhere'. Callie later clarified that graffiti writers did not do 'antisocial things like slashing tyres of cars or … those sorts of things or hurting people'.

These metonymical references to graffiti have a long history in the news media and official discourse (Young 2005b, pp. 56-62). This discourse has represented graffiti as causally related to other forms of criminal offending such that it has become part of an 'intensified nexus of criminality' (Young 2005b, p. 57). In a 'leap of bad faith', the aggression of the graffiti aesthetic is imputed to the mentality of the writer, and that aggression is also extended from the production of the illegal image to the passer-by who sees it (Young 2005b, p. 60). References to the violence of graffiti also correspond with recent research showing how illegal graffiti and street art are described in ways suggesting they can '*physically* attack, rob, or commit violence to their victims and local communities' (Schacter 2008, p. 43). These destructive imputations may be understood in the context of graffiti's positioning in law as criminal damage or in relation to particular property damage offences (Young 2014b)[1]. Yet, as some graffiti removers suggested, people may 'feel a sense of violence' when they

see graffiti, but they recognised that graffiti itself was not violent.

Digital technology

Another theme that emerged in the interviews was the use of digital telecommunications technology to produce and display graffiti and, to a lesser extent, fight graffiti. Interviewees talked about how graffiti writers sent images of their work to friends via mobile phones or uploaded them to Facebook, YouTube or other web pages. One interviewee who had spoken to a young person interested in graffiti said members of 'crews' also used their phones to organise the production of collective pieces with others. Other interviewees contrasted the use of smart phones by young people generally to communicate and exchange information with how older people gained information:

> *Interviewer: I suppose more and more people are using phones or computers for bus and train, tram timetables these days.*
>
> *Stewart, City of Unley volunteer: ... Yes and no maybe. My experience with the bowling club and others is that not a huge percentage … are that into phones and even internet … and particularly smart phones and things like that ... That's more the young people would go in for that.*

This exchange relates to general intergenerational differences, but it also reveals different experiences and expectations of the interviewee – aged in his 70s – and interviewer – aged in my 30s – and how it is important to clarify assumptions in research interviews. For one interviewee, City of Unley volunteer Oliver, differences in the ways that younger and older people communicated reflected contrasting values:

> *[Teenagers] don't see … a sense of community …They have a sense of people … who they text and whatever they do … but they're not what you'd call citizens as per Rome … I don't think they've even got a concept of private property.*

Several graffiti removers also noted how they used mobile phones in their own work,

such as photographing tags they had painted over and phoning the police when they saw someone writing graffiti.

How graffiti removers accounted for graffiti

Even though it was not a stated focus of the research interviews, most interviewees sought to account for why people did graffiti. One popular explanation was that graffiti writers were motivated by a desire for recognition or attention. Interviewees accounting for graffiti in these terms said graffiti writers wanted to have their work seen by others and they targeted places where this would be likely. As Salisbury volunteer, Patrick, explained:

> *Graffiti artists don't graffiti where it can't be seen … They always graffiti where someone can see it … They like to advertise their work. We find that. Bus shelters, anything that's noticeable, they target.*

Some interviewees believed graffiti writers wanted their friends to see their tags, whereas others said the general population was their intended audience.

> *Interviewer: We talked about some of the spots where graffiti keeps reappearing. Can you … identify particular locations …?*
>
> *Callie, City of Unley volunteer: … Along the Porter Street bike route. They seem to like to do it where it can be seen by lots of people … and I think it's probably because they have low self-esteem or something.*

This interviewee and others conflated a desire for recognition with psychological problems such as low self-esteem or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Such an understanding frames the desire to be recognised as a problem situated at the level of the individual, rather than interpreting it as an unproblematic and widespread human need (Halsey & Young 2006). Indeed, recognition was also important for graffiti removers. As Chapter Four showed, recognition from passers-by was a positive aspect of graffiti removers' work and, for many, a sign they had done a 'good job'.

The suggestion that graffiti writers' wanted to be recognised was often situated in discussions about the assumed effectiveness of rapid removal as a graffiti reduction strategy. Chapter Two noted the connection between rapid removal and the broken windows thesis. Interviewees talked about rapid and repeated removal as a council policy, a strategy they had learned from other graffiti removers, and an approach their own experiences had indicated was effective. These interviewees suggested rapid removal interrupted the desire of graffiti writers to be recognised for their tag by reducing the length of time it was on public display.

> *Interviewer: What do you think when you see graffiti? What goes through your mind?*
>
> *Kieran, City of Marion volunteer: These days I just think, 'Oh, no. Not again.' Something like that (laughs). I just think, 'Oh, well. The sooner I get to that job the better.'*
>
> *Interviewer: … Why is it important to get to it sooner?*
>
> *Kieran: It puts them off because … they want to show their mates and people, 'Oh, look what I did.' So if it's gone the next day they can't show their mates or anybody else …*

This exchange reveals connections between graffiti writers' desire for recognition, rapid removal techniques and the repetitious nature of graffiti erasure. These links could be interpreted as suggesting that interviewees understood the 'never-ending' nature of graffiti erasure in terms of its denial of the recognition people sought from doing graffiti, thereby minimizing the taint they experienced for engaging in such repetitious work.

A second explanation for graffiti was that it was vandalism aimed at destroying or damaging property. For many interviewees, graffiti was branded vandalism when it was done in particular places, such as in cemeteries or on war memorials. This framing of graffiti as vandalism can be contrasted with forms of graffiti art that interviewees said were driven by a desire for creative expression. The threshold between graffiti as vandalism and graffiti as art was often described in terms of skill,

legal status and aesthetic qualities:

> *I mean I don't mind graffiti art … It's not my taste of art … but I think if somebody's got that skill and has permission and does something like that, that's fine … because there's some skill in it and it's not done for attention seeking, it's done because that's reflecting the personality of that person (Luke, City of Unley volunteer).*

These distinctions between art and vandalism echo the views of graffiti writers who define graffiti by separating 'art' (piecing) from 'vandalism' (tagging) (Halsey & Young 2006).

In contrast to the psychological 'attention-seeking' factors described above, interviewees also identified sociological reasons for graffiti writing. For example, some interviewees suggested unemployment provided young people with time to write graffiti and a collective sense of frustration and boredom. As the following response from Mount Barker volunteer Norman shows, youth unemployment was also sometimes assumed to go hand-in-hand with family problems.

> *Interviewer: What is it about Mount Barker do you think that might help explain that lack of volume [of graffiti]?*
> *Norman: Maybe fewer frustrated kids … I think some of the other areas being out of work, [they have] maybe dysfunctional families [and] kids are frustrated. They … take it out on the world and … being able to display something that offends … the general public ... they get some pleasure out of that.*

Thus, graffiti was seen by some as an opportunity for individuals who were out of work and frustrated to experience pleasurable feelings. As Charles Sturt volunteer Wesley put it, writing graffiti was 'the way they get their kicks'.

A fourth reason interviewees said people did graffiti was to claim physical space, in a similar way that an animal marks its territory. This view identifies graffiti as dirt by linking it to bodily waste fluids such as urine (Young 2005b, pp. 53-55). In the words of City of Marion volunteer Mervyn:

… people put it there in the first place … for other graffiti [writers]…
or other friends to notice that that's their tag, they've been there …
It's like a dog … leaving its scent on the ground.

Young (2005b, p. 66) has written that the paradox of hip hop graffiti is 'it *displays illegibility,* it offers up for reading that which cannot be read (except by the initiated few)'. For graffiti removers, this illegibility of graffiti tags was connected with 'mindlessness'. Interviewees said they could not read tags nor understand the logic of graffiti writing and thus explained it away as a senseless act. Marion volunteer Jared illustrated this view:

Most of it is unintelligible. I'm sure the people who indulge in graffiti
must have some sort of shorthand or code or signals, symbols for
themselves … Most of it makes no sense to me … It's just random
scribbles.

Biography

The presumed youth of graffiti writers can be contrasted with the age of the graffiti removers interviewed in this study, more than two thirds of whom were aged 60 years or over. Against this backdrop, some among those interviewed situated their remarks about young people and graffiti within their own life stories. For them, graffiti was an 'imported culture', as one volunteer put it, arriving in Australia in their lifetime and becoming widespread. By doing this, graffiti had distorted the meanings these interviewees had constructed for their local and national places of residence. Some interviewees took up the myth of a 'golden era' (Pearson 1983) in their constructed past by suggesting the emergence of graffiti in Australia was attached to the broader problems of young people and incivility. These problems were expressed in terms of an erosion of respect, a decline in discipline, and a deterioration in parenting and teaching standards, as Unley volunteer Oliver explained:

Teachers ... used to be authoritarian figures – suit, tie.... You got to
respect them … Hey, I didn't respect them a bit. No, I did respect

> *them but I did get into trouble quite a few times … just making a*
> *noise, acting a fool … but I wasn't a vandal.*

Oliver links graffiti and vandalism to declining authoritarianism and respect. Yet his initial claim that he 'didn't respect them a bit' implies some ambiguity around the meaning of respect. Even those interviewees with more sympathy for young people reconstructed the past as a simpler, easier and more disciplined time:

> *I don't know why they stopped the services. They should be going*
> *into the services and getting a skill. That way if you can't get it any*
> *other way that's the best way to get it … because you're getting paid*
> *for it and you're getting good knowledge whereas out in the world*
> *today if you're not on a computer and … able to do things through*
> *computers … you haven't got a lot of scope … It's hard for kids today*
> *(Genevieve, City of Marion volunteer).*

This volunteer was not the only interviewee to show concern for 'kids today'. Amid much hostility towards graffiti, interviewees also conveyed a 'belief in the species' when talking about the future lives of young graffiti writers and those who might become graffiti writers (Erikson 1993).

Generativity

A potentially useful way to contextualise this belief that graffiti removers placed in young graffiti writers is as an aspect of generativity. Based on the work of Erikson, generativity is a multifaceted concept that broadly refers to a concern for and commitment to promoting and contributing to successive generations. A large range of activities can be generative, including many of those performed as volunteer work. McAdams and de St Aubin's (1992) model of generativity has seven parts: symbolic immortality and a 'need to be needed', societal norms experienced as cultural demand, concern for the next generation, belief in the goodness and worthwhileness of human life, commitment to act for the next generation, action guided by commitment, and narration of generativity as part of one's life story.

The desire of graffiti removers for symbolic immortality was perhaps most clearly illustrated in the conviction of many that they could, with perseverance, permanently restore an 'original' surface, thus embedding their desires within the material environment. They suggested they had been empowered to restore the urban aesthetic to its proper state, which, as this Unley volunteer said, was linked to positive feelings such as pride.

> *Interviewer: You were talking about some work you did yesterday. What difference do you think it made to those boxes once you'd removed the graffiti?*
> *Luke: Oh, I'm so proud of them. They looked as good as new.*

The significance of a clean, original and 'good-as-new' utility box for this volunteer recalls the 'broken windows' logic that privileges the surface appearance and aesthetics of 'proper' social order (Austin, J 2001, p. 146). As Cresswell (1992) writes, graffiti creates an illusion of disorder, one that is attached to a set of ideas about 'proper places'. According to Cresswell, notions of proper places are related to the meanings or behavioural expectations attached to locations by the dominant groups in society. In an analysis of 'the proper', Davies (1998) draws on Derrida for an insight into dimensions of the concept: 'The horizon of absolute knowledge is … the reappropriation of difference, the accomplishment of what I have elsewhere called the *metaphysics of the proper [le proper* – self-possession, propriety, property, cleanliness' (Derrida 1974, p. 26, as cited in Davies 1998, p. 149). Davies writes that in deconstructing the proper, Derrida indicates that it is never itself. 'The closure which it insists upon is only established with the expenditure of a certain force, or even violence, separating the law from non-law' (Davies 1998, p. 170). For Adelaide graffiti removers, the proper was defined in terms of surfaces that were graffiti-free - in terms of 'its (improper) other' - rather than in terms of what it was. Thus the act of graffiti removal may be understood as 'an ongoing ideological *act*' that sustained places as proper (Davies 1998, p. 171).

Graffiti removers also evinced a 'need to be needed' in their frequent references to positive public feedback, as described in Chapter Four. A City of Marion volunteer, Boyd, linked this public feedback to his role of restoring the urban aesthetic to a clean and proper state:

> *Interviewer: What about when you're painting over. What are the signs you've done a good job when you do that?*
>
> *Boyd: Oh, people say, 'What a good job.'*
>
> *Interviewer: Mm. Yep.*
>
> *Boyd: If it comes right off naturally, it's better … because it's completely clean.*
>
> *Interviewer: And what makes completely clean so important?*
>
> *Boyd: … It looks like new again.*

This desire to be of some importance to others in the local community again demonstrates the isomorphism of graffiti removers and graffiti writers. Similar to the way graffiti writers appreciate recognition from others for their tags and pieces, many graffiti removers appreciated and often judged their work on the basis of public recognition they received.

McAdams and de St. Aubin's model for generativity proposes that inner desire and cultural demand combine to produce a concern for the next generation. For some graffiti removers, the importance of the development of the next generation was expressed in terms of the disciplinary and educational qualities of their work. This was how Marion volunteer Roland connected his removal of graffiti with his concern for young people:

> *I'm saying to them: 'As far as your name being on there, for maybe the law to see and for you to get in trouble or maybe for you to be embarrassed in future years, I'll take it off for you and you don't need to worry about it anymore.'*

The extent to which interviewees experienced cultural demand to engage in generative acts was demonstrated in discussions about age. Developmental

expectations suggest that individuals aged in their 30s and 40s begin to engage in generative acts (McAdams, Hart & Maruna 1998). In this study, the youngest interviewee was Alana, aged in her 20s. I asked her about how her removal of graffiti was understood in the context of a form of work that older people often did. In response, she recounted people's reaction when she had organised another local community event:

> *I think lots of people … were really surprised that someone in their 20s … was running this thing and I was like, 'Well this is a long term place for me … I just have this real strong sense of civic responsibility. Don't care what age you are … if you can help then that's awesome … and I don't have that much spare time and look what I'm doing so you should jolly well do something too' (laughs) … But … not everybody has the same capacity and I'm sure when we have a family … our full intention is to get our kids out there too … It's like we're going to perpetuate generations of people who are taking responsibility for their local area.*

Many graffiti removers also expressed belief in young graffiti writers, suggesting that they were fundamentally good. These interviewees described how graffiti writers could be deterred from doing graffiti and how their skills could be harnessed in more productive and respectful ways. According to these graffiti removers, deterrence could be achieved through rapid removal of graffiti, harsher penalties, improved education and intergenerational communication, and maturity. Chapter Four showed how graffiti removers believed in the effectiveness of rapid removal to deter graffiti writers. Many also recognised that while rapid removal might reduce localised graffiti, it could also displace graffiti writers to other geographic areas. Thus, particular interviewees – mostly volunteers with ambiguous views about graffiti – also discussed methods of more general deterrence. For example, more severe penalties – 'put him in the clink for six weeks' – were cited as an effective lever by a Charles Sturt volunteer who said existing sanctions for graffiti offences were inadequate to change an individual's behaviour.

Other interviewees advocated, and occasionally practised, a more inclusive approach

entailing education or intergenerational communication. One Marion volunteer, Genevieve, said that after she had agreed to participate in this study, she prepared for her interview by contacting a young family friend interested in graffiti:

> *I rang his mum up and asked: 'Çould I talk to him?' … and she said, 'Yeah. It'd be good for him to have that …' He's 15 but he's not doing well at school. [He] hates school and … she doesn't want him to get led astray … and she said: 'He really is interested in doing these pictures … so it might make him think a bit more when he does them … when he talks to you.' … and I thought, 'Oh, that's good. That's good from the mother's … point of view too.'*

This story highlights themes of social connectedness, isolation, expression, voice and identity. It seems to exemplify the processes of engagement that British researchers have argued could reduce perceptions of anti-social behaviour by building empathy and mutual respect among people (MacKenzie et al. 2010). Immediately after she told this story, this interviewee, aged in her 70s, spoke about her identity as a grandmother.

> *When I first started I was looking after my grandchild who was back then … seven … If I'd had him overnight … I'd take him out with me with a little brush and he'd help … just to teach him … what I'm doing … and we're getting rid of it … so if we do go anywhere with him and we pass a pole, he'll say: 'Oh, Grandma. There's a pole for you' (laughs) … so I don't think he'll touch a pole (laughs).*

The linking of these two stories contrasts the interviewee's young family friend with her grandson, illustrating the different conditions young people experience and the ways their education, role models and everyday experiences shape them. It also shows the positive impact some interviewees believed they could have on the next generation.

Several interviewees with belief in graffiti writers also observed how their skills could be harnessed in more productive and respectful ways. These comments often flowed from discussions about 'legal graffiti walls', sometimes with respect to older and more experienced graffiti writers. These graffiti walls were legal either in the sense the

council had designated them as places where people could freely write graffiti (Adelaide City Council's 'free wall'), or where individuals or groups had gained the permission of property owners.

The generative commitment of graffiti removal volunteers were evident in their 'personal strivings', which are objectives or goals people try to achieve in their daily life (Emmons 1986; McAdams, de St Aubin & Logan 1993). Frequently these strivings related directly to the next generation. For example, many interviewees talked about looking after grandchildren or other young family members, one interviewee voluntarily ran gymnastics classes for people aged 14 years and over, and another interviewee had voluntarily taught young people to drive. As these examples show, most interviewees were also engaged in one or several forms of generative action, the sixth feature of the model of generativity. The final feature, generative narration, is defined, in part, by 'moral steadfastness', which refers to a firmly-held and enduring set of basic beliefs and values (McAdams, Hart & Maruna 1998). For graffiti removers, values such as respect and care were articulated as key features of their ideologies. These concerns were frequently activated by the question of graffiti on a war memorial. Adelaide City Council paid worker Diana, who ranked a war memorial as the first place she would remove graffiti among a list of 12 different places, explained:

> *I get really angry when they tag our memorials because … they*
> *looked after us so it's out of respect for them sort of thing … They*
> *fought to ... get what we got now … To me, that's very low ... when*
> *they tag stuff like that.*

Collective and public hope

The removal of graffiti may also be understood as an example of collective hope. Braithwaite (2004) adapts Snyder's characteristics of individual hope to define collective hope as (a) shared social vision, (b) a sense of empowerment or political efficacy and (c) the existence of social institutions providing pathways for collective

action. For graffiti removers, their vision was for a local community with 'pristine', graffiti-free surfaces and high levels of safety and wellbeing. Many also expressed a goal related to the development and wellbeing of successive generations. In relation to empowerment and political efficacy, all interviewees had felt empowered to voice their disapproval of graffiti by erasing it, and most suggested they were making a difference. The level of empowerment interviewees experienced was differentiated according to the way their council organised its graffiti removal program. Finally, all interviewees had taken advantage of the graffiti removal programs of municipal authorities to access the necessary resources to pursue their vision. They also placed faith in the effectiveness of these councils' 'rapid removal' policies:

> *Interviewer: What sort of impact do you think instantly covering it has?*
>
> *Con, City of Charles Sturt volunteer: It annoys the shit out of the person that did it (laughs) … Wouldn't it annoy you? You spent all that time doing that and you're quite proud of the fact that you've done that … and then you go back the next day and it's gone. 'I've got to do it again and then I have to do it again and I have to do it again.' And all of a sudden it becomes a hard-work exercise to do this graffiti … Hopefully. Wishful thinking.*

Collective hope is distinct from public hope, which refers to hope 'articulated or held by actors acting politically in relation to societal goals' (Drahos 2004, p. 20). Drahos (2004, p. 33) writes that one of the dangers of public hope is that it can become 'a tool of manipulation, an emotional opiate that political actors use to dull critical treatments of decisions and policies that serve private rather than social interests'. In particular contexts, graffiti removal may be viewed as motivated by public hope. This is not to suggest that graffiti removal is a tool that serves the interests of the elected members of councils, their paid staff members or their volunteers. However, the large amounts of money expended by municipal authorities, public agencies, private businesses and individuals to erase graffiti have generated a large anti-graffiti industry in Australia and elsewhere manufacturing chemical solvents to remove

graffiti, anti-graffiti paint and other materials. Thus, even if they are effectively reducing graffiti, policies of graffiti removal are also serving the interests of the industry that has emerged around it. As Kramer (2012) argues, the broken windows thesis that seems to underpin policies of graffiti removal also serves the interests of 'growth machines' that aim to commodify and exploit urban spaces.

Furthermore, empirical evidence to support the removal of graffiti to reduce and prevent further graffiti is limited and context-specific, and the causal connection between disorder such as graffiti and more serious crime is spurious (Sampson & Raudenbush 1999). Concepts such as broken windows and contagion effects have been powerful enough to flow from the United States to be implicit in the talk of Adelaide graffiti volunteers, but they have also been used for political and economic purposes. For example, they have been used to justify the sums of money committed to graffiti removal in the name of preserving and developing urban vitality (Kramer 2015).

Conclusion

The dominant image of the graffiti writer that emerged from the interviews was a young person, who had particular spatial and socio-demographic characteristics. This relatively homogenous image of the graffiti writer belies the invisibility of these individuals and perhaps reflects widely mediated images and ways of talking about graffiti. However, the image also had complexities and ambiguities. Some graffiti writers were represented as technically skilled, creative and capable of producing beauty, whereas others were seen as nothing more than unskilled taggers. For most interviewees, the question of who wrote graffiti was interconnected with the question of why they did it. They interpreted the graffiti writer's desire for recognition as an adolescent and immature need, validating their assumption that most graffiti writers were young. Some interviewees also said that while graffiti writers were unlikely to be

home owners, they still had a desire to stake a claim to some territory, which they did by tagging buildings, fences, Stobie poles and so on. Age and a lack of proprietary rights were also connected to a desire to damage or destroy other people's property or 'public' places. Some interviewees also imagined that graffiti writers could find the time to offend only if they were unemployed or students. Unemployment was connected to frustration, which, in turn, was said to be linked to graffiti writing. However, interviewees were silent about the context of high youth unemployment in many parts of Adelaide, relatively low levels of income and wealth for those without work, and barriers to home ownership.

Interviewees also framed graffiti as symbolic of undesirable changes in the social and moral order, such as declining levels of respect for other (older) people. For these interviewees, graffiti signified a change in relations between younger and older people. As Douglas (2002, p. 4) writes, types of pollution can be 'interpreted as symbols of the relation between parts of society, as mirroring designs of hierarchy or symmetry which apply in the larger social system'. As a response to this particular form of pollution, the erasure of graffiti gave interviewees the autonomy to physically defend or reassert their economic, aesthetic and moral values, and ownership of the community. However, some interviewees also represented graffiti writers as human beings with familiar desires and motivations. They described graffiti removers as people who sought recognition from their peers, similar to the ways graffiti removers enjoyed positive public feedback. The isomorphism between graffiti removers and graffiti writers also extended to their preoccupation with visibility and aesthetics.

In the context of these intergenerational conflicts and similarities, graffiti removers understood their work as an opportunity to promote the development of succeeding generations. Interviewees suggested their erasure of illegal graffiti would promote the development and wellbeing of young people. They said it would do this by showing

these individuals that writing graffiti was pointless and that the graffiti remover would eventually prevail in their battle over the appearance of the urban environment. By doing this, interviewees saw themselves as upholding and preserving long-held community norms, the way 'things used to be', as one volunteer put it. This generativity was not as evident in all interviewees. Those individuals who were unequivocal about the negative impact of graffiti tended not to articulate a belief in the goodness of graffiti writers. Furthermore, generative qualities were less obvious in the two paid graffiti removers than they were in voluntary graffiti removers.

Interviewees' comments about human development and social norms were often rooted in ideas of 'proper behaviour'. Different responses to particular instances of graffiti exhibited how expectations concerning how people behave are, to some extent, spatially distributed and determined. These views contribute to the moral geography confronting graffiti writers, graffiti removers and others involved in producing and controlling graffiti such as small business owners, municipal authorities, mass transit companies, utility operators and so on. The removal of graffiti may also be understood as an example of collective hope in the sense its practitioners share a social vision of a graffiti-free community, feel empowered to remove graffiti, and have social institutions such as councils to provide pathways for collective action. By understanding their work in this way, graffiti removers resist the futility that others attach to the erasure of graffiti.

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[1] Graffiti culture itself also uses the language of destruction, such as 'burners' to describe pieces covering a train carriage and 'bombing' to denote extensive tagging (Young 2014b).

7. CONCLUSION

I often think to myself, 'What's the difference between my area and … Unley/Mitcham?' … It's tree-lined streets, people parking their jolly cars off the park and people taking responsibility for their property, and lack of graffiti. (Alana, City of Marion volunteer)

If graffiti writers and street artists are communicating with the city, graffiti removers are also saying something when they erase their illicit words and images. When graffiti removers paint over a complex and colourful but illegal piece, they reveal how members of a community privilege different aesthetics in public spaces. In situations where they do not paint over such graffiti, intergroup conflict and negotiation can serve to re-arrange this hierarchy. When graffiti removers paint over tags on a Stobie pole but ignore tags at a skate park, they signal how they understand particular spaces should be used and by whom. They also reflect more practical concerns such as the ease of accessing and working on a Stobie pole's painted vertical concrete surface. When graffiti removers choose particular times to paint over or scrub off graffiti to avoid contact with the perpetrators, they project a threatening image of the graffiti writer and reflect ingrained ideas about disorder connected to the logic of 'broken windows'. Yet graffiti removers also hold contrary images of the graffiti writer and many of them are ambivalent towards the appearance of graffiti and what it signifies. These aesthetic, spatial and temporal concerns can help us to think about how decisions are made as to which graffiti is erased, which spaces are targeted and when graffiti is removed. They also reveal the conflict, uncertainty and ambivalence characterizing graffiti removal in Adelaide.

The substantial community resources devoted to managing graffiti is a problem for local councils, state government authorities and other property owners. The aim of this thesis is not to recommend ways to resolve the 'graffiti problem', but rather to

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show how the stories of graffiti removers can contribute to a re-imagining of the problem. As Iveson (2009, p. 29) writes, the costs of graffiti can be more accurately discussed as the cost of graffiti *removal.* This concluding chapter begins with a summary of the thesis' main findings and arguments. Then I discuss how these arguments can be understood in the context of criminological, sociological and geographical concepts. The chapter concludes by providing recommendations based on the stories of Adelaide graffiti removers. These recommendations show how a prosocial and flexible approach to graffiti may be important in encouraging more community connectedness, mutual respect and civility.

Summary and conceptual development

The development of Adelaide's urban areas since European settlement has been defined by careful planning, design and aesthetic considerations. Graffiti removers in Adelaide understood graffiti tags as a distasteful and visible defacement of particular spaces within the metropolitan area. For them, tags signalled a lack of care and respect for the spaces in which they were written and the people who used these spaces. Questions about graffiti also stimulated stories and ideas related to other forms of unlawful and disrespectful behaviour, and the deleterious effects graffiti had on real estate values. This is consistent with Skogan's (1990) argument that disorder, including graffiti, undermines the stability of the housing market and plays a role in the deterioration and abandonment of houses and commercial buildings. Sentiments such as these link the stories of Adelaide graffiti removers to the disorder and incivilities theories discussed in Chapter Two. Incivilities theories also connect disorder to experiences of fear (Skogan 1990; Wilson & Kelling 1982). However, when asked directly, most interviewees in this study said graffiti did not make them feel fearful. The emotional reactions they more commonly described were annoyance, frustration, disgust, outrage and anger, which supports research showing that fear is only one of several potential responses to crime and disorder (Ditton et al. 1999;

Farrall & Ditton 1999; Innes 2004).

Public anger

One way to interpret some of these responses is as what Durkheim referred to as 'public anger'. This is anger that is 'of everybody without being that of anybody in particular' (Durkheim 1984, p. 58). According to Durkheim, the sentiments involved in public anger are strongly felt and given a particular respect because they are not contested. Interviewees attached this type of universality to illegal graffiti tags by framing them as a violation of property laws and community norms. They demonstrated community consensus by noting the gratitude and praise they received from people who saw them at work. The high intensity of their sentiments towards graffiti tags was clear in the use of language such as 'mess', 'crap', 'puerile', 'offensive', 'awful', 'horrendous' and 'appalling'. Yet the strength of their feelings was not generalized, but specific to places, such as 'sacred' war memorials and the more mundane but visible spaces and objects, such as Stobie poles. In other situational contexts, such as an abandoned building, interviewees suggested graffiti was more acceptable.

Feelings of worry or fear were not absent from the accounts of Adelaide graffiti removers. The way in which many of them described their behaviours intimated a concern linked to the presence of graffiti. For example, several graffiti removers organised their work to minimize the likelihood they would encounter anyone writing graffiti. Thus, the sentiments experienced when someone sees graffiti are fluid, and contingent on time, place and the form and extent of the graffiti. Some interviewees also claimed to be unconcerned by the repetition of tags or the targeting of the same places. They managed an ambivalence that was rooted in aesthetic values and context, but which also suggested that, as ugly as it was, graffiti would always return and there was no point getting angry about it.

Public order/disorder

The 'broken windows' thesis emphasises the importance of the time that something remains unrepaired or abandoned (Taylor, 1996). As Skogan (1990, p. 75) puts it: '"Broken windows" do need to be repaired quickly.' In the lexicon of graffiti removal, this type of response is known as 'rapid removal', and it was another important theme in the interviews with graffiti removers. For these individuals, the logic of rapid removal guided their approach to erasing graffiti and was mobilised to defend their work from accusations of repetitiveness and futility. When graffiti was not quickly removed, interviewees said it showed that residents were indifferent and could stimulate others to 'trash' a place, use illicit drugs, engage in interpersonal violence and cruelty towards animals, and break-in to cars and homes. As Lee, the City of Marion volunteer quoted at the beginning of this thesis, said: graffiti 'can create an atmosphere where crime is tolerated'. This 'atmosphere' recalls Glazer's (1979, pp. 10-11) argument that graffiti 'contributes to a prevailing sense of the incapacity of government, the uncontrollability of youthful criminal behaviour, and a resultant uneasiness and fear'. This 'atmosphere', 'sense' or 'feel' was not explained in detail by interviewees, but was loosely connected with crime, violence and danger.

Thus, for many interviewees, graffiti was a sign of disorder. However, their understanding of local graffiti also diverged from disorder theories in notable ways. First, most interviewees believed local people did the majority of graffiti, contrary to the notion that crime and disorder is the act of an 'outsider' and the idea that the orderly people in a community can be clearly differentiated from the disorderly (Innes & Fielding 2002). The finding that many graffiti removers believed local people were responsible for graffiti coheres with Girling et al.'s (2000) study showing how residents of an English town attributed petty crime to local young people. A second difference is related to the suggestion that disorder theories devote little attention to the ambivalence and diversity of attitudes towards graffiti and other disorder. As Innes

and Fielding (2002) have written, these theories tend to assume members of a community are committed to shared norms, including a desire to live in a community free of crime and disorder. A small number of Adelaide graffiti removers had no tolerance for any form of graffiti, but most of them differentiated between 'artistic' graffiti and 'messy' graffiti. Some also saw 'art' in graffiti that others could not see. The heterogeneity within and between the accounts of graffiti removers unsettle disorder theories' assumption of relative consensus.

Innes' signal crime theory can help to better understand the ways graffiti removers described and explained graffiti. Building on some of the insights of disorder theories, the signal crime concept suggests crime and disorder can function as communicative acts (Innes 2004; Innes & Fielding 2002). However, unlike disorder theories, this concept does not assume all criminal offences and disorderly acts have the same 'signal value'; nor does it suggest a community will share a consensus about which events are troublesome. For Adelaide graffiti removers, tags seemed to indicate that something was wrong or lacking, and, for most interviewees, prompted them to take action by volunteering to paint over or scrub them. Moreover, they understood tags in particular places to have a high 'signal value' in terms of their 'social visibility' (Innes, 2004).

There seems to be something about the graffiti tag - its indecipherability, rapid execution, ubiquity and simplicity - that rankles people. I would argue these qualities separate graffiti tags from other forms of disorder, and distinguishes their removal from other types of community activism. Perhaps more than other responses to disorder, graffiti removal had a special quality for these interviewees, connecting them to ideas of 'original', 'pure' and 'proper' places that spoke to an earlier, simpler and more respectful era. Graffiti removal also permitted these individuals to take action in response to keenly-felt emotions of anger and annoyance, and to a more chronic

disempowerment felt by people in a world shaped by economic restructuring and advances in information and communication technology. For these individuals, graffiti removal provided an opportunity to 'resist the writers and motivate themselves to produce alternative aesthetic motifs in the same urban environment' (O'Brien 2005, pp. 603-604).

Other concepts relevant to matters of public order may help to further understand the work of graffiti removers. For example, graffiti removal can be thought of as evidence of 'grassroots' activism in which people take responsibility and mount their own efforts to prevent or reduce crime (Friedman & Clark 1996). However, as Carr (2005) writes, these 'grassroots insurgencies' can lack the organisation, structure and enabling arrangements of professional organisers contributing to successful initiatives. For Adelaide graffiti removers, municipal authorities provided the organisation and resources they required to effectively do their work. Without the paint, brushes, cloths, protective equipment and so on that councils supplied, 'you're putting your hand into your own pocket', as one volunteer put it. Furthermore, the councils' organisation and resourcing of the volunteer programs promoted the use of paints that matched the colour of particular surfaces, reducing the risk that residents would make a 'hell of a mess' while attempting to remove graffiti from particular surfaces. Therefore, interviewees recognised the structure and resourcing of these programs as important to their functioning.

At the same time, City of Marion and Unley interviewees valued the flexibility of their councils' volunteer programs for providing participants with greater autonomy to remove graffiti in their 'own time'. Many interviewees led busy lives - caring for grandchildren, performing other voluntary roles, doing paid work and so on - and the flexibility of graffiti removal enabled them to fit this work into their schedules when they had an opportunity. Rapid removal is well suited to local voluntary labour as the

people who travel through their communities several times a day can monitor their area in their everyday lives, respond to graffiti soon after they notice it, and remove anything that personally irritates, offends or angers them.

Social control

Graffiti removal can also be conceptualized as informal social control. This refers to the capacity of residents to regulate themselves according to collective goals such as public order, rather than formal regulation mechanisms applied to realise forced goals (Sampson, Raudenbush & Earls 1997). Informal social control includes the supervision of children and a willingness to intervene to prevent acts such as truancy and graffiti writing. Combined with social cohesion and mutual trust among neighbours, informal social control contributes to collective efficacy. Sampson and colleagues' research on collective efficacy suggests it can explain lower rates of crime and disorder after controlling for local sociodemographic characteristics (Sampson and Raudenbush, 1999). Many interviewees viewed graffiti removal as an intervention that controlled the behaviours of graffiti writers, consistent with the aims of informal social control and collective efficacy. But graffiti removal differed from other methods of informal social control in the sense it was a less confrontational and more flexible intervention. It enabled those who did it to maintain some anonymity and thus protect their personal safety and property. For many, graffiti removal also allowed them to work at times and locations they chose.

Another difference between the graffiti removal described in this research and informal social control is that the municipal authorities were, to some extent, organising the removal of graffiti within their boundaries. This involvement of councils makes the graffiti removal explored in this research more formal and structured than strategies of informal social control. These observations are consistent with Carr's (2005, p. 140) findings in relation to changes in strategies of informal control in the United States. A different way to understand graffiti removal is as a contemporary

form of community social control termed 'new parochialism' (Carr, P 2005). Carr (2005) argues that the bounded nature of some these new forms of civic participation are attractive for many people, in contrast with a more ongoing form of commitment such as supervising young people in public spaces. The new parochialism echoes Garland's (2001, p. 17) reference to 'preventative partnerships'. Graffiti removal would seem to be one aspect of this new crime control establishment.

A dimension of community social control that has not received significant attention is the extent to which it is understood as 'dirty work'. Interviews with graffiti removers suggested that performing work connected to symbolic notions of dirt such as crime and graffiti can taint the identity of those doing the work. These individuals can be stigmatized as 'dirty workers'. This was evident in the ways graffiti removers maintained their identity through 'reframing', 'infusing' and emphasising the control they held over their work environment. Yet, the ways graffiti removers described the status of their work and their identity was also pluralistic and context specific.

A dialectic of hope and futility

A major theme in the ways interviewees talked about graffiti removal was a dialectic of hope and futility. Some 'outsiders' that graffiti removers interacted with interpreted the reappearance of graffiti as a sign that removal was futile. A question some of these individuals asked graffiti removers was: 'Why do you bother?' In the face of this perception of futility, graffiti removers maintained a sense of hope. These individuals had a desire for graffiti in their local area to be reduced and an expectation that erasing graffiti would contribute to this objective, as is promised by the ideas of 'broken windows', 'contagion effects' and 'rapid removal'. The desire of interviewees to fight graffiti in a particular geographic area was evident in the ways many narrated their entry to graffiti removal, and in how all interviewees talked about staying in the work. Interviewees expressed a will to reduce and prevent graffiti, but the ongoing cycle of writing and erasure suggested this desire was never fully satisfied.

The cyclical pattern of graffiti also helped to account for how the feeling of many interviewees was one of expectation rather than certainty. Their identity was not triumphant, but rather it was a more unfinished state of overcoming. Graffiti removers talked about particular hot spots where they had halted graffiti, but they also described how graffiti had sometimes reappeared in these same spaces. They showed a concern that graffiti may resume in these spaces at any time by noting their ongoing monitoring of their area. For these individuals, uncertainty surrounded when graffiti would return, but its reappearance seemed inevitable. It could be back 'tonight', as one interviewee said.

Chapter Six outlined how hope can be experienced at an individual, collective and public level. The three factors Braithwaite (2004) identifies as defining collective hope - shared social vision, empowerment and institutional pathways – emerged in the interviews with Adelaide graffiti removers. However, this sense of collective hope had at least two problems. The first problem is that the graffiti remover's social vision of a community free of illegal graffiti is not shared by everyone. Residents and business owners in certain sections of cities and in particular suburbs celebrate 'grit as glamour' (Lloyd 2010). For example, residents of Melbourne's inner-city Fitzroy and Brunswick see graffiti as an integral part of their character, in both positive and negative terms (Dovey, Wollan & Woodcock 2012). The second problem is that, at different times, particular individuals, organisations and institutions can seize control from the citizenry the 'vision' for a particular city, suburb or space. Graffiti removers provided examples of instances where they were instructed to pay special attention to particular spaces that were sites of events such as the Adelaide Fringe Festival. Conversely, interviewees recounted occasions when they had been ordered not to remove graffiti from certain spaces at particular times, such as tram and rail corridors. These examples illustrate the politics of graffiti removal. Furthermore, the collective hope of graffiti removal is implicitly built on cultural resources such as the 'broken windows'

thesis, and depends on the erasure of the images and history of a particular group of citizens. In this respect, its foundations are rather anti-social.

However, at the same time, the removal of graffiti sustains graffiti writing culture. Erasure creates spaces for new tags and pieces and, in certain environments, has contributed to developments in style and technique. Furthermore, in the context of rapid removal policies, the digital world has emerged as a repository for images of graffiti and street art, perhaps in a more permanent sense than walls and canvases.

Geographic variation

This thesis also identified geographic variation among Adelaide graffiti removers. For example, graffiti removers working in Adelaide City Council were more likely than other interviewees to talk about erasing street art, particularly stickers. These relatively higher levels of street art led to other differences, such as the opposition Adelaide workers sometimes experienced towards their work and their negotiation of the blurred moral boundaries concerning illegal graffiti and legitimated murals and street art.

In the peri-urban district of Mount Barker, people from the city were said to be writing graffiti in particularly prominent places. Thus, although Mount Barker was located some distance from central Adelaide, separated by the Mount Lofty Ranges, it remained an attractive target for city graffiti writers who could exploit improved commuter links to the city. However, in the other outer suburban area of Salisbury, volunteers did not talk about such incursions by outsiders. They may have understood Salisbury as more closely connected with Adelaide's urban centre via transport links and geographic location, and thus were less likely to distinguish between locals and outsiders from the city. Mount Barker volunteers also appeared to be removing less graffiti than their counterparts in other municipalities, such as Marion and Unley, perhaps reflecting, in part, its greater distance from the urban centre and the

concentration of graffiti in cities. Another municipality to be targeted by non-locals, according to graffiti removers, was Adelaide City Council. As paid worker Harry said: 'There's a lot of foot traffic off of Hindley, nightlife effectively … They come off the main nightlife strips, wander off … they do their graffities and go off on their merries and do their social thing.' These comments can be read in the context of spatial theories of offending suggesting that crime can occur in the routine activities of offenders. Although this research found differences between local government areas relating to the writing and erasure of graffiti, no single approach emerged as the most effective at controlling graffiti.

Concluding remarks

Ideas about 'proper places' are codes dictating which behaviours and activities are appropriate and inappropriate in given spaces. To define 'the proper' requires reaching 'outside itself to that which is common, and to its (improper) other' (Davies 1998, p. 171). 'The proper is an affirmation of the pure through its exclusion of an other, in particular any other cast as contamination' (Davies 1998, p. 168). This thesis has shown how, according to Adelaide graffiti removers, the 'proper place' for graffiti has spread beyond the art gallery (Cresswell 1992) to other spaces that imply some sort of authority, respect and due process. These include the side walls of particular types of businesses, 'legal walls', and spaces where murals have been painted to deter tagging.

The proper place for graffiti also extended to spaces that were not visible or of any utility to most people. Interviewees noted that abandoned buildings were no longer serving the expected function of a building, had little useful relationship with people and therefore they would allow graffiti to proliferate there. However, an exception would be an abandoned building next door to one's own home. For most of the graffiti removers interviewed, skate parks were of no utility, but rather were the domain of

young people. Once again, interviewees were more tolerant of graffiti in these spaces. This view contrasts with the approach of the Adelaide City Council, which, according to one worker, routinely removed graffiti from its former skate park to reduce the risk of injury to its users. This counterpoint helps to show how ideas about proper places can shift depending on one's perspective. This thesis has also revealed perceptions concerning 'proper' and 'improper' graffiti removal. For most interviewees, a proper removal refers to a 'clean' and 'invisible' performance, whereas an improper graffiti removal refers to the patches, smudges and stains that are visible on urban surfaces.

For graffiti removers, the locations and surfaces where they removed graffiti - Stobie poles, utility boxes, road signs and so on - were all improper places for tags and throw-ups. But, to define the proper appearance of a surface painted with graffiti, we must refer to the improper - to graffiti - by describing the surface as 'graffiti-free' or 'clean'. As is the case with the proper, defining cleanliness depends on a reference to something outside itself, to 'dirt', 'pollution' or 'messy' tags. When the proper and the pure are thought about in this way, places cannot be defined as proper or clean when there is no graffiti. Graffiti removers also suggested the 'proper' places for graffiti were abandoned buildings or skate parks. They are only proper places in relation to the existence of other places where graffiti is inappropriate. By setting up this dichotomy between proper and improper, the act of graffiti removal affirms norms concerning property, order and purity. To preserve ideas of proper places, orderly communities and clean surfaces, graffiti must continue to exist and, similarly, the removal of graffiti must continue.

Whichever way that councils and other property owners respond to graffiti, people will continue to write, erase and re-write graffiti. The production and memory of these images and these individuals cannot be permanently destroyed, and this is the context in which authorities need to situate their response to graffiti. The moral politics

associated with the widespread criminalization and removal of graffiti contrasts with prosocial responses that some councils engage in and which encourage social connectedness, inter-group understanding, tolerance and mutual respect. These prosocial responses require a reimagining of the graffiti problem as a problem of graffiti removal (Iveson 2009). One aspect of this problem is that, in a similar way to laws concerning graffiti, council policies regarding graffiti removal often do not distinguish between different types of graffiti and street art (Iveson 2009). Thus, for many councils in Australia, responses are the same for all forms of graffiti and street art produced without the permission of the property owner, exhibiting 'zero tolerance' of graffiti (Halsey & Young 2002; Young 2005a). For example, Young (2010) has documented how the City of Melbourne rejected a draft graffiti management strategy based on the idea of 'negotiated consent' in favour of a policy of zero tolerance of graffiti and stencils. This thesis has shown how the biographies, cultural resources, values and sense of place of individual graffiti removers can be important in their responses to different instances of graffiti. For example, graffiti removers can and do make aesthetic judgements when they draw distinctions between 'good' and 'bad' graffiti. This may create an opportunity for them to be given more power to leave graffiti they believe looks 'good', regardless of its legal status.

If graffiti removers can make these judgements, others in the community could be similarly empowered to identify graffiti they believe is acceptable. Councils could tap into community sentiment by providing a tool for people to support particular instances of graffiti, similar to existing mechanisms used to lodge complaints about graffiti. This system could enable councils to engage in a process of weighing up whether graffiti would remain. Judgements about the offensive nature of graffiti – such as those expressing sexism, racism and homophobia – could also be included in this weighing up process.

Graffiti writers can also be effective 'curators' of spaces. This has been demonstrated

in another Adelaide local government area, the City of Prospect. Since 1997, KAB101

and other graffiti writers have gained permission or been invited by property owners

to paint the walls of a Prospect laneway (Kohn 2014). Providing another illustration of

social connectedness, this process has been gradual, informal and collaborative. In

2014, the council formally dual named the laneway: 'Honeysuckle/KAB101 Lane'.

Figure 7.1. Honeysuckle/KAB101 Lane, City of Prospect

Curating is not necessarily a permanent means of managing graffiti and the

appearance of spaces. An example is the Showground Central Mural (SCM) on a

250 metre-long wall in Wayville in the City of Unley, part of which was painted by

graffiti writers engaged by an artist managing the project (Halsey & Pederick 2010).

According to Halsey and Pederick (2010), a major aim of the SCM was to transform

a long-time 'graffiti hot-spot' into an 'art-spot'. Project stakeholders hoped that a

mural would be a superior alternative to a 'white wall' policy to limit and refine

graffiti's presence (Figure 7.2). By the time my research had been completed ten years after the mural's launch, the SCM had been covered with red paint, returned to a 'blank' space (Figure 7.3). This outcome may suggest that, just as graffiti is frequently ephemeral, programs and policies that seek to manage graffiti also need to be impermanent, open, informal and flexible.

Interviews with Adelaide graffiti removers may also help to understand how 'zones of tolerance' could become more acceptable to a community (Young 2010). An unintended consequence of existing graffiti removal policies is that they create informal zones of higher tolerance, which are spaces negotiated by property owners, graffiti writers and graffiti removers. These are the railway corridors, abandoned buildings and skate parks where graffiti often proliferates. The use of these spaces may be a precedent for other spaces to be designated as zones of tolerance. The boundary walls and fences of industrial properties and Stobie poles are other surfaces where graffiti is concentrated and where councils and property owners could show more tolerance. This type of policy does not prevent the removal of graffiti from other surfaces, such as timetables, road signs and house fences. However, it would reduce the amount of funding committed to paint and chemical removers for the erasure of graffiti where tolerance levels are relatively high. The commissioning of graffiti writers to produce authorized pieces and the provision of 'legal walls' are other prosocial measures some councils in Australia have implemented. Interviews with graffiti removers suggest a problem with such interventions is that, eventually, these walls and other surfaces around them may be flooded with tags, the form of graffiti that people most commonly seem to oppose. These problems need to be anticipated in policies promoting such measures.
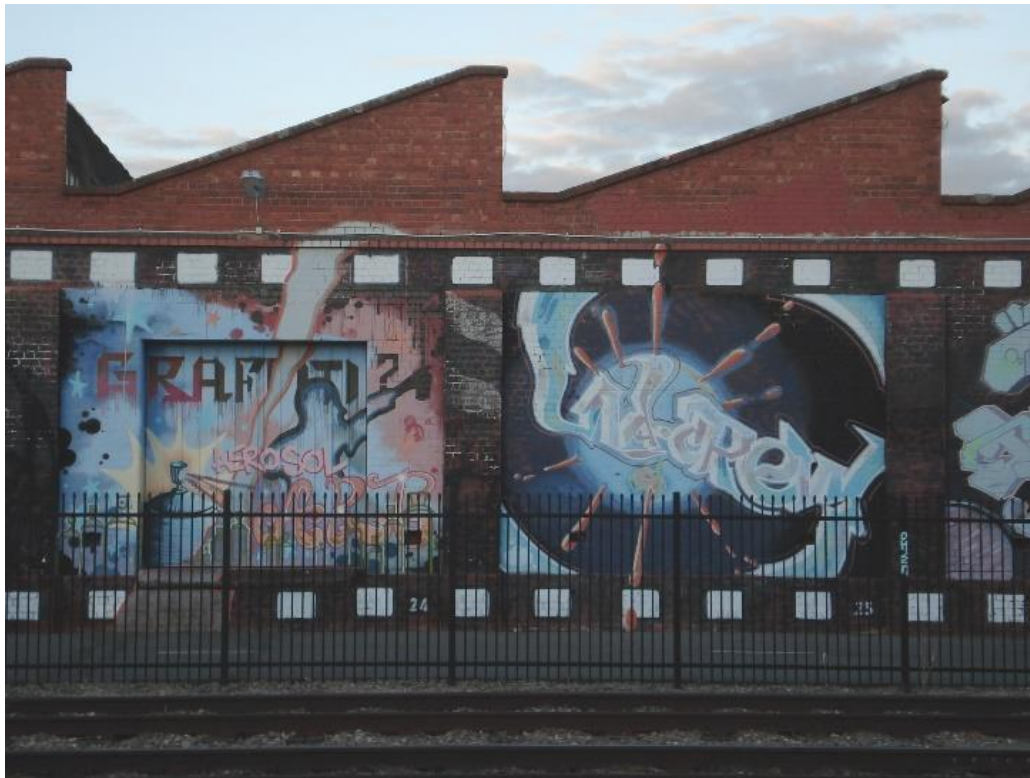
Figure 7.2. Showground wall, City of Unley, July, 2012

Figure7.3. Showground wall, City of Unley, December, 2015

Graffiti removal is a sign of social, cultural and economic change. The erasure of graffiti by volunteers reflects a widespread trend of governments at all levels in Australia and elsewhere increasingly outsourcing work traditionally within their sphere to voluntary labour, which is, at least in part a consequence of cost-saving measures. The enthusiasm of residents to remove graffiti provides local councils with a pool of resources they can draw upon as the South Australian economy continues to experience structural change, unemployment rates increase and individuals increasingly work part-time or casually.

Graffiti removers are on a 'never-ending' quest for proper surfaces, spaces and places because 'there is no proper' (Davies 1998, p. 171). That is, proper places do not exist except in relation to the improper or common, such as surfaces with 'anti-graffiti' paint or places with a 'lack of graffiti', as the interviewee quoted at the beginning of this chapter put it. The act of graffiti removal may not be futile in situations discussed in this thesis, where those who did it experienced hope, satisfaction and empowerment. But the search for an original and proper surface would seem to be futile. Councils and other property owners could instead direct these efforts to identifying surfaces where residents, traders, commuters, recreational and other users of particular spaces could, at least temporarily, tolerate or appreciate graffiti and street art.

APPENDIX A

Pseudonym	Biographical information
Colin	A Salisbury volunteer aged in his 60s who had lived in his home for 30-40 years and volunteered with the council for less than five years. 'Carisbrooke Park … I've seen beautiful murals there … like street art … and I thought, 'why in the hell have you done it there?'
Patrick	A Salisbury volunteer aged in his 60s who had lived in his home for over 10 years and volunteered with the council for less than five years. 'I used to hate [graffiti] totally, but at least now … I think, 'Oh, well. At least we can remove it.'
Gerald	A Salisbury volunteer aged in his 60s who had lived in his home for five years or less and had volunteered for less than five years. 'Hopefully they'll get sick of doing [graffiti] because they know it's going to be removed again.'
Con	A Charles Sturt volunteer who aged in his 50s who had lived in his home for over 10 years and had volunteered for less than five years. 'I get out there and I enjoy covering over … some little shit's bloody vandalism.'
Wesley	A Charles Sturt volunteer aged in his 70s who had lived in his home for more than 10 years and had volunteered with the council for 5-10 years. '[Graffiti] is like grass … When it rains it keeps growing … I don't think it'll ever go away.'
Diana	An Adelaide paid graffiti remover aged in her 40s who had lived in her home for less than five years and had worked in her position for 5-10 years. 'I don't like what they do but I like my job.'
Harry	An Adelaide paid graffiti remover aged in his 40s who had worked in his position for 5-10 years. He had lived in his home for more than 10 years. 'We've seen some really good stuff that we've been forced to remove that we don't want to but … if it's the request of the property owner …we're there for them.'
Norman	A Mount Barker volunteer aged in his 60s who had worked for the council for less than five years. He had lived at his home for less than five years. 'There's usually someone that is prepared to give up a few hours to right those sorts of things … because they're able to do it and … get satisfaction out of knowing that it's being removed.'
Luke	An Unley volunteer aged in his 60s with less than five years' experience. He had lived at his home for more than 10 years. 'We tend to be much more conscientious where it hits you in the face … we try and make that as good as new.'
Callie	An Unley volunteer aged in her 60s with less than five years' experience. She had lived at her home for more than 10 years. 'When … we had just the wipe stuff … it looked dirty at the end of it … and I thought: "Is this an improvement on what was there?"'
Oliver	An Unley volunteer aged in his 60s with less than five years' experience. He had lived in his home for more than 10 years. 'I just sort of finished … winding up work … and I thought: 'Oh, hate graffiti.' And I said … 'I'll sign up' … and I don't mind doing it because I can do it in my own time.'
Stewart	An Unley volunteer aged in his 70s who had volunteered for 5-10 years. He had lived in his home more than 10 years. 'It used to really irritate me – the graffiti on the tram stops ... particularly when they did the timetables … so ... about four, five years ago maybe I started to see if I could do anything about it.'
Howard	A Marion volunteer aged in his 70s who had volunteered for 5-10 years. He had lived in his home for more than 10 years. 'I find the tags meaningless, offensive and puerile … Some of the graffiti art …at times is quite impressive body of colour and shape.'

Boyd	A Marion volunteer aged in his 70s who had volunteered for less than five and lived in his home for more than 10 years. 'If [the graffiti] comes right off naturally, it's better … because it's completely clean.'
Simon	A Marion volunteer aged in his 40s with 5-10 years' experience. He had lived in his home for more than 10 years. 'I like to keep the place in a well-maintained state … If it's daggy people will just trash it so it's neat and tidy and clean.'
Kieran	A Marion volunteer aged in his 70s and with more than 10 years' experience. He had lived in his home for more than 10 years. 'People … talk to me on the road sometimes when I'm doing it. They say, 'Oh, why are you doing that? Oh, it will be back again tomorrow.'
Roland	A Marion volunteer aged in his 50s with more than 10 years' experience. He had lived in his home for more than years. 'I don't think it's proper and I feel upset and ashamed that young kids who go to school – young kids that I'm thinking of as future generations … they're really not thinking of how they're affecting me.'
Mervyn	A Marion volunteer aged in his 60s with more than five years' experience. He had lived in his home for more than 10 years. 'You don't like to see the area made look like it's a … slum-dwelling area … out of place with the character of the street … and the amenities and whatnot. Some of the murals aren't too bad, but there's a place for them.'
Genevieve	A Marion volunteer aged in her 70s who had less than five years' experience. She had lived in her home for less than five years. 'I just hated the look of it so I thought: 'Well, here goes. On my walks of a morning I'll take a paint brush and a bit of paint' … because I'm such a neat freak. I don't like things looking untidy.'
Jared	A Marion volunteer aged in his 50s who had less than five years' experience and less than five years in his current home. 'I'm very dispassionate about it … There are people letting off steam. There [could] be worse ways.'
Lee	A Marion volunteer aged in his 60s with more than 10 years' experience. He had lived in his home for more than 10 years. 'I recognise just painting it out once isn't going to solve the problem so I virtually take them on.'
Ian	A Marion volunteer aged in his 60s with less than five years' experience. He had lived in his home for more than 10 years. 'You see those bigger murals and some of the companies let them do it on their wall for advertising. That's fair enough ... but just scribbles and tags for the sake of it is just mindless'
Alana	A Marion volunteer with less than five years' experience and less than five years in her current home. 'It is a constant fight. It's not just, … 'Oh, no one's ever going to come back and do it again' because you've got that significant Housing Trust population down in the second end of the area.'

APPENDIX B

You have been given the following list of places/items and asked to remove graffiti from each of them in any order you wish. Please rank them in the order you would remove the graffiti, with 1 equal to where you would remove graffiti first and 12 equal to where you would remove graffiti last.

☐ Church

☐ Tree

☐ Private house

☐ Public sculpture

☐ School

☐ Abandoned building

☐ Government office

☐ Railway station

☐ Cemetery

☐ Car

☐ Skate park

☐ War memorial

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