MARKING SPACE AND MAKING PLACE:

GEOGRAPHIES OF GRAFFITI IN WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND

Michaela Des Forges

ABSTRACT

Contemporary graffiti dates from the 1960s when hip-hop style graffiti grew in popularity amongst youth in Philadelphia and New York. It has since spread throughout the world and its various forms and styles are considered both art and vandalism. In Aotearoa New Zealand, graffiti is seen in most urban areas and is regarded as a major problem for local authorities. Despite this, research concerning graffiti in New Zealand is sparse.

This research contributes to emerging work on graffiti in Wellington and New Zealand. It aims to provide an insight into the geographies of graffiti in Wellington by exploring the visual, spatial, and temporal aspects of graffiti, as well as the social dynamics informing its production and distribution. Using this information I investigate parallels between what is happening locally and what has been documented in international research.

To carry out the research aims, I employed qualitative observations of selected sites around the city over time and used photographs to interpret and document graffiti. I also carried out semi-structured interviews with some graffitists, in addition to people involved in city safety and efforts to stop graffiti. In framing the research I specifically draw from critical geography writing on discourse, power, resistance, place, and space which are particularly salient in regards to graffiti.

The research documents similarities with international research in regards to the motivations, rules, and visual, temporal, and spatial aspects. However, Wellington graffitists interact with, and utilise, the city's space in unique and multifaceted ways which reflect and exhibit localised differences worthy of consideration internationally. For instance, graffitists use, view, and read the urban environment in ways that result in them having an intimacy with the urban environment. Additionally, graffitists think about where they place their graffiti with regards to property, location, intended audiences, and observance to subculture rules.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF FIGURES

All photographs were taken by the Author between 2009 and 2011

MAP OF RESEARCH AREA

Figure 0.1. Map Section of Te Aro, Wellington City. Source: Wellington City Council 2011

GLOSSARY

Buff - the painting over or removal of graffiti by authorities

Crew - an informally organised group of writers (usually friends) who compete with other crews for fame and power

Gang graffiti - graffiti done by gang members or individuals to establish a gang's presence and territory

Graffiti - the aesthetic practice of permeating the urban landscape with letters or images done by scratching or using spray-paint, markers, paint, or other mediums

Graffiti art - graffiti which has a strong aesthetic dimension

Heaven spot - location up high where graffiti is placed

Hip-hop graffiti - part of the hip-hop culture, consists of three basic forms - tags, throw-ups, and pieces

Paste-up – usually images placed on paper with ink, pencil, or paint which is then pasted up

Piece/masterpiece- large, elaborate, colourful murals depicting a word or words and often include backgrounds, designs, characters

Political graffiti - graffiti with an explicit political message

Post-graffiti - a street art and a graffiti scene progressing in new directions

Protest graffiti - a subset of political graffiti directed towards mainstream commercial images

Stencil - a template which can be painted through with a paint-brush or spray-paint

Street art – image based graffiti not in the hip-hop style

Tag - stylised signatures, initials, nicknames or coded identities usually written in marker pen or spray-paint

Throw-up or throwie - larger names written in bubble block style in which the outlines of the letters are drawn in one colour and filled in with another

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Seen under bridges, down alleyways, on walls, lamp posts and various other surfaces, the diverse manifestations of graffiti are ever-present in cities around the world. Although the act of graffiti can be dated back thousands of years, graffiti gained popularity among youth in urban neighbourhoods of New York and Philadelphia from the late 1960s to early 1970s (Taylor et al., 2010). Since its contemporary re-emergence, graffiti has grown to be labelled a significant 'problem' by city authorities around the world, and one that can be linked with artistic creativity and popular culture, in particular the hip-hop culture (Cooper & Chalfant, 1984; Ferrell, 1995; Lachmann, 1988; Schacter, 2008). International academic research on graffiti to date has examined it as a marker of territory, explored the subcultures involved in its production, and investigated the links between graffiti and other crimes.

The word graffiti originates from the Italian word *graffiare*, which means, 'to scratch' (Castleman, 1982). In its broadest definition, graffiti could mean almost anything from scrawls written on a classroom desk to a highly elaborate mural. In its narrowest meaning, the term usually refers to hip-hop graffiti writing of tags, throw-ups, and pieces (Manco, 2006). In this thesis I use the term *graffiti* in its broadest sense to encapsulate the wide varieties and styles of letters or images which mark the urban landscape through the use of spray-paint, markers, paint, stickers, or other materials (Spocter, 2004).

In Aotearoa New Zealand, graffiti grew in popularity during the 1980s due to the spread of the hip-hop culture from the USA. While graffiti has a huge visual impact on the urban landscape, as a policy 'problem' and as an urban phenomenon it is not well understood in New Zealand. Recent high profile events have shown that graffiti is a highly contested subject with conflicting discourses. Subsequently, there has been an increase in government focus on graffiti. Yet there remains limited New Zealand research on graffiti, and in particular a lack of research which

includes the voices of graffitists[1]. Additionally, the newer and more humorous and engaging forms of graffiti, such as street art have generally been ignored by New Zealand academics and researchers.

This research addresses current gaps and contributes to understandings of graffiti in New Zealand. I focus on the visual, spatial, and temporal aspects of graffiti in Wellington. Through interviews with graffitists (mainly street artists), the research also explores their motivations and practices which contribute to the particular localised presence of graffiti in the urban environment. I am particularly interested in how local graffitists engage with, use, and experience urban space. Drawing on additional interviews with local authority staff and police, I also engage with wider debates associated with graffiti as art and vandalism/crime, as well as current methods being adopted to control its occurrence. Due to the worldwide prevalence of graffiti and lack of New Zealand research, I draw on international literature to inform my understandings of what I found in Wellington.

This introductory chapter provides an explanation of the rationale and objectives of the research. Theories from critical geography which underpin the research are then discussed with relevance to graffiti. Following that, aspects of my positionality which are important to reflect on in the research process are identified. Lastly in this chapter, the structure of this thesis is presented.

RATIONALE AND OBJECTIVES

Research on graffiti in New Zealand is limited, thus this thesis seeks to fill some of the gaps in research by exploring the geographies of graffiti in Wellington. The Stop Tagging Our Place (STOP) Strategy produced by the Ministry of Justice provides a framework for preventing and managing graffiti vandalism in New Zealand. It notes, "the scarcity of robust data collected in New Zealand means the graffiti problem is difficult to quantify accurately" (Ministry of Justice, 2008a, p. 6). Additionally, "there is very little New Zealand specific research on graffiti culture"

---

[1] The term graffitist will be used in this research to describe an individual who does graffiti. I have chosen this term instead of those generally used internationally - graffiti artist and/or graffiti writer - because the practice of graffiti does not necessarily involve artists or written words.

(Ministry of Justice, 2008b, p. 4). Furthermore, the ephemeral nature of graffiti means that it is constantly evolving as old works are removed or painted over and new works take their place. One style which has been ignored by New Zealand research is the more humorous image-based form of graffiti known as street art. Consequently, this research seeks to capture recent developments in graffiti styles and improve understanding of the politics and practices of graffiti in New Zealand.

Specifically my research seeks to answer the following questions:

- What are the visual aspects of graffiti in Wellington and in what types of spaces does graffiti occur?
- How do graffitists interact with, experience, and use urban space?
- What are the practices, motivations, and social dynamics informing the production and distribution of graffiti?
- What are the understandings and discourses of graffiti, and its links with crime and vandalism?
- How does New Zealand graffiti compare with what has been discussed in international graffiti studies?

To answer the above questions, the objectives of this research have been:

- To examine the visual, spatial, and temporal aspects of graffiti in Wellington.
- To explore the practices, motivations and use of urban space by graffitists in Wellington.
- To examine graffiti discourses, criminal elements of graffiti, and current graffiti strategies in Wellington.
- To investigate parallels between findings discussed in existing international literature and what is found in Wellington.

Not much is known about what graffiti looks like in New Zealand, where it is located, what types exist, and how frequently additions of graffiti occur. Therefore, the first objective (to examine the visual, spatial, and temporal aspects of graffiti in Wellington) has addressed this lack of knowledge by looking specifically at these

dynamics within a section of Wellington City. It has been important to see where graffiti is primarily located, to assess the extent or predominance of graffiti, and to get an overview of graffiti in Wellington. These dimensions were gathered from observation data collected from a number of sites within the research area over a three month period from July to September 2010. The ephemeral nature of graffiti was examined by observing the additions of graffiti over time. There has been no comprehensive attempt at categorising graffiti found in New Zealand, and the majority of research concerning graffiti from New Zealand and internationally is concentrated on the popular form of hip-hop graffiti. Therefore, subsequent to the observations, the types of graffiti found were categorised with the help of local participants and by using previous international research such as that by Alonso (1998) and White (2001).

The voices of graffitists are largely lacking from New Zealand research. As a result, I sought to give priority to their voices and their thoughts and feelings when doing graffiti. The second objective (to explore the practices, motivations and use of urban space by graffitists in Wellington) focused on graffitists comments regarding their practice, motivations, rules, and how they interact with, and use urban space. Information was gathered from semi-structured interviews held with five graffitists in September and October 2010. The interviews involved a form of photo elicitation through which some of the visual data gathered from the observations was used to ask graffitists specific questions about particular graffiti I had observed.

Currently, the limited amount of New Zealand research regarding graffiti means that New Zealand policy is based on stereotypical assumptions of graffitists. It assumes that graffiti is homogenous, and that links exist between graffiti and other more destructive crimes. Therefore, the third objective looked at the wider context and discourses of graffiti as well as links with crime. This information is needed to examine the assumptions regarding graffiti in order to improve understandings of anti-graffiti approaches. Views were also gathered about the current graffiti strategies used in Wellington, such as removal and legal walls. These views were gathered from semi-structured interviews with a Community Constable and

Community Sergeant from the New Zealand Police, a Wellington City Council Safety Advisor, and five graffitists.

Prior to undertaking this research, there were few parallels drawn between New Zealand graffiti and that documented in international graffiti literature. The fourth objective (to investigate the parallels between what is found in Wellington and international literature concerning graffiti) used international literature to help make sense of the information gathered from the semi-structured interviews and observations. Some parallels were made with regards to the spatial locations of graffiti, the graffiti subcultures, competing discourses, and motivations of graffitists.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research is situated within human geography and more specifically critical geography. Human geography is essentially the study of "patterns and dynamics of human activity on the landscape" and "the examination of human or social phenomena" (Moseley, Lanegran & Pandit, 2007, p. 3). In the 1980s, theories inspired by Marxism, feminism, and post-structuralism began to develop a critical approach to human geography (Cresswell, 2008). For instance, critical geographers attempt to "expose the socio-spatial processes that (re)produce inequalities between people and places" (Hubbard, Kitchin, Bartley, & Fuller, 2002, p. 62). This thesis specifically draws from critical geography writing on discourse, power, transgression, place, and space which are particularly salient in regards to graffiti.

Critical geographers argue that place is bound up with power, and places tend to reflect the society that produces them (Cresswell, 2008). Therefore, places and the social relations within them are the result of multiple intersecting social, political, and economic arrangements of power. Arrangements of power construct rules and boundaries which result in places where things, practices, and people can be either 'in place' or 'out of place' (Cresswell, 1996; McDowell, 1999). These boundaries are constantly contested, transgressed, and resisted by those seen as 'out of place',

which in turn creates overlapping and intersecting places with changing boundaries where power and exclusion are maintained through social relations (Cresswell, 2008; McDowell, 1999). In Cresswell's (1996) work he demonstrates the ways in which marginalised groups use multiple tactics of transgression to disrupt interpretations of what is appropriate in particular spaces. In regards to graffiti, authorities remove the unwanted 'out of place' graffiti. Simultaneously, graffitists can be seen as resisting or transgressing the socially constructed rules and boundaries about appropriate behaviour in public and urban space.

Whilst places are a result of arrangements of power, places also reproduce meaning. Spatial structures and places provide a set of cultural signifiers that denote belonging (Hubbard et al., 2002). This understanding suggests that the presence of graffiti could therefore enable graffitists to feel belonging within the urban environment. Furthermore, the urban environment itself promotes particular practices through its appearance and design as cues are given about whether particular kinds of acts are appropriate or not (Cresswell, 1992; Hubbard et al., 2002). Such cues may influence how graffitists act and in which spaces. The same cues however, may be read differently by others who identify safety concerns and think graffiti is unwanted and 'out of place'.

The concept of public space, in particular its appropriation, has been theorised in depth by Lefebvre (2003, p. 19):

> The urban space of the street is a place for talk, given over as much to the exchange of words and signs as it is to the exchange of things. A place where speech becomes writing. A place where speech can become 'savage' and, by escaping rules and institutions, inscribe itself on walls.

Lefebvre (1991) detailed how the production of space is created on three levels; as perceived, conceived and lived. The level of perceived space is constructed through *spatial practice*; specifically the processes and movements, which act to make and unmake the city as a working urban system (Hubbard et al., 2002). Another level is through the r*epresentations of space* in terms of the conceptualised form which represents and makes sense of space. For instance, space is reproduced through representations of space in books, films and the internet. These representations

make sense of space and legitimise or contest particular spatial practices. Internet sites showing graffiti can work to legitimise the spatial practice of graffiti. The third level is *representational space*; the lived and felt (Hubbard et al., 2002; Lefebvre, 1991). These ideas have been useful for me to engage how the graffitists interviewed perceived and conceived of the urban environment. Moreover, these ideas can be used to explain the way in which graffitists move though the city, how they occupy certain spaces, and how the graffitists, through the practice of doing graffiti, view and 'feel' the city. Additionally, graffitists have a part in creating space through their movements and via the practice of graffiti.

Experience of public space involves aspects of power.

> Power must be analysed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localised here or there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organisation. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. In other words, individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application. (Foucault, 1980, p. 98 as cited in McHoul & Grace, 1993)

The Foucauldian view of power as entangled can be used to analyse the competing discourses that socially and spatially construct meanings within places (Panelli, 2004). Discourses refer to "relatively well-bounded areas of social knowledge" (McHoul & Grace, 1993, p.31).   Usually deriving from social and cultural institutions, discourses shape and structure thoughts and actions, and they play a central role in the creation and maintenance of the meaning of a place (Cresswell, 1992; Hubbard et al., 2002). These concepts have been helpful in thinking through the competing discourses about graffiti and how the practice and presence of graffiti frequently contravenes the dominant constructed meaning of places. In order to situate my thesis within a human geography framework, these ideas are drawn on in the findings and analysis chapter.

POSITIONALITY

Recently geographers have highlighted the importance of reflecting critically upon the multiple positionalities of the researcher (See Hopkins, 2007; Sultana, 2007). Del Casino (2009, p. 69) states, "in constructing studies of space and spatial relations poststructuralists must always reflexively consider their own position and its impact on the research context". Issues of reflectivity and positionality are important to address as one's positionality can influence and shape research encounters, processes, and outcomes. Positionalities may include aspects of identity (race, class, gender, age, sexuality, disability) and personal experiences of research, such as previous projects worked on (Hopkins, 2007). By reflecting critically on my multiple positionalities I can be aware about how they may influence my research. Doing this is vital to the research process. It involves a reflection on one's self, a critical examination of power relations in the research process, and researcher responsibility in data collection and analysis (Sultana, 2007).

In order to address issues of my own positionality and how it could influence the research process, the 'writing up' and analysis of my research, I reflected critically on my multiple positionalities. I was able to relate to the participants in the semi-structured interviews because I am of a similar age and ethnicity. Being female was both inhibiting and helpful for obtaining information. Inhibiting, because graffiti subcultures are comprised mainly of young men and it may have been assumed that I was ignorant or judgemental about this male dominated activity. Conversely, being female was helpful because I was not perceived as threatening or intimidating to the participants. Being educated may have resulted in the participants thinking that I come from a position of power and they may have had concerns about how I would use the knowledge they gave me. I minimised this to a certain extent by providing the participants with an information sheet outlining what I was going to do with the information they shared with me and what my thesis was concerned with finding out. The research also involved taking photographs and I was aware that the photographs I took had an impact on what

was revealed and that they had the potential for multiple meanings (Bryman, 2008).

My interest in graffiti made it easier to relate to the graffitists and engage with them during the interviews. I admire the ability and creativity that it takes to produce some graffiti. Although at the same time I can see graffiti (particularly tagging) as a form of vandalism to be addressed by Local and Central Government. At times during the research for this thesis I experienced the feeling that I was 'out of place', researching a subculture (particularly with hip-hop graffiti) that is visible, but largely unreadable to the public. I was an *outsider*[2] in the areas I was observing. I could not associate tags with people and I did not know the meaning of the graffiti I saw. These feelings were reduced by the fact that the graffitists I interviewed did predominantly street art style graffiti, which is usually more humorous, image based and more engaging with the public. It is important to acknowledge my own position and bias as this will ultimately influence my research.

STRUCTURE OF THESIS

This thesis is structured into six chapters. The initial chapter has provided an introduction and the rationale and objectives for the ensuing research. The theoretical framework informed by critical geography writings on place, space, power, discourse has been explained. I also discussed my positionality and how it may have impacted on the research.

Chapter two presents an examination of literature concerning graffiti. The definition of graffiti is further extended and the history of graffiti is provided, focusing on the different forms and ways of categorising graffiti. I also discuss the main themes from the international literature on graffiti, which are used to make parallels with what is found in Wellington.

---

[2] The use of the term *outsider* indicates that a person does not properly understand the behaviour expected of that place and they are 'out of place' (Cresswell, 1996).

The third chapter discusses graffiti in a New Zealand context. It provides a history of graffiti in New Zealand including previous high profile events, which have highlighted the conflicting discourses of graffiti. In this chapter, I discuss recent policy changes as part of the Government's STOP Strategy, such as increasing fines and preventing under 18 year olds from purchasing spray cans. I also briefly examine existing New Zealand research concerning graffiti.

Following this, the fourth chapter describes the methodology and methods used in the research. It explains the use of two qualitative research methods, observations and semi-structured interviews. This chapter introduces the participants and how they were recruited. The strengths and limitations of the chosen methods are also identified.

The fifth chapter presents the findings and analysis. This chapter is structured into three sections with each section making parallels with international graffiti literature. The first section uses the findings from the observations to examine the visual, spatial, and temporal aspects of Wellington graffiti. The second section uses primarily information from the semi-structured interviews with graffitists to explore their motivations, practices of graffiti and how they view and use urban space. The last section uses interview data from the graffitists and authorities to examine graffiti discourses, criminal elements of graffiti and current graffiti strategies in Wellington.

The final chapter briefly recaps the main premise of the research and discusses the key findings. Possible avenues for the further study of graffiti which would be of benefit are also suggested.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter discusses the definition and history of graffiti, and examines literature relevant to the research topic. I initially discuss the definition of graffiti highlighting its diverse nature. The history of graffiti is presented in the second section, focusing on the different types, and possible ways of categorising graffiti. The third section examines a range of texts relating to graffiti. The main ideas presented by the literature are then used in subsequent chapters in order to understand and further contextualise findings from my own research.

DEFINITION OF GRAFFITI

Graffiti is extremely diverse in terms of the styles, methods, and messages being conveyed. It is ephemeral in nature and new forms, styles, and methods are developed with each successive generation (Schacter, 2008). Methods for doing graffiti include spray-paint, markers, paper, stickers, and paint, which can be used in different styles such as stencil, tagging, and piecing. Additionally, the messages and content of graffiti can be philosophical, political, humorous, pornographic, or nonsensical (Little & Sheble, 1987). Thus, graffiti "should not be considered as if it were a unitary, homogenous category" (Young, 2004, p. 51). The extensive nature of graffiti is illustrated by Carrington (2009, p. 412) who states:

> Graffiti is, of course, not a single genre – the term is more of an umbrella to indicate the range of generally unsanctioned texts written onto city surfaces and furniture ranging from apparently random scribbles to elegant street art.

Graffiti is not always done illegally, although the term "is most often applied to any form of unsolicited marking" (Fredrick, 2009, p. 212).

HISTORY AND TYPES OF GRAFFITI

Graffiti is not a new phenomenon. Forms of it can be traced back thousands of years to the ancient Egyptians, the Roman Empire, the ancient Greeks, and the Classical Mayan Empire (Alonso, 1998; Carrington, 2009). Its main contemporary

reappearance, however, dates from the 1960s (Ley & Cybriwsky, 1974). In the late 1960s the act of graffiti writing gained popularity amongst teenagers from the densely populated black neighbourhoods of New York and Philadelphia when they began to write their names on neighbourhood walls (Cooper & Chalfont, 1984; Ferrell, 1995; Taylor, Cordin & Njiru, 2010). Soon after its introduction, the subway system in New York City became a primary location for graffiti and "graffiti penetrated all the spaces of the city, as these trains cruised through the four boroughs of the city" (Alonso, 1998, p. 3). Subsequently, the number of articles and commentaries on graffiti increased during this growth period. In the *New York Times*, these articles increased from "only one over the fifteen-year period, 1950-64, to five in 1969, and then to forty in 1972" (Ley & Cybriwsky, 1974, p. 491). One of these first of these articles was on Taki who wrote his name and street number (TAKI 183) everywhere he went and is credited with spawning hundreds of imitators ("Taki 183' spawns pen pals", 1971).

By the late 1970s, graffiti had become aligned with hip-hop culture. Graffiti then spread via this culture from New York City and Philadelphia to other cities in the United States and the rest of the world, arriving in New Zealand in the mid-1980's (Brewer, 1992; O'Donnell, 2007). This has resulted in hip-hop graffiti being the most common form of graffiti around the world. The hip-hop subculture has its own fashion and music and its influence on the pervasiveness of graffiti should not be underrated (Alonso, 1998; Spocter, 2004). Hip-hop graffiti has three basic forms: tags, throw-ups, and pieces. The simplest and most common type of hip-hop graffiti are tags. Consequently, tags and tagging have dominated research on graffiti (Brewer, 1992).

Tagging is said to represent the first stages in the skill development of the graffitist (Spocter, 2004; White, 2001). Tagging is the practice of spray-painting or writing names, initials, nicknames, or coded identities in a stylised nature, which are not easily read by those outside of the subculture (Alonso, 1998; Carrington, 2009). A tag only takes a few seconds to put on a surface; the purpose is to 'get up' and be seen in as many places as possible (Alonso, 1998; Ley and Cybriwsky, 1974). This is because recognition as a prolific graffitist is an important goal (Alonso, 1998). As

the skill develops, the graffitist becomes more experienced and produces more elaborate graffiti (Spocter, 2004). The second step in the graffitist's development are throw-ups, which are similar to tagging, but are names written in a two-dimensional format in bubble block style in which the outlines of the letters are drawn in one colour and filled in with another (Manco, 2006; Spocter, 2004).

The third type of hip-hop graffiti is known as a *piece* short for masterpiece. Piecing is more than just a tag or signature; it requires exceptional artistic skill and can involve both words and drawings (Spocter, 2004). However, like tags, they are not easily read by those outside of the subculture. Piecing also requires more of an understanding of aerosol paint control than a tag and as a result, those who piece acquire more fame. An average graffiti piece can take over an hour to complete while seconds are required to tag a name on a surface (Alonso, 1998). In the 1980's, graffiti pieces began to gain some recognition as being an artful expression, largely through the writers' use of bright colours and cryptic forms (Taylor et al., 2010). Because of the artistic skill required to do a piece, piecing has simultaneously been present in the art world and in the urban environment (Alonso, 1998; Lachmann, 1988).

Similar to tagging is a category of graffiti written by gangs. Both tagging and gang graffiti take a similar form, and they are both written in ways that make them difficult to read by those outside of the subculture (Adams & Winter, 1997). However, those who tag may belong to a group or crew, which is an informally organised group of graffitists (usually friends) who come together with the main purpose of writing graffiti, whereas a gang has a more structured group membership with initiation rites and often a neighbourhood orientation (Adams & Winter, 1997; Brewer, 1992). Gang graffiti is usually concentrated in areas surrounding a gang's territory with the purpose of establishing their existence and presence in a particular neighbourhood (White, 2001). It is not known whether any gangs in New Zealand use graffiti to mark their boundaries. According to Lindsey and Kearns (1994), both Black Power and the Mongrel Mob do not use graffiti to mark territory in Auckland. They suggested that because of the low

population density of New Zealand there is no need for gangs to use graffiti and that other visible signs may be used if needed (Lindsey & Kearns, 1994).

Another type of graffiti, political graffiti, is vastly different to hip-hop graffiti and gang graffiti; the main distinction is that the messages conveyed through political graffiti are easier to understand because they are directed towards the general public. Political graffiti has a longer history than hip-hop graffiti, particularly in Latin American countries where stencils were used for propaganda purposes from the 1940s (Manco, 2006). Political graffiti usually has a precise political message and is commonly placed in locations which guarantee an audience (Alonso, 1998). This type of graffiti is written by individuals and groups who wish to challenge the legitimacy of the present political order or specific government policies. Political graffiti is most often associated with critical social events, and is not usually part of the everyday landscape (Alonso, 1998). White (2001, p. 254) distinguishes *protest graffiti* as a subset of political graffiti which he defines as "political in nature, but tends to have specific issues and specific targets directly related to the form and content of existing commercial signs". Protest graffiti is designed to highlight what graffitists see as the offensive nature of mainstream commercial visual objects in the urban environment (White, 2001).

Another type of graffiti is that located in toilets and other public places. This type of graffiti is written by a wide range of individuals, over a broad range of concerns (White, 2001). For instance, it can be used to communicate certain points of view, be part of a discussion, to establish authority or to just have fun. The specific character and content of the graffiti varies according to location, such as train stations, bus shelters, and university toilet blocks (White, 2001). This category of graffiti can be subdivided into several subcategories, such as racial and sexual graffiti (Alonso, 1998).

Like hip-hop graffiti, New York City is also the place where stencilling and other forms of street art became popular in the early 1980s (Manco, 2006). However, one of the first and perhaps most influential stencil artists, Blek le Rat, began stencilling in Paris in the early 1980s (Dickens, 2008). Similar methods of

stencilling such as screen-printing were used by artists from the 1930s and most famously by Andy Warhol in the 1960s (Manco, 2006). Stencilling takes a considerable amount of preparation and planning. After preparation a stencil is held up against a surface and sprayed over using spray-paint (Carrington, 2009). Stencil graffiti achieved popularity in the late 1990s through its use in publicising political protests, such as the Reclaim the Street movement and through individual artists, such as the United Kingdom's Banksy (Manco, 2004). Stencil graffiti addresses a broad public, in a way that hip-hop graffiti does not, and has a reputation for being highly political or humorous (Carrington, 2009; MacDowell, 2006).

The development of stencil graffiti generated the expansion of a more general category of street art, replacing the dominance of traditional hip-hop graffiti with a range of forms, including stickers and paste-ups (MacDowell, 2006). In the 1980s, the term *street art* began to be used to describe any art in the urban environment that was not in the hip-hop style (Manco, 2006). Influential to this style was the work of early street artists Jean-Michel Basquiat and Keith Haring (Dickens, 2008).

In recent years, with the rise of new techniques and styles, mixing both street art and hip-hop graffiti, it has become more difficult to distinguish between street art and graffiti (Manco, 2004). The evolving nature of graffiti led Manco (2004) to suggest that the new style of graffiti challenged previous definitions. Dickens (2008) and Manco (2004) mention the term *post-graffiti* as a way of differentiating the more artistic works from traditional graffiti. This particularly refers to the different aesthetics of *post-graffiti*, which are more visible and less cryptic, and its high level of engagement with urban audiences. Dickens (2008) suggests that the works of British street artist Banksy best illustrates this practice. Post-graffiti, however, is a contested notion among graffitists and many graffitists doing this style would call themselves 'street artists' not 'post-graffiti artists' (Dickens, 2008). There are very few studies on the new evolving styles of graffiti, and as of date, there is no New Zealand research on recent developments in graffiti and street art.

Reasons for the recent developments in new graffiti styles may be a result of the widespread sharing of graffiti images and information over the internet. The internet has had a huge impact on the graffiti culture. With the use of YouTube, personal blogs, and social networking sites the graffiti sub-culture has become a worldwide phenomenon (Taylor et al., 2010). Taylor et al. (2010, p. 153) state:

> In the post-Internet global arena a writer's skills are no longer simply judged on how long their tag or piece remains up in their local community, but rather on how many electronic hits / comments their posted tag / piece receives.

YouTube videos featuring graffiti reshape place-identities and consequently remake places (Glynn, 2009). Glynn (2009, p. 15) expresses that through YouTube videos youth work to "reframe themselves and to reverse the urban gaze, thus laying claim to, re-visualizing [sic] and re-imagining the city's landscapes and identities". By posting photographs and videos electronically online, the ephemeral nature of graffiti has been reduced. One can find photographs of graffiti long gone from the urban environment, but still existing and receiving comments of appreciation and criticism on the internet.

As discussed above there are several types of graffiti, each serving a different function and associated with different subcultures. As a result, various researchers have attempted to categorise the different types of graffiti (see Alonso, 1998; Castleman, 1982; Cooper & Chalfant, 1984; White, 2001). Lynn and Lea (2005, p. 41) state, "whilst there is merit in identifying and classifying graffiti into a number of different genres, the act of categorising graffiti according to its perceived genre is also fraught with difficulty". Although problematic, the categorisation of graffiti enables the recording and analysis of the various types. To gain a better understanding of graffiti, Alonso (1998) created a framework that categorised the types of graffiti he observed in Los Angeles. His categories divided graffiti into five types: existential, tagging, piecing, political and gang graffiti. White (2001) distinguished between six types of graffiti: political, protest, tagging, gang, graffiti art, and toilet and other public graffiti. In New Zealand, many types of graffiti exist, but there have been no attempts to *comprehensively* categorise or analyse the different types of graffiti found. Therefore, this thesis looks as at the visual aspects

of graffiti and attempts to categorise Wellington graffiti with the help of international literature and interviews with graffitists.

UNDERSTANDINGS OF GRAFFITI

The different types of graffiti have been theorised in numerous ways. This section discusses the approaches most relevant to the research undertaken in this thesis. The first section examines literature regarding graffiti in relation to urban space, including issues of territoriality, locations of graffiti, and the use of graffiti to reclaim and transform space. The second section examines aspects of graffiti culture, such as becoming a graffitist, rules, and motivations for doing graffiti. The conflicting discourses of graffiti, its alleged links with crime, and important anti-graffiti strategies are presented in the third section. These understandings will be used to investigate parallels with, and inform the findings from, Wellington.

TERRITORY, LOCATION AND TRANSFORMING SPACE

Graffiti has strong geographical components: gang graffiti in particular is widely thought of as being a marker of territory. The seminal geographical article on graffiti by Ley and Cybriwsky (1974) argued that for Philadelphia gangs' graffiti expressed territory. Ley and Cybriwsky (1974) stated that gang graffiti was an observable sign of a gang's social space and that the incidence of gang graffiti becomes denser nearer to the core of a gang's territory. Influenced by Ley and Cybriwsky's (1974) study, others, including Brown (1978) and Kostka (1974), also argued that the major function of gang graffiti was to mark territory. The research for this thesis does not investigate gang graffiti within the context of Wellington because it was not found during an initial sweep of the city. However, this thesis does explore issues of territoriality, including the use and control of space by graffitists, and whether graffiti is an observable sign of graffitist's social space.

In addition to being a marker of territory, gang graffiti can express group and individual identity, communicate thoughts and feelings, advertise gangs, and indicate social networks (Alonso, 1998; Adams & Winter, 1997). Adams and

Winter (1997) argued against the notion that the *major* function of gang graffiti was to mark territory; this was based on their analysis of 1522 utterances found on 107 surfaces in an area of Phoenix, Arizona. In their view, gang graffiti was often written on surfaces not easily accessible or viewed by the general public, was used to communicate with other gangs, and was not intended for public viewing (Adams & Winter, 1997). Alonso (1998) did a contemporary study on the same theme as Ley and Cybriwsky (1974). He examined gang graffiti in order to understand the way gangs mark their territory in Los Angeles. Photographs of graffiti were used to interpret how gangs from different ethnic backgrounds claimed space, communicated thoughts and feelings, and expressed group and individual identity through the activity of graffiti. I have used a similar photographic approach to Alonso's (1998) to document graffiti. I have also extended this approach to explore the additions and interactions of graffiti by different individuals at the same sites.

In Auckland, New Zealand, graffiti has been identified as only a weak territorial marker. However, graffiti can be read as *signposts* to a graffitist's movements and the examination of the types and placement of graffiti can expose aspects of territorial behaviour (Lindsey & Kearns, 1994). Lindsey and Kearns (1994) drew from the study by Ley and Cybriwsky (1974) to discuss the spatial features of graffiti in various areas of Auckland. Their study concentrated predominantly on tagging by individuals and crews. By recording the number of tags found in three areas of Auckland, Lindsey and Kearns (1994) found that some taggers travelled between more than one area to write their tags. In their study, a clear time-space relationship was thought to exist between the appearance of tags and where taggers spend most of their time. This was because graffiti was most commonly located around public places such as shops, bus stops and train stations, and private property was specifically avoided (Lindsey & Kearns, 1994).

On a similar note to Lindsey and Kearns (1994), Spocter (2004) found that most taggers tended to write in areas they frequent. In addition, Spocter (2004) found that graffiti was mostly located in the commercial areas. For instance, tagging was found at entertainment venues, such as cinemas, nightclubs and a skateboard park. Spocter (2004) also stated that the more visible a graffiti artist, the more respect

they gain from their peers. However, because graffiti is still an illegal activity in many commercial areas, graffitists are at risk of being caught and criminally charged and fined. As a result, areas with a lower detection risk, for example, in a subway or under a bridge typically have higher occurrences of graffiti than other areas in a city (Spocter, 2004). In contrast to earlier studies, Spocter's (2004) study showed that the use of urban space by graffitists was *not* an issue of territoriality. He (2004, p. 302) states, "on the contrary, different graffiti artists ... utilise different parts of the same wall without any animosity between them". In this thesis, I have recorded the spatial locations of graffiti to compare them with the results from Spocter (2004) and Lindsey and Kearns (1994) to see if there is any relationship between graffiti and where graffitists spend most of their time.

The placement of graffiti has also been researched for this thesis to see whether graffitists strive to place their graffiti in inaccessible locations, and why. Graffiti done by individual graffitists tends to follow a linear pattern along main transport arteries, and their targets are public structures, such as bridges, large businesses, and public buildings (Ferrell, 1995; Ley & Cybriwsky, 1974). Cool Earl, one of the participants in Ley & Cybriwsky's (1974, p. 494) research expressed it this way, "I started writing ... to prove to people where I was. You go somewhere and get your name up there and people know you were there, that you weren't afraid". By doing graffiti in inaccessible locations, such as rooftops, billboards and signs, status is gained (Ferrell & Weide, 2010). Ley and Cybriwsky, (1974, p. 493) stated, "The more brazen the spatial conquest, the greater the status, so that graffiti kings seek to emulate each other in the inaccessibility of locations they invade".

Recently Ferrell and Weide (2010) have focused on the presence of graffiti in the urban environment through an analysis of the spots that graffitists choose for graffiti. The ability to select appropriate spots is a skill which requires an intimate knowledge of the city, such as back alleys and interconnecting rooftops. This skill is developed through participation in the graffiti subculture and the understanding of places which have subcultural significance. "Graffiti writers put much thought into where and what they will paint, discriminating between locations and surfaces according to precise subcultural criteria shared across different neighborhoods

[sic] and cities" (Ferrell & Weide, 2010, p. 51). Ferrell and Weide (2010) contend that graffitists choose spots in regards to potential audiences with focus on other graffitists first and the general public second. Spots may be chosen in places known only to other graffitists, where the general public do not go. Graffitists also choose spots in regards to the perceived and anticipated longevity and durability of their graffiti as the longer graffiti is present in a location the more people will notice it (Ferrell & Weide, 2010).

Connected to the choosing of locations to place graffiti, graffitists view the urban landscape and its surfaces in unique ways. They "see the landscape as a series of surfaces waiting to be written on" (Halsey & Young, 2006, p. 283). This was illustrated by a participant in Schacter's (2008) research who stated:

> You're constantly checking out your surroundings, the back alleys, the little corners. It's your own personal playground! The whole city is a potential canvas, you're constantly looking out for new places to write on . . . looking for ways you can alter it. I think it's totally different than what others experience, for most people everything around them is controlled by other people. (Delve, in Schacter, 2000, p. 53)

Similar to how skateboarders view the city as a set of objects and surfaces indifferent to their function (Borden, 2003), for graffitists, blank walls in particular are thought of as dull and locations in need of graffiti (Halsey & Young, 2006; Schacter, 2008). Instead of taking away from or ruining the aesthetics of the city, graffiti is seen as adding to it (Halsey & Young, 2006). This way of visualising spaces and surfaces is concerned not with thoughts of destruction, but of expression, communication, and the progression of individual styles (Halsey & Young, 2006).

Furthermore, graffiti may be a response to the social exclusion that certain people experience in public spaces. Ferrell (1995) found that graffiti occurs in urban environments where atmospheres of segregation and control of social space exist. These segregated environments are often a result of changes to public space which have been increasingly controlled or removed through privatisation and externally imposed spatial restrictions. In addition, young people in many western societies

experience increasing criminalisation of their activities by authorities. This lead Ferrell (1995, p. 79) to state, "in negotiating the contemporary city, kids are largely walled in and boxed out". Therefore, through doing graffiti, graffitists attempt to disrupt the order of authority and to reclaim the public space from which they feel excluded (Ferrell, 1995). White (2001) suggested that, for some young people, graffiti becomes an important tool of resistance, for example, against the re-construction of public places into managed shopping spaces.

Through doing graffiti, graffitists make new forms of public space. Schacter's (2008) research expressed that graffitists create new forms of public space, and by using the urban environment to meet their own personal desires and motivations, graffitists engage in creative and expressive processes of place making. "The artists actively aimed to modify and transform their environment to make it more personal, more inalienable; they wanted an active role in producing and constructing their lived-in surroundings" (Schacter, 2008, p. 53). By practicing graffiti, graffitists try to reclaim public space and communicate their criticisms of the dominance of private and commercial interests in the urban environment (Schacter, 2008).

Additionally, through doing graffiti, meaning in public space is reshaped.

> When writers tag and piece, they work to remake the visual landscapes and symbolic codes of public life, converting abandoned abutments into "walls of fame," alley walls into ongoing sites of symbolic interaction, and- much to the chagrin of local business and political leaders - a carefully designed aesthetics of authority into aesthetics of disorder and play. (Ferrell, 1998, p. 594)

Docuyanan (2000, p. 105 emphasis in original) asserted that graffitists make places, but unlike other commercial or private interests, they "are also profoundly *out of place*—at odds with competing and usually more dominant visions of the appropriate use of urban environments". However, by doing graffiti graffitists also fail to be constrained by hegemonic notions of the appropriate use of, and behaviour in urban spaces. As a result, graffitists 'make place' and are 'out of place' when they practice graffiti in the urban landscape (Docuyanan, 2000). Information

about how graffitists use, make, and claim space has been sought in this research through interviews with graffitists.

SUBCULTURAL PRACTICES, PROCESSES AND MOTIVATIONS

Academic writings on graffiti have been dominated by ethnographic and sociological accounts of the hip-hop graffiti subculture, which explain its gender dynamics, style, rules, and aspects of youth culture (see Brewer, 1992; Castleman, 1982; Ferrell, 1995, 1998; Lachmann, 1988; MacDonald, 2001). For instance, Macdonald's (2001) study of the graffiti subculture in London and New York focused on gender dynamics. She (2001, p. 149) stated that the graffiti subculture:

> Must be acknowledged for what it is. Not a site for 'youth', but a site for 'male youth'- an illegal confine where danger, opposition and the exclusion of women is used to nourish, amplify and salvage notions of masculinity.

These ethnographic writings usually acknowledge the voices of graffitists, which are not often heard and offer a glimpse into graffiti subcultures. For example, Ferrell (1993) and Macdonald (2001) both included numerous quotes from the graffitists they studied and the significance and meaning of graffiti for those who do it are made visible in these studies.

While there are numerous international studies on graffiti culture, New Zealand specific research is lacking. In New Zealand, Cox, Hutton, and Rowe (2009) found little evidence which suggested that graffitists form a distinct subgroup among young people with identifiable perceptions of graffiti. Therefore, in this thesis I give priority to the voices of graffitists and explore aspects of the graffiti culture such as the rules, progression of graffiti, and their motivations to do graffiti. For instance, new additions of graffiti at selected sites have been observed to see whether the rules that Docuyanan (2000), Macdonald (2001), and Schacter (2008) mentioned are followed by graffitists in Wellington.

Becoming a graffitist is a heterogeneous event; "subtly yet importantly nuanced for each and every writer" (Halsey & Young, 2006, p. 276). There is however, an

identifiable pattern to progressing through the hip-hop graffiti career, where one goes from tagging to doing throw-ups to piecing (Lachmann, 1988). A vital part of whether someone moves from tagging to piecing is whether they have a mentor and their subsequent proximity to the expertise associated with creating pieces (Halsey & Young, 2002; Lachmann, 1988). It is not known what percentage of taggers move up through the graffiti 'career' and start doing more elaborate graffiti. However, Lachmann (1988, p. 236) states, "the vast majority of graffiti writers never progress beyond tagging to produce graffiti murals".

Generally it seems that graffitists choose places to do graffiti that "possess subcultural status and therefore are likely to be visited and used by other writers" (Ferrell, 1998, p. 590). For example, tags are placed near other tags which in turn create subcultural "walls of fame" (Ferrell, 1998, p. 590). Subsequently, these walls become places of "*ongoing dialogue*, a continual artistic discussion, and public forum" (Schacter, 2008, p. 48 emphasis in original). Graffitists walk the streets and read a private billboard of subcultural information, while members of the public do the same and see only a vandalised wall of unreadable and obscure scribble (Macdonald, 2001). Graffitists also "translate these seemingly incoherent images and letters and appreciate them not merely for their aesthetic value, but equally for their *emotional* presence" (Schacter, 2008, p. 38).

Inclusion into the graffiti subculture creates a sense of cultural belonging for young people, one which is based on the exclusive access to specific knowledge (Macdonald, 2001). The graffiti subculture is considered, by those outside of it, to be unruly and disorganised, but in actual fact it is full of complex social structures and rules (Schacter, 2008). Docuyanan's (2000) ethnographic fieldwork in southern California identified some basic graffiti writing etiquette: "Go over a piece with a better piece. Go over messed up pieces before those that haven't been damaged. Tagging on a finished piece is considered very disrespectful" (Docuyanan, 2000, p. 112). Placement is considered important. For instance, graffiti placed higher up is considered better and "a tag that is larger says 'I am bigger than you'" (Macdonald, 2001, p. 208). Graffitists tend to avoid going over

each other's pieces and once a piece has been crossed out it is considered destroyed and that space becomes available for others (Castleman, 1984).

Going over another's graffiti can occur for a number of reasons. Graffitists may cross out or paint over graffiti because they think it is inferior or because there is animosity between graffitists (Ferrell, 1998). The crossing out of others work can accelerate to where graffitists are constantly targeting another's graffiti by crossing it out or placing graffiti over the top (Schacter, 2008). In response to the crossing out of one crew member's work by another, violence may occur (Halsey & Young, 2006). One of Docuyanan's (2000) interviewees in Los Angeles gave the extreme example of a person getting beaten and stabbed for repeatedly going over another's graffiti. Not all graffiti is painted over by other graffitists because of animosity, in most cases graffiti occurs because there is either a lack of space, the graffiti has already been ruined, or the graffitist thinks they can outdo or better the original (Schacter, 2008). Additionally, going over or crossing out is not necessarily a negative thing as it can lead to increased artistic innovation and development where each graffitist strives to surpass the other in scale and style (Schacter, 2008).

Related to the graffiti subculture are the motivations and reasons of graffitists for doing graffiti. Gomez (1993, p. 646, 653) states, "the primary motivation of taggers is fame and recognition. A tagger's objective is to paint his tag or that of his crew in as many places as possible, because a tagger's recognition depends on how much he [sic] is 'up'". Recent writings on the motivations of graffitists (see Cox et al., 2009; Halsey & Young, 2006) suggest that a variety of other reasons exist for doing graffiti. Halsey and Young (2006) drew from detailed interviews with graffitists where they focused on matters of desire, pleasure, and vision in the act of illicit writing. Graffitists indicated that the aesthetic appeal of graffiti and the social interactions that could be gained are what drew them to graffiti. Continuing to do graffiti was then a result of the powerful emotional and physical sensations felt when doing graffiti, as well as other positive sensations including pride, pleasure, the enjoyment from sharing of an activity with friends, and recognition from others involved in the subculture (Halsey & Young, 2006). Specifically, pride was felt in terms of the "sense of accomplishment writers experience upon completing a

piece" (Halsey & Young, 2006, p. 279). Fewer graffitists mentioned motivations related to less positive sensations of boredom and rebelliousness (Halsey & Young, 2006).

Graffitists particularly derive pleasure from the physical experience of doing graffiti which is similar to that gained from extreme sports or other physically demanding activities such as skateboarding. The powerful physical experience is resultant from holding the spray can, seeing the work take place, and feeling a bodily thrill (Halsey & Young, 2006). When combined with the illegal nature of graffiti, the exhilaration gained increases (Halsey & Young, 2006). Similarly, Ferrell (1995, p. 82) expresses:

> Writers consistently report to me and to others that their experience of tagging and piecing is defined by the incandescent excitement, the adrenalin rush, that results from creating their art in a dangerous and illegal environment- and that heightened legal and police pressure therefore heightens this adrenalin rush as well.

Graffitists also experience emotional satisfaction from their increasing skills as they carry out more elaborate and complex graffiti. In addition, Halsey and Young (2006, p. 283) state, "something in the act of writing feels 'right' to graffiti writers". This 'rightness' motivates many graffitists to continue, even with the possibility of being arrested or injured. These discussions of the pleasures and positive motivations of doing graffiti are relatively new in the literature and I have also pursued these themes during my research.

DISCOURSE, CRIME AND POLICY

The power relations and conflicting discourses surrounding graffiti have been discussed widely (see Alonso, 1998; Cresswell, 1992; Docuyanan, 2000; Halsey & Young, 2002, 2006; Silwa & Cairns, 2007). Since the 1970s, the dominant class has constructed graffiti, particularly tagging, as deviant and criminal, linking it to drug use and violent crime (Alonso, 1998; Carrington, 2009). Public authorities and property owners assert its destructiveness and make every effort to remove it from the urban environment (Docuyanan, 2000; Schacter, 2008). Docuyanan (2000)

explains that these people contend that graffitists are destructive, disrespectful, disruptive, prone to violence, and detrimental to the interests of the community. In direct contrast to this, graffiti, particularly certain types of graffiti are thought of as pure, unrestrained expressions of art (Schacter, 2008). Moreover, graffiti makes walls useful and meaningful, and many pieces:

> Require skilful rendering and that those who produce them strive to offer a unique visual feast of colour combinations, complex interlocking letters, subtle blends and fades, and razor sharp lines (difficult to create with an aerosol can). (Docuyanan, 2000, p. 105)

Thus, both art and vandalism are terms used to describe graffiti (Docuyanan, 2000).

Descriptions of graffiti commonly include the term *dirt,* and graffiti is correlated to a disease which is subsequently linked to disorder. The reactions to graffiti in New York during the early 1970s were examined by Cresswell (1992; 1996). He (1992; 1996) argued that the reactions of the media and government to graffiti presented a *discourse of disorder,* which suggested that graffiti was a symptom of disorder, a threat to order, 'out of place' and needed to be removed. However, "simultaneously the art establishment reacts to graffiti by (dis)placing it in Manhattan galleries and describing it as creative, 'primitive', and valuable" (Cresswell, 1992 p. 329). The places where graffiti is located; the gallery or the street, affect the discourses and judgements surrounding the value of graffiti. Graffiti is 'out of place' in the urban environment. In addition to being 'out of place', graffiti challenges dominant constructions around appropriate behaviour in places (Cresswell, 1996). However, when graffiti is moved inside into the home or gallery, it becomes accepted and valued. "Crime becomes creativity, madness becomes insight, dirt becomes something to hang over the fireplace" (Cresswell, 1996, p. 49).

Graffiti is described as 'dirt', because it occurs in the more dilapidated and dangerous parts of the city down back alleys, by train tracks and in unsanctioned and unauthorised locations (Schacter, 2008). Similar to Cresswell's (1996) research, Schacter (2008) explored the conflicting discourses of graffiti. He conducted informal interviews with street artists, gallery curators, legal graffiti

mural groups, public art commissioning bodies, local community centres, council authorities, and graffiti removal teams in London. Comparable results were found with Cresswell (1996) where anti-graffiti authorities would commonly use the terms *dirt* and *pollution* to describe graffiti. Additionally, members of the anti-graffiti establishment frequently expressed that graffiti had the ability to "*physically attack, rob, or commit violence to their victims and the local communities*" (Schacter, 2008, p. 42, 43, emphasis in original). Thus, its status as dirt is linked to aspects to of social disorder which are further constituted as contaminating society. Within this conception of graffiti, it must be isolated and removed before it spreads (Schacter, 2008).

Within the competing discourses of graffiti as art or vandalism, graffitists are frequently constructed as either vandals or artists. They are generally "vilified and seen as detached from norms of society or justified through incorporation into the discourse of modern art" (Silwa & Cairns, 2007, p. 73). These two polarised views of graffiti are explained by Silwa and Cairns (2007) who discuss the ways in which graffitists are perceived as demonstrating adherence to, or rebellion against, hegemonic social norms. Focusing on the graffitist Banksy, they found that while he engages in an illegal activity (spray-painting public property), he is simultaneously a media celebrity. Banksy has had his graffiti published in a number of books (see Banksy, 2001, 2002, 2006) and his work has sold for large amounts of money (Silwa & Cairns, 2007). However, Banksy is largely an anomaly[3]. Banksy's works on the walls of London and in other cities have become tourist hotspots, and buildings which have Banksy paintings on them have increased in value. For instance, a derelict pub for sale in Liverpool doubled in value after Banksy painted a giant rat on the side of it (Driscoll-Woodford, 2010). Moreover, private property owners who have Banksy graffiti on their walls have taken steps to protect them from tags and weathering by placing Perspex over the top (Laing, 2010). Furthermore, councils (such as Sutton Council) have made exceptions for not removing or painting over some of Banksy's graffiti despite having zero tolerance stances on graffiti ("Vote to decide Banksy work future", 2009).

---

[3] Although others such as Jean-Michel Basquiat and Keith Haring have straddled both discourses of modern art and vandalism, Banksy is perhaps the most well known.

The more humorous and engaging forms of graffiti, such as Banksy's has contributed to the troubling of graffiti. In particular, these forms of graffiti have brought up policy issues of whether some graffiti has significant artistic value and as a consequence should be allowed and even protected. As Halsey and Young (2002, p. 165) state:

> The diversity of graffiti — in terms of its authors, styles and significance — poses a number of problems for agencies attempting in the first instance to classify graffiti (as "crime" or "art") and in the second to control its occurrence (whether to "eradicate" or "permit").

Moreover, defining what vandalism is has an impact on perceptions of graffiti. While often used in conjunction with each other, graffiti and vandalism do not mean the same thing (White, 2001). Graffiti varies considerably according to authors, location, and motivations not all of which can be thought of as vandalism (White, 2001). For White (2001), graffiti is not strictly vandalism, because graffiti is usually creative and used to display artistic skill, communicate with peers, protest, or mark territory.

Graffitists themselves also divide graffiti between art and vandalism. Those who piece consider their activities constitute a form of art based on the skill, intent, and aesthetics required (Halsey & Young, 2006). Additionally, those who piece were adamant that their images had far greater aesthetic merit than those who tagged or executed throw-ups. "Such views are generally consistent with ways in which writers defined 'graffiti', separating 'art' (piecing) from 'vandalism' (tagging) and 'artists' (or writers) from 'taggers', 'bombers' and 'vandals" (Hasley & Young, 2006, p. 285). For graffitists, the perceived impact of their image upon the environment was a crucial factor in separating it as art not vandalism (Halsey & Young, 2006).

In addition to being constructed as vandals, graffitists are often assumed by policy makers to be involved in other criminal activities, and furthermore that doing graffiti leads to other crimes being committed. Because graffiti is usually done illegally, the criminal aspects of graffiti have been studied widely. Criminological based writings (see Doran & Lees, 2005; Halsey & Young, 2002, 2006; White, 2001)

look at the links between graffiti and other crimes. The relationship between different criminal activities is complex (Halsey & Young, 2006). The majority of participants in Halsey and Young's (2006) study undertaken in Melbourne, Australia indicated that they had committed or were presently involved in other types of crime. However, Halsey and Young (2006, p. 290) state, "this should not be taken to mean that graffiti 'causes' or leads to other crime. Nor should it be supposed that other types of crime lead to, or cause, graffiti". In relation to this, Alonso (1998, p. 11) states, "heavy drug use is almost nonexistent among serious graffiti writers, and activities involved with writing graffiti appear to be their only criminal behaviour".

The presence of graffiti has been linked to the fear of crime because of the visible signs of disorder that graffiti often presents. Doran and Lees (2005) used Geographical Information Systems to investigate the links between graffiti and the fear of crime in New South Wales. Their results reveal that the distribution of fear of crime varies considerably over time and is often spatially coincident with concentrations of disorder. Graffiti was found to be one of the most prevalent types of physical disorder. Delays in removing graffiti can often result in the proliferation of graffiti; because areas with lots of graffiti will attract further graffiti (Doran & Lees, 2005). According to Doran and Lees (2005), graffiti 'hotspots' increase not only the amount of property damage being committed in a particular area, but also the fear of crime among residents. Similarly, Craw et al. (2006) argue that although graffiti is a relatively minor act of vandalism, it does contribute to an atmosphere of neglect, which can spur further acts of vandalism.

The assumption exists that the presence of graffiti will lead to further acts of graffiti and other more serious types of crimes (White, 2001). This has been described in terms of the 'broken windows' theory (see Kelling & Wilson, 1982) which refers to the idea that if a broken window in a building is not repaired, then the sense that nobody cares or is in control will lead to more windows being broken. The broken windows thesis has been influential in criminal justice policy, including graffiti policy around the world and in New Zealand. For example, Rudy Giuliani, the mayor of New York City during the mid 1990s, stressed the broken-window effect

in terms of graffiti being an invitation to more serious street crimes, like mugging and pick-pocketing, because the presence of graffiti communicated the lack of control law enforcement had on an area (Dickinson, 2008). Similarly, in New Zealand, the *Knowhow Beat Graffiti Guide* (Ministry of Justice, 2006, p. 3) states, "research shows that graffiti is often linked with other more destructive crimes. Without graffiti removal an area is likely to attract further property damage and other forms of street crime". While not a central focus of my thesis, this research does explore some of the assumptions about graffiti and its links with crime through interviews with graffitists and authorities in Wellington. The investigation of the links between graffiti and other crimes is important because much of the current New Zealand graffiti policy assumes that the presence of graffiti will lead to more types of criminal behaviour and vandalism in that area and that graffitists are involved in other crimes. If this is not the case then the relevance of those policies is questionable.

The broken windows thesis has been heavily criticised and discredited (see Innes, 2004). This is because disorder does not create a consequential increase of crime and people's perceptions of crime in areas with disorder do not correlate with crime rates which are usually lower than they were perceived (Cox et al., 2009). Innes (2004) argues that evidence to support the broken windows thesis is lacking and alternatively proposes a signal crimes perspective. The signal crime perspective explains that people have a tendency to construct their understandings of the risk of crimes and disorder around certain signal incidents. These signal incidents have different values in terms of the level of risk perception they generate. This is because factors such as social class, age, gender, ethnicity, previous victimisation, lifestyle, and awareness of recent media stories may shape how any potential signals are interpreted (Innes, 2004).

Additionally, not all forms of graffiti present the same level of safety concern. Austin and Sanders (2007) undertook research in Louisville, Kentucky looking into the impact of graffiti on perceptions of safety. Their research used both photography and standard quantitative survey methods to demonstrate that graffiti was related to perceptions of safety in local neighbourhoods. It was found

that graffiti was not a one-dimensional construct in terms of its impact on attitudes concerning safety. Reactions to graffiti vary widely based on the type of graffiti and, to some extent, differ by individual characteristics and victimisation experiences (Austin & Sanders, 2007). Therefore, Austin and Sanders (2007) suggested that different categories of graffiti evoke various levels of concern over safety and suggested that attempts to classify graffiti and reactions to it as a uniform phenomenon may be misguided.

In New Zealand, government policy treats graffiti as homogenous. The only separation is graffiti vandalism from graffiti art or urban art[4] (Wellington City Council, 2009a). One of the objectives in Halsey and Young's (2002, p. 165) study was to "address the tendency (in some academic writing and in policy-making) to treat graffiti as a relatively homogeneous and somewhat simplistic phenomenon". If graffiti is treated as homogenous "policies will be based on stereotypes rather than the varied actions, beliefs and desires of actual persons" (Halsey & Young, 2002, p. 170). These stereotypes conclude that graffiti is done by teenage males, is a result of boredom and unemployment, is unsocial, and associated with low income areas and crime (Halsey & Young, 2002). In many cases these assumptions are either wrong or need to be examined further (White, 2001). One way to not treat graffiti as homogenous is to distinguish between the different types of graffiti, and consequently the ones that cause the most concern to a community can be dealt with (Halsey & Young, 2002). Yet, Halsey and Young (2002) only categorised four types of graffiti- pieces, tags, throw-ups, and slogans in their research. The image based form of street art and also forms of political graffiti are missing from their discussions.

There are many different policy options for preventing and managing graffiti. Halsey and Young (2002) separated Australian responses to graffiti into four categories drawn from their underlying aims; these were removal, criminalisation, welfarism, and acceptance of graffiti culture. Welfarism involves the use of youth workers, youth facilities and job training schemes (Halsey & Young, 2002).

---

[4] Graffiti vandalism is graffiti placed in unauthorised or prohibited locations while graffiti art or urban art is done with the property owner's consent or on legal graffiti walls (Wellington City Council, 2009a).

Acceptance of the graffiti culture may involve "commissioning of murals by graffiti artists; community education on the nature of graffiti art; and the provision of art classes or workshops so that writers might improve their aerosol techniques" (Halsey & Young, 2002, p. 177). The expectation of acceptance strategies is that tagging will decrease for two reasons. The first is that in graffiti workshops taggers learn how to piece and are then encouraged to stop random tagging. The second is that the provision of sites for graffiti such as legal walls will concentrate graffiti in those areas and reduce random tagging. Councils in Australia have reported lower rates of tagging since the provision of legal walls. For instance, Hurstville has a legal wall and has experienced reduced rates of graffiti vandalism and reductions in fear of crime (Halsey & Young, 2002). However, in New Zealand, the Ministry of Justice (2008a) expressed that little evidence exists that legal graffiti walls contribute to a reduction in graffiti vandalism, and legal walls do not fit with the Government's position on preventing the sale and possession of spray-paint cans to those under 18 years of age. As a result, the STOP Strategy does not support the use of legal graffiti walls. This does not stop councils from having legal walls, however. There are currently two legal walls in Wellington and these were discussed with the participants in the semi-structured interviews.

Removal strategies are based on the notion "that prompt cleaning will deter subsequent writing" (Halsey & Young, 2002, p. 177). Although removal is not always successful; it can essentially provide a new spot to do graffiti and if constant removal occurs, graffitists may instead do quick graffiti, such as tags or throw-ups in that location (Ferrell & Weide, 2010; Halsey & Young, 2002). It is also expected and accepted by graffitists that their graffiti will be painted over or removed, and this impermanence is seen as neither a positive or negative thing, but contributes to the progression of graffiti styles (Schacter, 2008). For many:

> The destruction of the images was seen to act as a 'fresh canvas', a new area to paint in for a form that was often restricted in its locations, and, furthermore, seen to act as a stimulus to 'get up', an additional incentive and motivation to put more of their images on the walls and the streets. (Schacter, 2008 p. 47)

In addition, if removal of graffiti does achieve the sought after clean blank surfaces "one can ask whether or not sanitised, controlled spaces (and minds) is entirely

desirable" (White, 2001, p. 246).   Furthermore, removal measures may be counterproductive to the vitality in some places as they make places sterile, unfriendly, and no longer enjoyable for young people (White, 2001). The removal of graffiti in Wellington will be addressed in the research through both observations and interviews.   Opinions were gathered from graffitists on the successfulness of graffiti removal in Wellington and examined whether removal provides a fresh canvas on which to paint.

Alongside the above strategies, criminalisation methods are commonly used. These involve the use of possible criminal convictions, fines, community service, and jail time. However, such methods are problematic for two reasons. The first is that graffiti is often done only for a short time so the creation of a criminal record for graffitists could be avoided if other deterrent methods were adopted (Halsey & Young, 2002). The second reason is that graffitists may be doing it for aesthetic reasons and "prosecution might unfairly penalise individuals with artistic talent" (Halsey & Young, 2002, p. 179).   Moreover, types of criminalisation methods, especially those which amplify existing coercive measures, can strengthen the determination of graffitists to retaliate and do more graffiti (White, 2001). Additionally, amplified legal and police pressure can increase the adrenalin rush, subsequently making the act of graffiti more pleasurable for those involved (Ferrell, 1995).

Halsey and Young (2002) argue that councils who operate rigorous forms of either removal and/or criminalisation are likely to experience success in high numbers of arrests and a subsequent decline in illegal graffiti. However, they do so at the cost of "either increasing numbers of individuals becoming involved (formally or informally) in the criminal justice system" or further isolating these individuals from their community (Halsey & Young, 2002, p. 179).

Instead of adopting a universal anti graffiti stance, Halsey and Young (2002) suggest that responses to graffiti should combine acceptance of graffiti culture, welfarism, and/or removal. This is because graffiti is heterogeneous, complex and that unless graffiti responses acknowledge graffitists' desire for expression through

doing graffiti they will continue to be unsuccessful (Halsey & Young, 2002, p. 179). White (2001) suggests that graffiti should be dealt with on a local level and suited to the peculiarities of the area. This could be done by gathering information on the types, methods and locations of graffiti to see where it is a problem and which types of graffiti are problems (White, 2001). In coming up with possible responses it is also important to find the authors of the graffiti and create some dialogue which may lead to other issues coming to the fore (White, 2001). The research represented in this thesis has sought to do just this by gathering information on the types, methods, and locations of graffiti in Wellington and discusses some of the possible policy options for responding to graffiti.

SUMMARY

Graffiti is heterogeneous; there are many different types of graffiti and literature concerning graffiti is diverse. To date graffiti has been theorised as a way of claiming space, marking territory, as a complex subculture and as a criminal activity. The territorial aspects of graffiti have been debated widely; gang graffiti in particular is seen as a marker of territory (Ley & Cybriwsky, 1974). In New Zealand, Lindsey and Kearns (1994) argue that a clear time-space relationship exists between the appearance of tags and where taggers spend most of their time, and that graffiti could been seen as an indicator of presence. Graffiti is said to often follow a linear pattern along main transport arteries, and generally private property is avoided (Ley & Cybriwsky, 1974; Ferrell, 1995; Lindsey & Kearns, 1994). However, graffiti is also said to be located in areas with less detection such as under bridges, and in inaccessible locations, such as up high on billboards (Ferrell & Weide, 2010; Spocter, 2004). By doing graffiti, graffitists not only transform space, they reclaim it from commercial interests and in the process they are 'out of place' while remaking public space (Docuyanan, 2000; Ferrell, 1995; White, 2001; Schacter, 2008).

The graffiti subcultures are male dominated and inclusion into the subculture creates a sense of cultural belonging (Macdonald, 2001). Within graffiti subcultures there are rules, such as respecting other's graffiti. These rules can be

broken for several reasons, for instance, because of a lack of space or animosity between graffitists (Docuyanan, 2000; Macdonald, 2001; Ferrell, 1998). Becoming a graffitist is a heterogeneous event, however graffitists usually start off tagging and then as their skill increases they move into doing throw-ups and then pieces (Halsey & Young, 2006; Lachmann, 1988). Motivations for doing graffiti are largely positive, such as pride, pleasure and doing an activity with friends (Halsey & Young, 2006).

In addition, the conflicting discourses surrounding graffiti mean that graffiti can simultaneously be both vandalism and art. The dominant discourse of graffiti is one where graffiti is strictly vandalism, associated with dirt and pollution and its presence is linked to more destructive crimes (Alonso, 1998; Docuyanan, 2000; Cresswell, 1992;1996; Schacter, 2008). Options to prevent and reduce graffiti include removal of graffiti, acceptance of graffiti culture and criminalisation policies, although removal and criminalisation may have adverse consequences (Halsey & Young, 2002). For instance, removal measures may make more places to do graffiti as painting over gives a 'fresh canvas' or alternatively removal can make places sterile and no longer enjoyable for young people (Halsey & Young, 2002; Schacter, 2008; White, 2001).

CHAPTER THREE: GRAFFITI IN NEW ZEALAND AND WELLINGTON

This chapter discusses the context in which the research has taken place. It briefly explains the history of graffiti, as well as recent events and policy changes which highlight the need for new New Zealand research.

GRAFFITI IN NEW ZEALAND

In New Zealand, graffiti does not have a long history. The now prevalent appearance of graffiti was a result of the spread of the hip-hop culture from New York City from the 1980s. The popularity of graffiti grew following the release of the movie *Style Wars*[5] in 1984 (O'Donnell, 2007). Before the mid-1980s the dominant form of graffiti was political in nature, one such example is "unemployment is not working". This started to change in the mid-1980s; the infrequent appearance of political graffiti was replaced "by a new breed of spray-can literati ... who practice[d] signature style graffiti known as 'tagging', a trend originally associated with American (Black) youth culture" (Lindsey & Kearns, 1994, p. 8). There was a strong ethnic connection to this American-influenced practice in which Māori and Pacific Island youth, in particular, appropriated American black culture (Lindsey & Kearns, 1994). Graffiti in New Zealand has continued to progress and diversify into new forms and styles following international developments in graffiti and street art. While those who do graffiti in New Zealand "can be from any ethnicity, culture, gender, and socio-economic background" (Ministry of Justice, 2006, p. 3) it still tends to involve mostly Māori and Pacific Island youth[6] (Cox et al., 2009; Statistics New Zealand, 2010).

In addition, "research has shown that graffiti may be written by: those aged 10-45, males and females, employed and unemployed, those in schools, and truants,

---

[5] *Style Wars* is a hip-hop documentary examining New York City subway graffiti and its authors
[6] For instance in 2009 over half of all those apprehended under the Wilful Damage- Graffiti Sec 11 were recorded as being Maori (Statistics New Zealand, 2010).

children of stable and unstable families, students, artists, political activists" (Ministry of Justice, 2006, p. 3). Although there has been little New Zealand-specific research undertaken concerning the characteristics of those who do graffiti, the experience of councils in New Zealand suggests that graffiti tends to be done by young people from 12-19 years of age (Ministry of Justice, 2006). The research conducted for this thesis interviewed graffitists who were between 20 to 32 years of age during September and October 2010. This age group was chosen because of ethics concerns raised by my application to the Victoria University Ethics Committee about interviewing people under 18 years of age and those involved in activities of criminal offending. Due to these concerns, I approached older graffitists for interviews. They do mostly legal, permission granted or commission works and were more open to disclosing information and participating in an interview. By interviewing older graffitists, a more reflective and critical view of the graffiti subculture was gained. In addition, by interviewing older graffitists I was able to challenge the common stereotype of graffitists as 'bored youth'.

In the last few years, conflicts over graffiti have come to the fore in New Zealand. Several high profile events have prompted passionate and intense debates about both its values and harms. They have also heightened perceptions that graffiti is a growing problem. Many of these events included judges giving out jail terms (one tagger received a two year jail term) to prolific taggers and ordering them to pay for the thousands of dollars of damage they caused ("Taggers face clean-up, and big bills", 2010; "Tagger goes to prison for painting spree at 22 sites" 2010). In 2010, a couple who caught two young men tagging their fence, captured them, filmed them, and forced them to dance in order to humiliate them[7] ("Taggers held captive, filmed, forced to dance – Video", 2010). Some of these events have brought up issues and concerns about the use of force that property owners have taken when their property has been tagged.

The most salient of these events was the manslaughter of 15 year old tagger Pihema Cameron who was stabbed by Auckland businessman Bruce Emery after

---

[7] The news report can be found here: http://www.3news.co.nz/Taggers-held-captive-filmed-forced-to-dance/tabid/368/articleID/174820/Default.aspx

Pihema was caught tagging Emery's home in Manurewa in January 2008 (Irvine & Tan, 2010). This event in particular prompted fervent debates with many online comments saying that Bruce Emery should not go to jail for what he did, that it was the fault of Pihema Cameron because he was the one vandalising someone else's property and questioned where Pihema's parents were[8] ("Family of slain tagger says four year jail sentence not enough", 2009). After serving less than two years in jail (under half his sentence) Bruce Emery was released in late 2010 (Irvine & Tan, 2010). The passionate views on graffiti visible from these conflicts sparked my own interest in the subject, particularly in terms of the noticeable conflicting discourses concerning graffiti and graffitists and in thinking about what could be done (if anything should be) about graffiti.

In 2009, Smashproof, a hip-hop music group from South Auckland (where the manslaughter of Pihema Cameron took place) produced a song called *Brother*. The song deals with social issues in South Auckland, including drug dealing and gang affiliation. The music video shows graffiti and re-enacts the incident of Pihema Cameron's death. In the video a young Māori boy is shown tagging a fence. He is then chased down the street by middle aged Pākehā man whom then catches and is seen struggling with him in the next section (Tapaleao, 2009). During this section of the song the lyrics are:

> Take away a kids life away just because he tagged. Damn. Why you let us get ahead if you let us pull us back right before we see the end. Please tell me understand why you took away my friend son to brother. I lost my brother. I gotta [sic] know. (Smashproof, 2009)

To date the YouTube music[9] video has had over 300,000 views, and in 2009 the song featured at number one on the NZ Top 40 Singles Chart for ten weeks in a row; the longest run ever for a New Zealand song ("Smashproof break chart record", 2009).

Since its rise in popularity from the mid 1980s, graffiti in New Zealand has not only become widespread in urban areas, but is shown online, in books, magazines and in

---

[8] See http://www.3news.co.nz/Family-of-slain-tagger-says-four-year-jail-sentence-not-enough/tabid/423/articleID/91079/Default.aspx
[9] For the video see http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yooqIsQnjME

art galleries. Graffitists from New Zealand have become known internationally. The TMD crew from New Zealand were recognised as world graffiti champions in 2006 and 2008 for winning the annual *Write4Gold* competition in Europe (Murray, 2009). On the internet, numerous YouTube videos, Flicker pages, and blogs are dedicated to showing graffiti in its various forms. For instance, YouTube videos showing skateboarding and graffiti in Christchurch have proliferated (Glynn, 2009).

> These videos often feature the elaborate and colourful work of graf 'kings' in its finished forms or while it is being made at locations throughout the city on the sides of trains, under overpasses and on other available surfaces. (Glynn, 2009, p. 20)

Wellington graffiti is also represented on YouTube with videos of elaborate pieces being produced, often with hip-hop music playing as the soundtrack[10].

ANTI-GRAFFITI POLICY AND STRATEGY

Coupled with, and influenced by these high profile events amplified by the media, has been a growing government focus on the escalating problem of graffiti vandalism. "Graffiti vandalism has become a major problem for almost all New Zealand local authorities" (Ministry of Justice, 2006, p. 3) and "ugly scrawls deface the walls and structures of our cities and towns" (Ministry of Justice, 2008b, p. 3). Responding to public and Government concerns that graffiti is a serious and escalating problem in many New Zealand communities, the Ministry of Justice implemented the STOP Strategy in 2008. The STOP Strategy was put in place to help local government, non-government agencies and regional authorities deal with graffiti. It provides a framework of prevention, management, and enforcement to reduce graffiti vandalism in New Zealand and builds on actions already developed by central and local government, communities, and voluntary organisations (Ministry of Justice, 2008a). One of the prevention approaches advocated in the Strategy is application of CPTED principles (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design). CPTED seeks to reduce opportunities for crime through

---

[10] For instance, see http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jE8yELbhvBY&feature=fvwrel

the design and management of built and landscaped environments, for instance, by using rough textures and improving lighting (Ministry of Justice, 2008a).

As part of this response, the Summary Offences Act 1981 was amended in 2008 to create a specific offence for graffiti vandalism, tagging, and defacing. It also restricted the sale of spray-paint to those younger than 18 years of age (Ministry of Justice, 2008a). This now means that spray-paint must also be stored in areas which cannot be accessed without the aid of a shop employee, and a person who sells spray-paint to an under 18 years old commits a punishable offence and can be fined up to $1,500 (Cox et al., 2009). Additionally, under the Summary Offences (Tagging and Graffiti Vandalism) Amendment Act, the maximum penalty for graffiti vandalism rose from $200 to a $2,000 fine and a community based sentence can be imposed by a judge to clean up graffiti vandalism (Cox et al., 2009).

The Summary Offences Act 1981 (New Zealand Government, 2008) defines graffiti vandalism as:

> The act of a person damaging or defacing any building, structure, road, tree, property, or other thing by writing, drawing, painting, spraying or etching on it, or otherwise marking it:
>
> (a) Without lawful authority; and
>
> (b) Without the consent of the occupier or owner or other person in lawful control.

On a community scale, local authorities can introduce bylaws to address the problem of graffiti. This falls under the scope of the Local Government Act (2002) which covers graffiti as part of wider community concerns. For example, a graffiti-related bylaw can provide authorisation for local authorities to remove graffiti within 24 hours (Ministry of Justice, 2008a). In 2000 the Auckland City Council launched such a bylaw where the Council aimed to remove graffiti from street frontage private property within 24 hours (Ministry of Justice, 2006). Councils also adopt other forms of graffiti management approaches, such as mentor programs and the facilitation of community murals. For instance, Project Legit in Christchurch is a Council initiative which involves working with, and directing

taggers and young people toward more legitimate forms of art. The initiative promotes legal graffiti as an art form through murals with the aim of reducing incidences of graffiti vandalism in Christchurch (Christchurch City Council, 2009). In Porirua, the City Council works with local schools, education centres, residents and community groups to design and paint murals in specific areas of the city with the aims of increasing community ownership of these spaces, increasing the safety for children and young people and thereby reducing incidences of graffiti and other forms of vandalism (Porirua City Council, 2011).

WELLINGTON CONTEXT

In Wellington (New Zealand's capital city of approximately 195, 500 people), the City Council spends about $400,000 a year removing graffiti by painting over it, or washing it off public spaces (Thomson, 2010; Wellington City Council, 2010). Recently there has been an increase in graffiti in central Wellington and the surrounding suburbs of Newtown and Aro Valley and the Police have employed a Community Constable to focus specifically on the problem of graffiti (Thomson, 2010). Approaches used to reduce and prevent graffiti in Wellington include a 'dob-in a tagger' reward programme which has been used in several Wellington suburbs. This approach involves the Council offering $100 rewards to people who help Police catch taggers in specific suburbs where tagging is frequent (Wellington City Council 2008).

The Wellington City Council's attitude towards graffiti is that it negatively affects people's perception of safety and reduces property values (Wellington City Council, 2009a). Furthermore, the view is that if graffiti is not removed soon after it appears that area will attract more graffiti (Wellington City Council, 2009a). This view is illustrated by the Wellington City Council's current graffiti campaign which uses posters around the city to encourage people to report graffiti. The message on the posters is "stop graffiti before it spreads". The campaign also includes the creation of murals, as well as working closely with local communities to prevent graffiti and increase the speed of its removal. Additionally, the Wellington City

Council gives out graffiti removal kits which include paint remover, gloves, glasses, and removal directions (Wellington City Council, 2009a).

To remove graffiti, the Wellington City Council employs an anti-graffiti squad to paint over or wash off graffiti from the city's public spaces and from private property with the owners' consent (Wellington City Council, 2009b). In 2009, the anti-graffiti squad painted over a memorial to Ian Curtis (the singer of the British band Joy Division) on Wallace Street in the suburb of Mount Cook, proximate to the city centre. Since the suicide of Ian Curtis 31 years ago, graffiti with the singer's name, RIP, birth date, and date of death has been present on a wall on Wallace Street. It has come to have some historical and cultural value to local residents (Burns, 2009). Consequently, its removal raised questions about current strategies and the singular portrayal of graffiti as a problem, which overlook its other possible useful dimensions. The tribute was repainted in the exact place on the wall a week after and has not been removed by the Council as yet (see Figure 3.1).
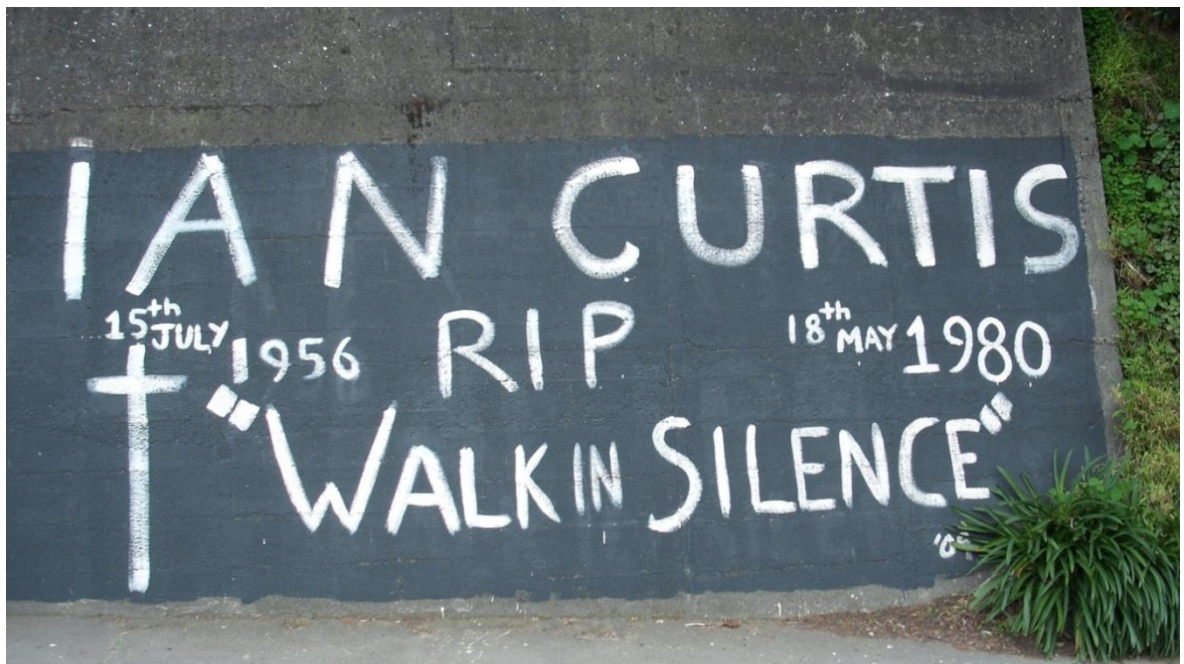
Figure 3.1. **Ian Curtis memorial, Wallace Street, Mount Cook**

NEW ZEALAND GRAFFITI RESEARCH

While recently graffiti has achieved a higher public profile in New Zealand and as a consequence more policy focus, there has not been any recent research on graffiti apart from that commissioned by the Ministry of Justice into tagging (see Cox et al., 2009). This research used an online survey and a series of focus groups to gain information about offender motivations and attitudes of young people to tagging and graffiti. From this, the researchers found that graffitists do not form a distinct sub group and that for those who do graffiti, it is a meaningful cultural and social practice which is associated with a desire for local celebrity (Cox et al., 2009).

New Zealand research prior to this study is limited and no research has been done on the different types of graffiti found in New Zealand or on aspects of the graffiti subculture, such as the rules associated with doing graffiti. Existing New Zealand research includes that undertaken by Craw, Leland, Bussell, Munday, and Walsh (2006) who investigated whether a colourful mural could reduce new graffiti attacks in areas prone to graffiti. They hypothesised that graffitists would not practice graffiti on the area covered by a mural, but would continue to write on a blank wall. The reasons given for this were that the graffiti would be harder to see on the mural and second, that graffitists would be likely to see the mural as belonging to somebody and respect the artwork. Craw et al. (2006) found that the section of a blank wall was subject to significantly higher levels of graffiti than the mural section. In Dunedin, Green (2003) researched graffiti in male toilets, female toilets, and study booths at the University of Otago and detected gender differences in language style.

Seventeen years ago, research undertaken by Lindsey and Kearns (1994) examined the geographic aspects of graffiti in Auckland. They found that spatial relationships existed between taggers, their tags, and places where youth spent their time. For instance, they found that graffiti occurred around transport routes, bus stops, and shops. This study is the most closely related to that undertaken for this thesis and has been discussed in more detail within the literature review. The New Zealand research is therefore limited in its scope, particularly concerning the recent

developments in graffiti styles, visual dynamics, practices of graffitists and insights into aspects of graffiti culture. These gaps are specifically addressed in this research.

Summary

The popular form of hip-hop graffiti proliferated in New Zealand from the 1980s as a result of the spread of the hip-hop culture from New York. Graffiti in New Zealand is widespread and regarded as a significant problem in many urban areas. Due to the perceived problem of graffiti, the New Zealand Government has recently introduced policy changes which make graffiti vandalism a specific offence, restrict the sale of spray-paint to those younger than 18 years of age, and spray cans must be located out of reach of the public (Ministry of Justice, 2008a). In Wellington there have also been recent changes to graffiti prevention strategies. Although graffiti is characterised by heated debates and assumptions, with the exception of the report by Cox et al. (2009) no new research has been undertaken. As a result, this research attends to this gap by providing insights into graffiti in Wellington as an indicator of graffiti nationally, by examining the visual, spatial, and temporal aspects of graffiti along with the practices and social dynamics involved in its production and distribution. The following chapter presents the methodology.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the purpose and design of the methodology, including the methods used and discusses some of the key methodological issues that affected the data collection and analysis process. Firstly, I discuss the epistemological stance I took and the methods chosen. I then explain how the illegal nature of graffiti and ethics concerns impacted on the methods chosen. Following that, the process I undertook in the observations and semi-structured interviews are discussed, including how I recruited participants. Lastly, this chapter examines the strengths and limitations of the approach.

EPISTEMOLOGY AND METHODS

In framing this research, I draw from postmodern and post-structural epistemologies. As an epistemology, postmodernism rejects grand theories and favours localised accounts and voices of the marginalised. By paying more attention to the voices of marginalised people, postmodernism can question how people are defined as different from the hegemonic norms and how this difference is constructed. Moreover, it suggests that no singular theory can be sufficient enough to explain all aspects of a phenomenon (Hubbard et al., 2002).

Coupled with this, I draw on post-structural epistemologies with regards to interpretations of space. In particular, that space is a social construction that is made real through the circulation of certain discourses. Dominant hegemonic narratives construct spatial discourses of what is appropriate or inappropriate spatially (Del Casino, 2009). These spatial discourses are constantly being challenged through practices as individuals transgress the boundaries (Del Casino, 2009). Therefore, poststructuralist space is "a performed space of both power and resistance" (Del Casino, 2009, p. 24).

The social construction of space through discourses of power is considered key in understanding the production of identities and performance of subjects (Del

Casino, 2009). Social identities are constructed by the discursive regimes and dominant power relations, and they are constituted in relation to, and through, particular spaces. Thus, the identities performed by individuals are in ways that reinforce certain spaces (Del Casino, 2009).

> Poststructuralists methodologically shift their questions and concerns toward how spaces are socially constructed to maintain relations of power and difference, while also examining how spaces serve as sites of resistance to authority and inequality. (Del Casino, 2009, p. 68)

Methodologically, post structuralism attempts to "deconstruct, disturb and interrupt existing accounts of the world" (Hubbard et al., 2002, p. 85). In this research, I attempt to interrupt existing assumptions about graffitists by privileging their voices and experiences of doing graffiti, and by examining issues of power and transgression in regards to graffiti. I do this by using two qualitative research methods. Qualitative methods focus on the subjective experiences of individuals and their voices and experiences (Del Casino, 2009).

The qualitative methods chosen for this research enabled it to be in-depth and flexible depending on the graffiti found, and how the semi-structured interviews progressed. Qualitative researchers are increasingly using visual methods to produce research, such as visual ethnography (Bryman, 2004, see also Crang, 2010). Firstly, occurrences of graffiti around the Wellington City were documented through observations which specifically looked at their visual, temporal, and spatial aspects. Photographs were taken to document these aspects. Subsequently, the semi-structured interviews with graffitists provided information on their experiences, practices, motivations, and the local rules associated with doing graffiti. Additional semi-structured interviews with people involved in city safety and efforts to control graffiti generated information on anti-graffiti strategies and the discourses and links between graffiti and crime. My approach was also influenced by methods used in graffiti studies, in particular using photographs (Adams & Winter, 1997; Alonso, 1998), observations (Lindsey & Kearns, 1994) and semi-structured interviews (Docuyanan, 2000; Schacter, 2008). I then situated this empirical research in the larger context of international literature on graffiti reviewed in chapter two.

ETHICS AND THE ILLEGALITIES OF GRAFFITI

The illegality of graffiti as the subject being examined for this thesis influenced the research methods chosen and the means by which I recruited participants. Ethnographic or participant observation methods were deemed to be too difficult ethically. I also believed that it would be too difficult to recruit people who would allow me to document them undertaking an illegal activity or even a legal one[11]. Thus, I chose a visual method of looking at the occurrence of graffiti in the urban environment. However, even with observations, ethical and legal issues could have emerged, as Kearns (2010, p. 255) points out:

> Observing the 'what' and 'where' of graffiti is unproblematic, since 'tagging' is part of the publicly observed landscape. But because the act of inscribing graffiti is invariably illegal, what are our obligations if we witness 'taggers' at work; report their breach of the law or preserve their anonymity? Arguably, our role as citizens takes precedence, and former stance should hold sway.

During the observations I did see young men doing graffiti on two occasions. Both of these occurred at Left Bank Alleyway, and because my understanding was that Left Bank was a permitted graffiti spot, there was no need to report their actions.

Semi-structured interviews were chosen to deepen and extend the information gained from the observations. Surveys were decided against because a large number of respondents would be difficult to access given the criminal nature of the activity under investigation. Furthermore, surveys have not been popular in international graffiti research, so in terms of discussing my research in relation to international research the use of surveys would not have been very helpful.

Ethics approval had to be granted by the Victoria University Human Ethics Committee before any interviews took place. The Committee raised several concerns about how I was to research people engaged in a criminal activity, those under 18 years of age who would be required to get signed consent from their parents to participate, and what the possible repercussions of their involvement in

---

[11] This is because those who do legal graffiti also do illegal graffiti on occasion and would therefore not want their identity shown.

my research might be. Hence, I chose to approach graffitists who were older (20-32 years of age), easier to access either through email or friends of friends, and who mostly did permitted and commissioned graffiti. I anticipated that there would be concerns about anonymity and confidentiality by those willing to participate. For that reason, participants were asked if they wanted to use a pseudonym for me to quote them. I also did not want those who had participated in the interviews to get into any kind of trouble with police as a result of my research, and because of this I was also careful about the kinds of questions I asked them. Thus, ethical considerations influenced my approach to the semi-structured interviews.

OBSERVATIONS

Unstructured qualitative observation methods were used in this research because graffiti is a highly visual, highly nuanced, and an ever changing phenomenon. The term observation refers to:

> Methods of generating data which entail the researcher immersing herself or himself in the research 'setting' so that they can experience and observe at first hand a range of dimensions in and of that setting. (Mason, 2002, p. 84)

These dimensions can include events, interactions, and spatial and temporal aspects which can capture the occurrence of a phenomenon (Mason, 2002). Using an unstructured qualitative observation approach meant that categories and concepts for describing and analysing the information emerged inductively. The advantage of using this approach was that it allowed fluidity of the process according to the specific types of graffiti that were found. The observations examined the visual, spatial, and temporal aspects of graffiti within Te Aro, an inner city suburb of Wellington City. This was done by taking field notes, and most importantly, photographs. Photographs were used as sources of data in their own right, and were interpreted and used as prompts in interviews. I began by observing graffiti generally (within the research area of Wellington CBD) and progressively narrowed in scope to look at four sites and the changing graffiti on certain walls.

The section of Wellington's CBD used for these observations was chosen because it was logistically easy to access and because I believed that a wide range of graffiti would be located within this area. The first step in this method was to get a general indication of where graffiti was located spatially within the research area, what graffiti in Wellington looked like in terms of types and methods used, and to locate those areas where high instances of graffiti occurred that would be suitable for closer documentation. I did this by walking within the research area, including behind buildings, in car parks and down alleyways and looking at the back of street signs, on drainpipes and various other places where graffiti usually occurs. During this process I also paid particular attention to the characteristics of the sites where graffiti was located and noted down repetitions of words or letters. I also identified several locations where there were high incidences of graffiti; these sites were then documented using street maps and by taking photographs.

Out of these general observations I then chose, for more detailed documentation, four sites (see Figure 4.1) where there was a high frequency of graffiti, a range of types of graffiti, and a mix of illegal and permitted graffiti. Information on the emergence of new graffiti, and the frequency of new graffiti was gathered at these sites by taking photographs and making field notes. These observations were used to visually present the spatial distribution of graffiti and examine the changes that took place over time. To do this, photographs were taken in roughly the same spots every week to closely document the changes that occurred. I documented the changes at the four sites weekly, on a Monday, for twelve weeks during the period from July to September 2010. Mondays were chosen because I expected that more graffiti would be written in the later part of the week, (Friday, Saturday, and Sunday nights) and on Mondays there would be less pedestrian traffic in the chosen areas. During these observations I also took photographs of graffiti surrounding the sites when I saw instances of graffiti that could be used to help ask questions in the semi-structured interviews, and to visually display the social aspects of graffiti, for instance tags that had been crossed out.
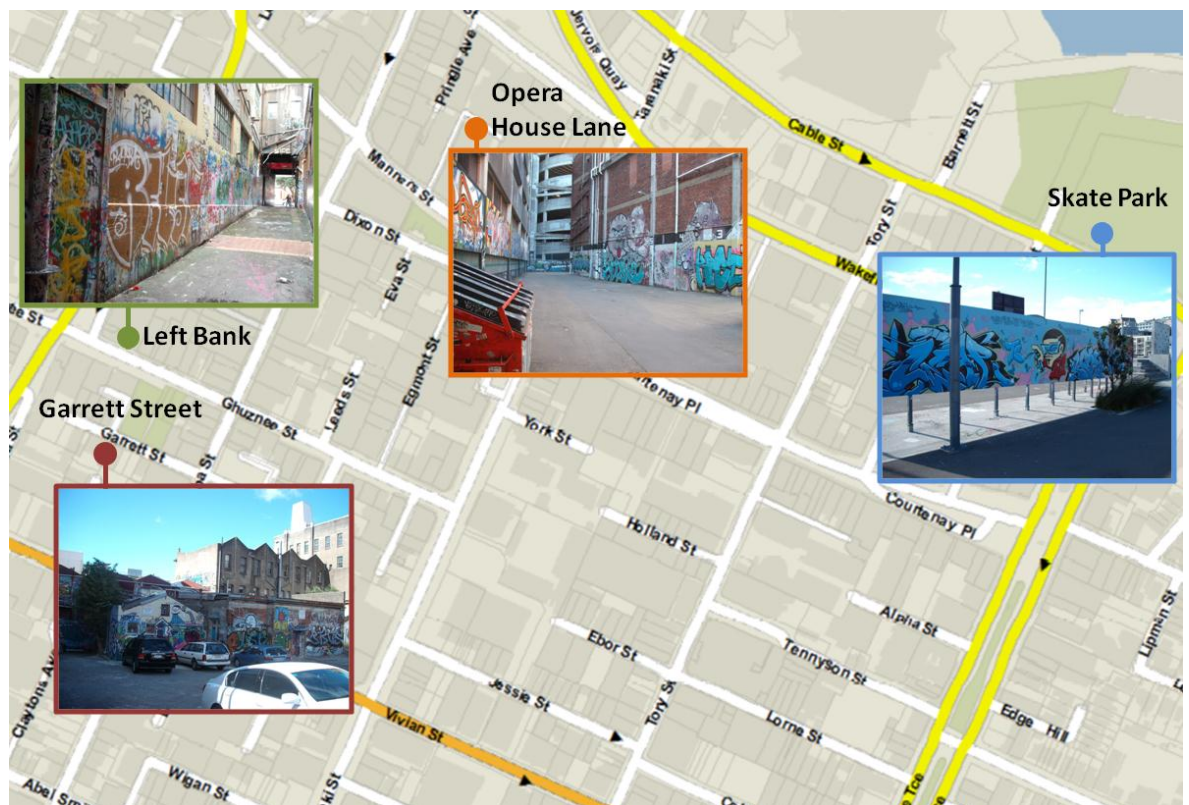
Figure 4.1. **Map of Te Aro, Wellington with sites shown. Source: Wellington City Council 2011 and Author's photographs**

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Before the semi-structured interviews took place the participants were given an information sheet and informed consent was acquired (see Appendix A and B). Issues around confidentiality and the use of pseudonyms were also discussed. City Safety Advisor Emma Titcombe, Community Sergeant Matt Boyce, and Community Constable Jane Gowans declined using pseudonyms to protect their identity and were comfortable with their full names being disclosed. I suggested to the graffitists that I use the name they were known by in their graffiti. By using the names that they were known by, it provided some legitimacy for my research as people within the subculture or knowledge of the scene would know who they were if reading it. I also informed the participants how long the interview would take, and discussed my research with them including the types of questions I would ask in order to build rapport (Dunn, 2010).

Five graffitists between 20-32 years of age took part in the semi-structured interviews. The five graffitists were: WgtnWallStreet, Drypnz, Tom, Aiole, and Ghstie. The participants were all men who do mainly street art and image based graffiti with the exception of Aiole who does hip-hop graffiti, mostly pieces. The locations for the interviews were left up to the participants to suggest so they would feel relaxed in them. All of the graffitists interviewed had been doing graffiti for at least three years. Semi-structured interviews were chosen because they are conducted more flexibly than structured interviews and allow the researcher to explore themes and respond to the participant's answers more freely (Bryman, 2008; Dunn, 2010).

In semi-structured interviews the researcher uses an interview guide with a list of questions or topics to be covered which do not need to be strictly adhered to, and new questions may be asked if desired (Bryman, 2008; Dunn, 2010). I used a list of possible questions (see Appendix C) that related to themes from the literature review so parallels could be made between both the findings and international literature. For instance, I asked the graffitists why they chose particular sites to do graffiti, why they do graffiti, and questions surrounding the graffiti subculture. Using this method I hoped that a more relaxed approach to the interviews would be gained, and I tried to ask questions that followed on logically from the emerging conversation (Dunn, 2010).

The first few questions were opening questions to initiate discussions, break the ice, and minimise discomfort (Dunn, 2010). These first questions were quite broad and general, such as what their definition of graffiti was, and what kind of graffiti they did. In addition to these generic questions, slightly different questions were posed to each of the participants depending on their particular areas of knowledge. For instance with WgtnWallStreet (who runs a popular Wellington graffiti/street art blog) I asked about the impact of the internet on the development of graffiti, and with Drypnz (who is a showing international artist) I asked his opinions on the difference between doing graffiti on the street and doing graffiti inside for the purpose of showing in a gallery.

Because I had done the observations first and had nearly completed them by the time I began the interviews, I had gained a sense of where graffiti was and had built up a familiarity with the graffiti I saw. This helped in the interviews as I knew what most of the participants' graffiti looked like and where it was situated, and I could ask them about particular works, why they placed them where they did, and how they felt if and when their work was tagged on. I could also ask about other graffiti I saw such as the systematic crossing out of one particular tag. In addition, some of the photographs taken at the research sites during the observations were used in the semi-structured interviews as prompts. This method of photo elicitation is defined as inserting a photograph into the research interview as stimulus for questioning (Bryman, 2008). This was useful as it supplied a context for discussion, and questions could be asked that related to particular graffiti in the photographs. I also kept up to date with the WgtnWallStreet blog and other Wellington graffiti internet pages.

The interviews with City Safety Advisor Titcombe and the joint interview with Community Sergeant Boyce and Community Constable Gowans all occurred after the interviews with the graffitists. All In these interviews I asked similar questions to those I had asked the graffitists, but from the perspective of someone who does not engage in doing graffiti. For instance the questions focused on why they thought people did graffiti, whether graffiti was linked with crime, what locations are targets for graffiti, and what their perspectives were on removal and legal walls. The interviews all occurred at their places of work.

RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS

I initially set up an online blog[12] with the intention of generating dialog and recruiting a range of participants for semi-structured interviews. However, due to the concerns raised in my application for ethics approval, this approach was abandoned, as I instead chose to approach people for the semi-structured interviews who were older than 18 years of age, and who were engaged in more

---

[12] The blog can be found here: http://geographiesofgraffiti.blogspot.com/

legal and permitted graffiti. As an alternative, the blog was used as a place to direct possible participants to, so that they could get additional information about my research. This was particularly in terms of the participant observation sheet, consent form, and research abstract. It was also a useful space for me to post photographs from the observation phase of my research.

The recruitment methods involved a mix of approaching people who I wished to include and snowballing (Bradshaw & Stratford, 2010). In September 2010, I emailed WgtnWallStreet and Drypnz whose email addresses I got from the internet (WgtnWallStreet blog and Drypnz website). I chose to approach Drypnz because I knew he did quite a lot of permitted work around Wellington and he shows his work in galleries, and therefore I thought he would be an interesting person to talk to about the differences in doing art in galleries and art on the street. WgtnWallStreet runs a popular graffiti/street art blog and as a result he was approached because he was knowledgeable about the Wellington graffiti scene. In the initial email to Drypnz and WgtnWallStreet and the subsequent email to Ghstie (after contact details were passed to me) the website link to the blog was given as a place where they could find the research abstract and the information and consent form. Both Drypnz and WgtnWallStreet were willing to be interviewed. I then gained the contact details of Ghstie through a friend of a friend. From this interview, Ghstie suggested that Aiole would be good to interview because he did hip-hop style graffiti. An interview was then organised with Aiole. This interview was a joint one with Aiole and Tom as he was with Aiole when I was interviewing him.

In order to recruit someone involved in graffiti management or efforts to stop graffiti I sent an email to the Wellington City Council outlining what my research involved and that I was looking for someone to participate in an interview. City Council City Safety Advisor Emma Titcombe responded. At the end of this interview Emma Titcombe suggested that Community Sergeant Matt Boyce (her contact with the police for graffiti matters) might be willing to be interviewed. I then emailed Community Sergeant Matt Boyce and arranged an interview with him.

He brought along Community Constable Jane Gowans[13] to the interview which was held at the Wellington City Police Station.

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

The analysis of the observation findings involved categorising the types of graffiti by matching up descriptions given in international graffiti literature with photographs I had taken. I also examined my field notes and photographs and grouped photographs in terms of their location, mediums, and the structures on which graffiti was found. I also collated photographs taken in the same location over the 12 week observation period to look at the changes that occurred.

Recordings were made of the interviews and I transcribed them in full. Analysis of the interview data involved identifying key themes and using a coding system by hand highlighting key terms and specific passages that I wanted to use (Cope, 2010; Dunn, 2010). These themes were influenced by the themes chosen for the interviews, the objectives of the research and the sections in the literature review (Cope, 2010). The text in the transcripts was divided into three main themes: territory, location and viewing space; subcultural practices, processes and motivations; and graffiti discourses, criminal elements and current graffiti strategies. Several sub-themes emerged out of these main themes. I was aware that graffitists' voices are not often heard in writings concerning graffiti. Therefore, I made a specific effort to use quotes from them.

STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

There were several strengths and limitations to the research approach I took. One of the strengths of the research was that I interviewed those who were between the ages of 20-32 years of age. This was a strong point because they are older and they are not often featured in research as most research assumes graffiti is a youth activity. The participants I mentioned above predominantly do image based

---

[13] Jane Gowans is the recently employed community constable mentioned in the second chapter whose job is to focus specifically on the issue of graffiti.

graffiti/street art and humorous and engaging forms of graffiti, which are forms of graffiti lacking in both New Zealand and international research. The participants involved in the interviews had been engaged in other forms of graffiti and were knowledgeable and reflective about graffiti in general and also about specifics around the kinds of graffiti they did. Many of the participants had tagged before as it was the starting point for their development in graffiti, and some of them still do it on occasion, so there were some discussions on tagging. As a consequence, the research lacks viewpoints from people who are younger than 20 who may be just starting out doing graffiti and would presumably tag more. This was a conscious decision because of ethical and access issues discussed earlier, however, it does have an impact on the scope of the research, how my research is interpreted, and importance for any policy discussions.

One of the weaknesses of the research was that no female graffitists were interviewed and the majority of the participants I interviewed were of European heritage. This has implications because it means that the marginalised voices within both wider society and within the graffiti subculture are absent from my research.

The graffiti examined in this research did not include toilet graffiti or any other graffiti located within buildings. The reasoning for this is that I was interested in graffiti in the urban environment, which could be connected to the theoretical framework (about appropriate behaviours, acts of transgression and discourse) and international literature that focuses mainly on hip-hop graffiti and other graffiti located in urban space. The research focused on graffiti located within an area of the Wellington CBD where a wide variety of graffiti was assumed to be located. Therefore, not many residential properties were included in the research. As a result no conclusions can be drawn from the observation data about the possible avoidance of residential or private property by graffitists; however, through the interview data this information became accessible.

Due to the focus on a section of Wellington's CBD, the observations left out a few common places for graffiti, such as the rail yards, and an old war bunker which are

both popular with graffitists in Wellington. These sites were excluded because I wished to examine graffiti in one particular area where there would be a large variety of graffiti to be examined, where the public frequented, and where there would be power and control issues through removal of graffiti by property owners or the Wellington City Council.

Time constraints meant that I did not have time to engage with the perspectives and opinions of gallery owners, graffiti removal people, private property owners, or members of the public. I thought it was more important to hear the voices of the graffitists which are not often heard in graffiti research.

Another limitation of the research was that no comprehensive policy analysis was undertaken on what works, what is done, and what options are available to manage and prevent graffiti, including policies adopted in other countries. This was because doing so was deemed too large for a Masters thesis. However, this thesis does include a discussion on some of the anti-graffiti strategies discussed in international literature and gathers views on the current strategies used in Wellington. I also decided that due to the lack of previous New Zealand research to frame understandings of graffiti in New Zealand, graffiti should be examined broadly using Wellington as a case study instead of focusing on particular aspects of graffiti such as policy options or motivations for doing graffiti.

Summary

Two qualitative methods were chosen to collect data about the visual, spatial, and temporal aspects of graffiti, the practices, and experiences informing its production, and the discourses of graffiti. Observations were chosen because graffiti is a highly visual phenomenon. The observations firstly examine graffiti broadly in Wellington then focus on four sites where there is a high frequency of graffiti. Semi-structured interviews were held with five graffitists, a City Safety Advisor from the Wellington City Council, a Community Constable, and a Community Sergeant. These interviews focused on gathering their views and opinions of graffiti in Wellington. There were several strengths and limitations of the methods chosen. One of the strengths is

that the graffitists interviewed were older and did mostly street art style graffiti which is lacking in New Zealand research. The findings are presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter is organised into three sections. The first section uses findings from the observation data to examine the visual, spatial, and temporal aspects of graffiti in Wellington. Using primarily the interview data from the semi-structured interviews with graffitists, the second section examines the ways graffitists visualise and read urban space, considerations for placement of graffiti, reasons for doing graffiti, the rules associated with their practice, and the process of becoming a graffitist. The competing discourses about graffiti, including its supposed links with crime and the current strategies to control it, are examined in the third section using information from the interviews with the graffitists, City Council City Safety Advisor Emma Titcombe, Community Sergeant Matt Boyce, and Community Constable Jane Gowans. In order to better understand Wellington graffiti, international literature is woven throughout the findings. In some cases, findings are used more than once to illustrate different points, for instance, photographs taken in the observations are used to visually illustrate aspects being discussed in the other sections.

VISUAL, SPATIAL, AND TEMPORAL ASPECTS OF GRAFFITI IN WELLINGTON

As discussed in the previous chapter, a section of Wellington's CBD was first scanned for graffiti to identify where graffiti occurred, its characteristics and to locate key sites for more detailed analysis. Visually, the graffiti sighted ranged widely in terms of colour, size, and shape. The types of graffiti found consisted of tags, pieces, protest graffiti, political graffiti, street art, throw-ups, and yarn bombing (see Figure 5.1), but did not encompass the entire range of types identified by Alonso (1998) (existential, tagging, piecing, political and gang graffiti) or White (2001) (political, protest, tagging, gang, graffiti art, and toilet and other public graffiti). In addition, the research site included categories of graffiti not previously included by Alonso (1998) or White (2001) such as throw-ups, yarnbombing, and street art. Throw-ups were added as a category because they differ from pieces and they are more elaborate than tags.

Tags

Piece

Throw-up

Protest

Political

Street Art

Figure 5.1. **Categories of graffiti, various locations, Te Aro, Wellington**

Figure 5.2. **Yarnbombing, Vivian Street**

Yarnbombing or graffiti knitting[14] (Figure 5.2) is a recent development in graffiti/street art. It is often associated with women who use yarn to make words and images on wire fences or place knitted sleeves around posts, trees and other objects (Wollan, 2011). There is no research concerning this type of graffiti as yet in New Zealand and none was found internationally. However, like other forms of graffiti, there are numerous websites and blogs dedicated to showing and sharing images of yarnbombing[15]. For the purposes of this thesis, street art was defined as image based graffiti as opposed to traditional hip-hop graffiti which are words and letters (MacDowell, 2006; Manco, 2006). A range of mediums and methods are used to do street art, such as paste-ups, stencils, and stickers. Ghstie (2010) put this well when he stated:

> I guess that street art is more of an illustrative side that is not using the spray-paint medium whereas ... traditional graffiti is typography based using spray-paint ... I think the dividing line between the two is probably the different medium that you use and also the fact that you're not doing traditional name typography.

[14] Yarn bombing or knit graffiti can also be categorised as a form of street art, but I have made it a separate category because it differs from common street art methods and mediums of stencils and paint and paste-ups.

[15] For instance see http://www.knittaplease.com/

While interesting in, and of themselves, these categories were also helpful when examining the spatial aspects of graffiti as different types were found in different locations.

Pieces and throw-ups were located in legal and permitted places, or in illegal spots away from the public's gaze. Pieces and throw-ups in illegal locations were often found down alley ways and behind buildings as they take longer to do, and subsequently the risk of getting caught is higher, hence they are placed in areas with less possibility of detection (Spocter, 2004). Throw-ups were also quite often found in high and inaccessible locations (Ley & Cybriwsky, 1974) (see Figure 5.3). Tags were more often seen in the public view than throw-ups and pieces because they can be executed quickly. Political graffiti and image/street art based graffiti was sighted in locations where the general public would see it and at heights where people would look, for instance on the back of signs or on empty billboards.
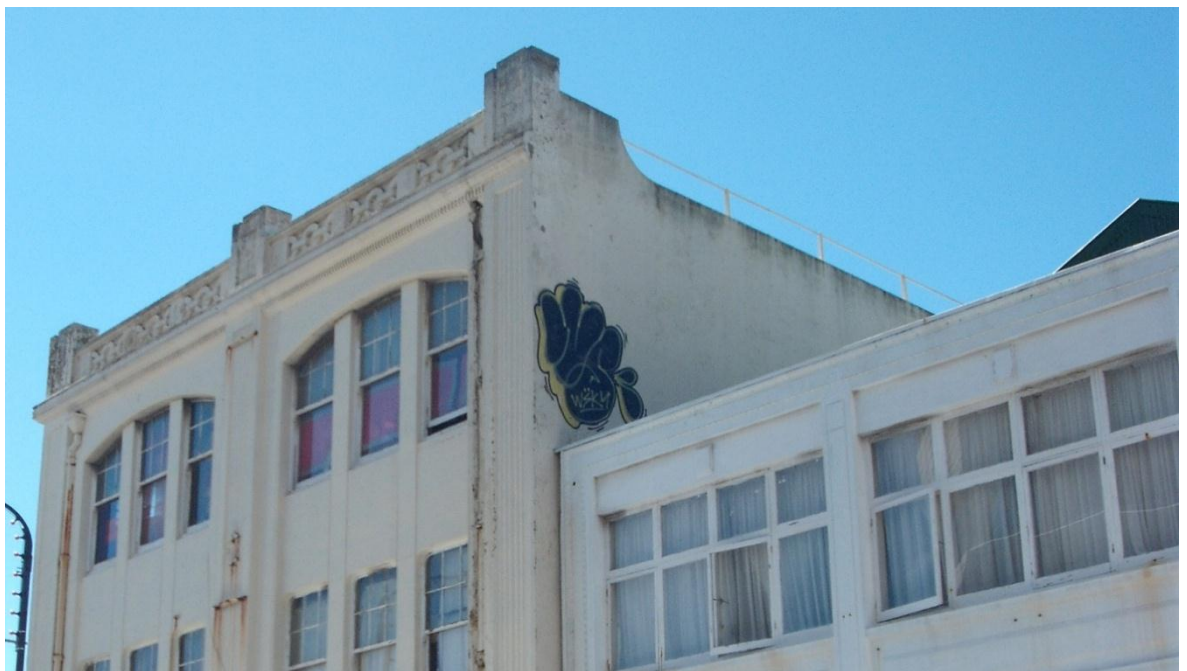
Figure 5.3. **Whisky throw-up, Cuba Street**

The mediums of graffiti varied according to the types and styles produced. Paste-ups, paint, spray-paint, yarn, and stickers were all used to do graffiti in Wellington. Tags written using markers were commonly found because markers are faster to use than spray-paint, easy to conceal, and quieter when being used. Markers are

also a preferable medium to tag with compared to other mediums as they cover a larger area than a sticker and are easier to execute than a paste-up, which requires paste to adhere to a wall. Paint was used either in street art style murals or to roll a tag. From the interviews with the graffitists it was found that the mediums used varied depending on the graffitist and changed with the development of their skill and the type of graffiti they did. Many of the graffitists interviewed started off tagging with spray-paint and moved into using paste-ups or paint along with spray-paint. Ghstie (2010) uses a wide range of mediums and stated, "I've used everything probably pencils, charcoals, pastels, spray-paint, acrylics, spray glue, screen prints".

Graffiti was found on a range of structures and surfaces including electrical boxes, drainpipes, doors signs, and walls (see Figure 5.4) and specific mediums were placed on particular surfaces. For instance, stickers were most commonly found on drainpipes.

Figure 5.4. **Several structures on which graffiti was found, Cuba Street**

Graffiti was located on public or commercial buildings, as the research area of in Wellington does not feature many residential buildings. Graffiti was also found down alleyways, on the sides of buildings, both up high and at eye level, on legal graffiti walls and on walls in car park areas. Both Lindsey and Kearns (1994) and Spocter (2004) suggested that most taggers write in areas they frequent, resulting in graffiti in commercial areas and public places, such as shops, bus stops, train stations, and entertainment venues such as the cinemas. In Wellington, tags were sighted at places where youth 'hang out', but a vast majority of graffiti, including tags, were located in places that were undesirable for youth to socialise in, such as in car parks and behind buildings. These less desirable and hospitable places reflect Schacter's (2008) findings that graffiti tends to be located in back alleys, by train tracks, and in the more dilapidated and dangerous parts of the city. Therefore, Lindsey and Kearns' (1994) suggestion that a time-space relationship exists between the appearances of tags and where taggers spend most of their time, was not consistently met in Wellington. Instead areas with a lower detection risk, for example, behind buildings, and down alleyways had higher occurrences of graffiti than other areas in Wellington (see Figure 5.5).

Figure 5.5. **Car Park building, Lukes Lane**

Figure 5.6. **Behind several buildings off Vivian Street**

Many locations with high volumes of graffiti were behind buildings and down alley ways where there was no thoroughfare for the general public (see Figure 5.6). I therefore contend that these places were *specialised places* as the graffiti was located away from the public's gaze, for instance behind buildings, meaning that the majority of people who would see it and know that it was there would have been other graffitists. The use of the term *specialised place* was influenced by WgtnWallStreet (2010) who, when discussing the graffiti behind the Opera House, said that it was "more *specialised* for people who want to look at it, coz [sic] I can't really imagine the general public walking around there for no reason at all". Presumably, this is the same with a lot of the graffiti beside the railway tracks and yards, where the location has subcultural status and graffiti located there is purely for others within the subculture to see (Ferrell & Weide, 2010). Because these *specialised places* are located away from the general public's gaze, the graffiti is often not removed by property owners or by the Wellington City Council. In these locations there are more graffiti walls than blank walls, and the practice of doing

graffiti is not countered by institutional forces which remove it. These locations are in marginal spaces away from the public and in dirty and undesirable places, which in turn reinforce hegemonic discourses of graffiti as being 'dirt' (Cresswell, 1992; Schacter, 2008).

In places that are frequented by the general public, the Council removes the offending graffiti. In these locations, graffiti was obviously 'out of place' and unwanted, and here graffitists transgress the socially constructed rules of appropriate behaviours in public places (Cresswell, 1996). When these socially constructed boundaries are transgressed through the act of graffiti, overlapping and intersecting arrangements of power are created as authorities remove unwanted graffiti, and power and exclusion are maintained through this removal (Cresswell, 2008; McDowell., 1999). In the observations the locations where the Council had painted over offending graffiti often stood out as there were squares of paint that were a different colour to the original wall. Usually these squares had new graffiti on them and it was not long after that area had been painted that it would be targeted once again (see Figure 5.7). This space would be retargeted for a couple of reasons. One reason is that when it is painted over, this square of paint on the wall is less porous and will take less paint, meaning it is a better surface to paint on and is essentially a 'fresh canvas' for graffitists (Schacter, 2008; WgtnWallStreet, 2010). Another possible reason has to do with the resistance against authority, and when graffitists see that the Council has painted over graffiti they deliberately retarget that area.

Figure 5.7. **Patches of buff (removal), Taranaki Street**

Figure 5.8. **Map of Te Aro, Wellington with sites shown. Source: Wellington City Council 2011 and Author's photographs**

The first site chosen was the Skate Park at Waitangi Park in Wellington City (see Figure 5.8) where there are three large panels on which legal graffiti occurs. The skate park is visible from the road, is popular with skateboarders, and is one of the two legal sites for graffiti in Wellington. Inside the skate bowl there are a lot of illegal tags and throw-ups (see Figure 5.9). Besides the panels, a few tags were sighted on the seats and structure of the skate park. Tagging around the skate park happened infrequently and I did not notice many new tags. The panels had elaborate pieces on them (see Figure 5.10). The amount of tags increased *around* a piece before tags were written over the top of a piece. The general graffiti 'rules' of respecting others work were evident here (see Docuyanan, 2000; Macdonald, 2001). Once a piece was tagged over the top, the piece was considered destroyed and that space became available for others (as suggested by Castleman, 1984), and a new piece would be placed over the top. On the other side of one of the panels which faced away from the road and skate area (see Figure 5.11), tagging, and

75

throw-ups occurred more frequently than on the other panels and no pieces were seen here. The occurrence of tags in this place suggested to me that there was a hierarchy of spaces for graffiti where the pieces that took more skill were painted on the front panels and subsequently had the most viewing time from other graffitists, the public, skateboarders, and youth. I noticed that graffiti using the same letters or images would replace works of the same letters or images that had been ruined. This suggested that there was individual control of certain spaces or that certain people had more rights to graffiti in this area.

Figure 5.9. **Inside the skate bowl, Skate Park, Waitangi Park**

Figure 5.10. **Elaborate piece on a panel at Skate Park, Waitangi Park**

Figure 5.11. **The other side of a panel at the Skate Park, Waitangi Park**

The second site chosen to study was down Opera House Lane and behind the Opera House where there were numerous tags, pieces, and street art murals (Figure 5.8). This is a specialised place as it is out of the public's view. The separation of the different types of graffiti was particularly interesting at this site and the separate walls seemed to be signifiers for certain types of graffiti and promoted the particular practice of that type of graffiti (Cresswell, 1992; Hubbard et al., 2002). Street art murals and pieces were found along one of the other walls (see Figure 5.12). The street art was different every month or two, depending on whether it had been tagged on, and if so, it would be replaced. Tags were located in one area, along the lane which is out in the open and is used as a pedestrian thoroughfare (see Figure 5.13). Pieces and throw-ups were located down the alleyway and around the side of the Opera House (see Figure 5.14). This area had fewer changes as it is not out in the open. It was not frequented as much by taggers who chose the wall more exposed to the public on which to tag. Pieces that I noticed had more colours, were more elaborate in design and looked like they had taken more time to do must have been more respected by taggers as they were not tagged on. For example, the FKBH piece in Figure 5.15 was not covered for the entire 12 weeks of

the research. In WgtnWallStreet's (2010) interview he said that the people who did
this piece had been around for a while and were respected.

Figure 5.12. **Street art behind the Opera House**

Figure 5.13. **Tags along a wall of Opera House Lane**

Figure 5.14. Pieces and throw-ups behind the Opera House

Figure 5.15. FKBH piece, behind the Opera House

The third research site was Left Bank Alley[16] where the property owners have allowed graffiti on one side until recently (see Figure 5.8). Both sides of the walls are covered in multiple layers of graffiti, particularly tags and throw-ups (see Figure 5.16 and 5.17). While taking photographs in the middle of the day down Left Bank, I encountered youth writing graffiti; Left Bank was the only place I saw graffitists during my observations. One of the reasons why Left Bank is a popular place to tag is that it is close to Cuba Street which is an open mall with shops, bars and places to sit. Another reason is that graffiti has been documented in this location for a number of years, photographs of it have been placed online, and consequently it has become a popular place to graffiti. In my preliminary research on the internet I found that there was previously quite a lot of elaborate street art and pieces on the walls of Left Bank Alley[17]. This was also mentioned by Tom (2010):

> A few websites started documenting what happened in Left Bank kind of on a daily basis and I think a lot of graffiti taggers whatever cottoned on to this … I think that has contributed to the mess that it is in now.

Taking photographs at Left Bank was challenging because of the large amount of changes that occurred each week. Often, one week after a set of observations there was no trace of the graffiti that had been there previously. This made it difficult to work out precisely what had changed and what new additions there were, as the previous tag was completely covered. The international literature (see Docuyanan, 2000; Macdonald, 2001) about the graffiti rules of respecting others' graffiti did not seem to apply here as hardly any of the graffiti stayed up untouched for a week. There were so many tags in this area that it suggested that tags were placed near other tags in order to achieve co-presence or sociality with other taggers (Ferrell, 1998, p. 590).

---

[16] This alley actually has no name as it is a thoroughfare between two privately owned buildings but because it feeds into Left Bank Alley it has been called that and I have retained the common usage.

[17] One of these websites is http://www.leftbank.co.nz/

Figure 5.16. **Multiple layers of graffiti, Left Bank**

Figure 5.17. **One side of Left bank Alleyway**

One of the easier areas to track down Left Bank Alley over the twelve weeks was a spot where there was originally a piece by SYFA that I photographed for nine weeks before it became unrecognisable (see Figure 5.18). The piece was tagged on a few times. In the fourth photograph and fourth week these tags were crossed out and SYFA was tagged on top. A throw-up was placed over that and then another piece was placed over top which was then tagged on again. This example illustrated the ephemeral nature of graffiti.
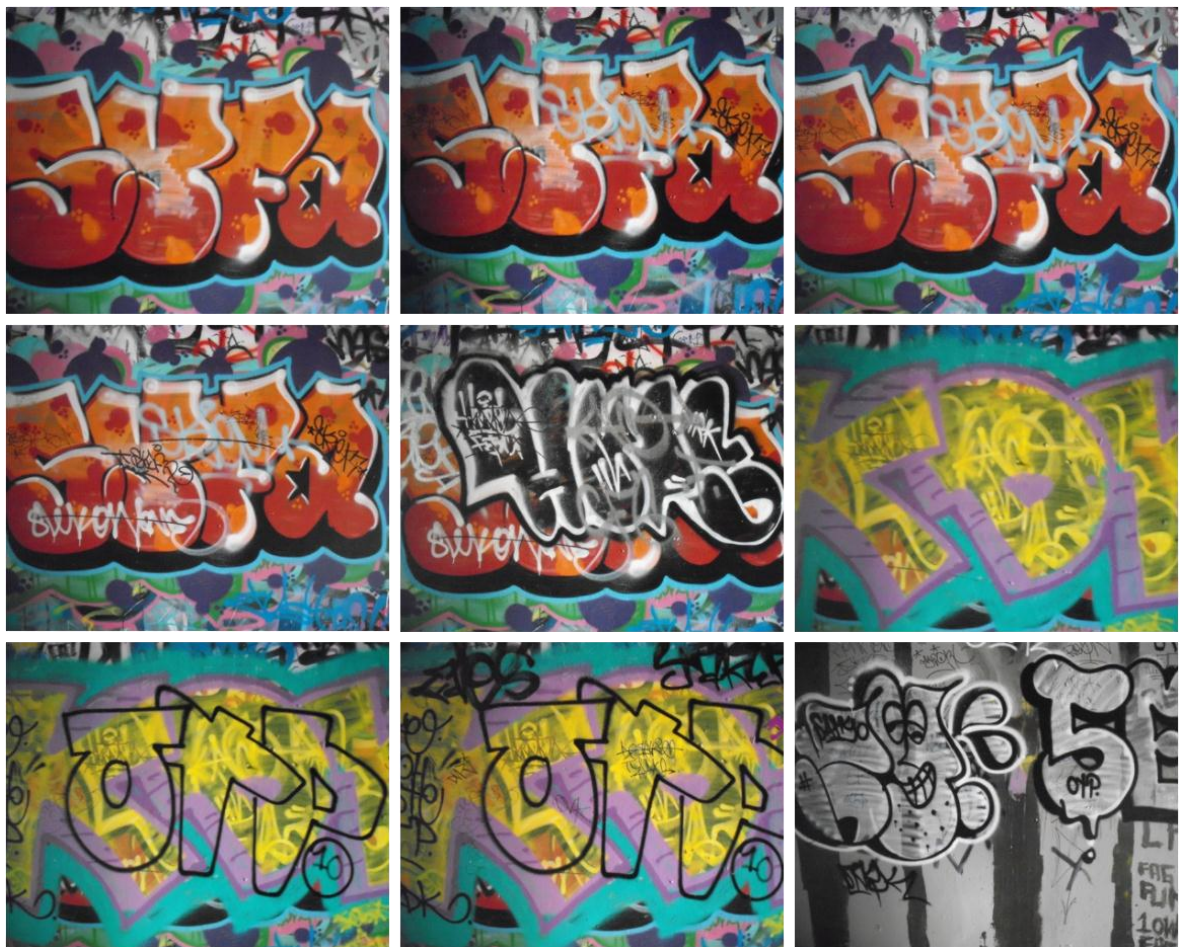
Figure 5.18. **Graffiti changes over nine weeks, Left Bank**

The fourth research site was beside a car park off Garrett Street (see Figure 5.8). One of the walls had street art and pieces on it and there were few changes along this wall, and it was not painted over by the Council. On the other side of this wall there was a grey wall that was tagged on during the first two weeks of the observations and then painted over with grey paint on week three by either the graffiti removal team on behalf of the Wellington City Council or by the property

owner. Tags then reappeared within a week and increased in the weeks after (see Figure 5.19). The interaction between the Council and taggers at this site showed that the removal of graffiti provided "'fresh canvas', a new area to paint" (Schacter, 2008, p. 47).

Figure 5.19. Changes to a wall, Garrett Street car park

From the observations I wanted to know more about the specific graffiti I saw, such as why it was crossed out, why it was placed in that location, and what the reasons for doing graffiti were. These questions and others were asked during my interviews with graffitists and their responses are explored in the next sections.

THE PRACTICES, MOTIVATIONS AND USE OF URBAN SPACE BY GRAFFITISTS IN WELLINGTON

This section discusses how graffitists read, use and claim urban space, and the reasons for becoming a graffitist, their motivations, and the rules of graffiti. It uses the data from the interviews and privileges the voices of the graffitists interviewed.

READING URBAN SPACE

Graffitists see city surfaces as potential places where they could put graffiti (Halsey & Young, 2006). They visualise space in terms of surfaces and structures that need circumventing and envisage their graffiti on that surface and then work to create it. This approach to viewing the city surfaces as a potential canvas included the search for suitable sites; "you see buildings and places a whole different way" (Aiole, 2010).

> I think instead of looking on this eye level that most people generally around us do we kind of take into account whole aspects of the city rather than just this constant view that most people have (Tom, 2010).

> When I walk round the city I'm not just looking at the ground, but looking up looking everywhere and basically using the city as a playground and looking for the spots and seeing little bits pop out at me (Ghstie, 2010).

The thoughts of using the city as a playground and the different way of looking at urban space were reflected by one of the graffitists interviewed by Schacter (2008) who stated:

> It's your own personal playground! The whole city is a potential canvas, you're constantly looking out for new places to write on ... looking for ways you can alter it. I think it's totally different than what others experience, for most people everything around them is controlled by other people. (Delve, in Schacter, 2008, p. 54)

When walking or skateboarding around the city the graffitists were constantly assessing their environment, and seeing possible opportunities for their work, always looking for a new "spot that hasn't been hit before" (WgtnWallStreet, 2010).

> My number one key is to try and find places that no one's done before ... a lot of the time I will look for empty billboards or spaces that aren't being used. (Ghstie, 2010)

As well as looking at the landscape in terms of potential places to do graffiti, the graffitists interviewed are constantly looking for graffiti:

> At fuse boxes, the back of street signs just in case there are stickers there. Always trying to walk around like behind buildings to see if there is stuff there. (WgtnWallStreet, 2010)

Additionally the graffitists interviewed read into the graffiti they saw and associated names with people:

> I read the streets and that's another reason I got into doing it. It's quite interesting knowing who these tags' names were and who they were and what was going on as well because as I said, I like to know every facet of my city and every nook and cranny. (Ghstie, 2010)

This reading of traces of others on the landscape indicates a form of sociality (Hasley & Young 2006). Furthermore, from Ghstie's comment above, it suggests that graffitists have a sense of ownership and intimacy with the city (Ferrell & Weide, 2010). Graffitists walk the street and read a private billboard of subcultural information (Macdonald, 2001). As Schacter (2008, p. 38) found "when observing other artists' work, the members of the graffiti community would translate these seemingly incoherent images and letters and appreciate them not merely for their aesthetic value, but equally for their *emotional* presence". Graffitists read the urban landscape in ways that are different to the general public.

This 'graffiti gaze' shares similarities with the way skateboarders view the city as surfaces to skate (Borden, 2003). For example Ghstie (2010) talked about not just viewing:

> ... what's in front of me, [but] up and down and all around ... I think it's stemmed from I used to be a professional skateboarder and I always looked at the city in a completely different way for skateboarding reasons, like I could probably mark out the whole city on a map with the different grades of concrete.

Through this knowledge of the city, graffitists create their own maps of the city including places where they have placed graffiti, where there is graffiti and potential places to graffiti (Ferrell & Weide, 2010).

Ghstie, Tom, Aiole, and Drypnz have all skateboarded in the past.

> You're kind of trying to find spots all the time, like you constantly want to find a new spot to skate or a new spot to put something where no one else has skated or pasted before (Tom, 2010).

One difference between skateboarding and doing graffiti is that skateboarders leave no personal residue in the urban landscape apart from the marks left by the skateboards as they scrape city surfaces. These marks however are not personal marks. Graffiti on the other hand leaves words and images that can be read in terms of who made them, and these marks have an emotional as well as a physical presence. Graffiti leaves visible signposts of specific graffitists as they move through the city.

Both graffiti and skateboarding provide pleasure from doing a physically demanding activity (Halsey & Young, 2006). Additionally, both graffiti and skateboarding are behaviours that are seen as inappropriate in most public spaces, and these activities are often forced into marginal (behind buildings) or appropriate spaces (Skate Park). Although by doing these activities in inappropriate spaces, graffitists and skateboarders transgress and disrupt dominant interpretations of what is appropriate in a location (Cresswell, 1996).

LOCATIONS FOR GRAFFITI

As well as seeing the city in terms of surfaces on which to place their graffiti, the graffitists interviewed spent quite a lot of time thinking about which graffiti would be most suited to particular sites. For example Ghstie (2010) said:

> We've always got spots that we know we're going to put stuff ... Half the fun is actually looking for new spots and then writing down a list ... and then coming to the studio thinking right okay I can hit that spot, that would be quite cool if there was someone with an umbrella flying down there ... or something that ...

relates to the spot and where it's at rather than just wandering around and putting stuff up randomly.

The considerations for placement are important aspects of the production and distribution of graffiti. Instead of doing graffiti without really thinking, the graffitists interviewed (unless tagging) think about where they do it (White, 2001). This was an important consideration usually thought out beforehand and was decided in regards to graffiti rules, audience, visibility, and the property where their graffiti was going to be placed (Ferrell & Weide, 2010). For instance, the graffitists said that they would avoid private property and in particular "granny's fences" (Aiole, 2010; Ghstie, 2010; Tom, 2010) (see Figure 5.20). As Ghstie (2010) noted:

> A lot of the stuff I do is more in the city centre and I kind of do try and think about it ... I would never do somebody's house, it's pretty stupid, but I guess that's an older thing... with my age I have more respect for people's property.

Figure 5.20. **"I wont paint your fence" tag, Vivian Street**

The graffitists favoured commercial and public properties because they assumed that people who owned the commercial properties could afford to paint over the graffiti if they did not like it, and once painted over, it would present a fresh canvas (WgtnWallStreet, 2010). The preferable locations for graffiti reflects research by Lindsey and Kearns (1994) who said private property was avoided, and also Ferrell's (1995) research that suggests that graffitists in the United States preferred to 'hit' on city structures, large businesses and public buildings.

In other instances during the interviews, conversations were had with the graffitists about whether placement mattered. When Aiole (2010) was asked if placement mattered in terms of where he put his graffiti he responded:

> Yeah I suppose so definitely. Well not for me personally I don't really care if I find a nice wall out in the middle of nowhere in the woods I'll be happy because that means I can just paint. Finding a nice spot that you can just drive out to that's why I like water towers and just random walls.

This comment illustrated that for Aiole, the pleasure gained from doing graffiti was more significant than placing graffiti in locations where it would be visible to others to see. Tagging was found to be more spontaneous:

> When I'm doing a tag or whatever or something else it's usually kind of impromptu. It's never really organized. It's one of those things you kind of just do it in the spur of the moment. (WgtnWallStreet, 2010)

However, there are still considerations for placement. For taggers, they want, "somewhere that's visible and where a lot of people will see it coz you acquire almost a certain level of fame for a spot" (WgtnWallStreet, 2010). This suggests that taggers choose places that "possess subcultural status and therefore are likely to be visited and used by other writers" (Ferrell, 1998, p. 590). One of the best places to do graffiti is up high (the heavens) (see Figure 5.21) because fame is received for its location and inaccessibility. As WgtnWallStreet (2010) states:

> That's called a heaven and that's like a hard to reach spot, so the people who paint the buff we call them can't really get up there, so it stays up there forever.

Additionally, other reasons to do graffiti up high on rooftops are that:

The little kids who tag over your name or whatever you do can't touch you and also it's a danger element as well hanging off the side of a building. (Ghstie, 2010)

This echoes the statements by Ley and Cybriwsky, (1974, p. 493) who state that those who do graffiti seek to leave their mark and "emulate each other in the inaccessibility of locations". Furthermore by doing graffiti up high, the longevity of the graffiti is a consideration (Ferrell & Weide, 2010). There is also a competitive element to doing graffiti up high which consists of a shared sociality between graffitists (Halsey & Young, 2006).

Figure 5.21. **Aiole tag, Cuba Street**

There is also competition in terms of how many times graffiti is 'up'. When an Australian street artist Rone visited Wellington it was noticeable that someone new was in town as there were hundreds of his stickers around the city (WgtnWallStreet, 2010). The movement of this artist through Wellington was highly visible (see Figure 5.22). There were a few streets (Vivian Street and Brougham Street) where every five metres or so there was an identical sticker by

the graffitist Rone. These stickers could be read as signposts to Rone's movement and its occurrence was along transport arteries (Ley & Cybriwsky, 1974; Lindsey & Kearns 1994).
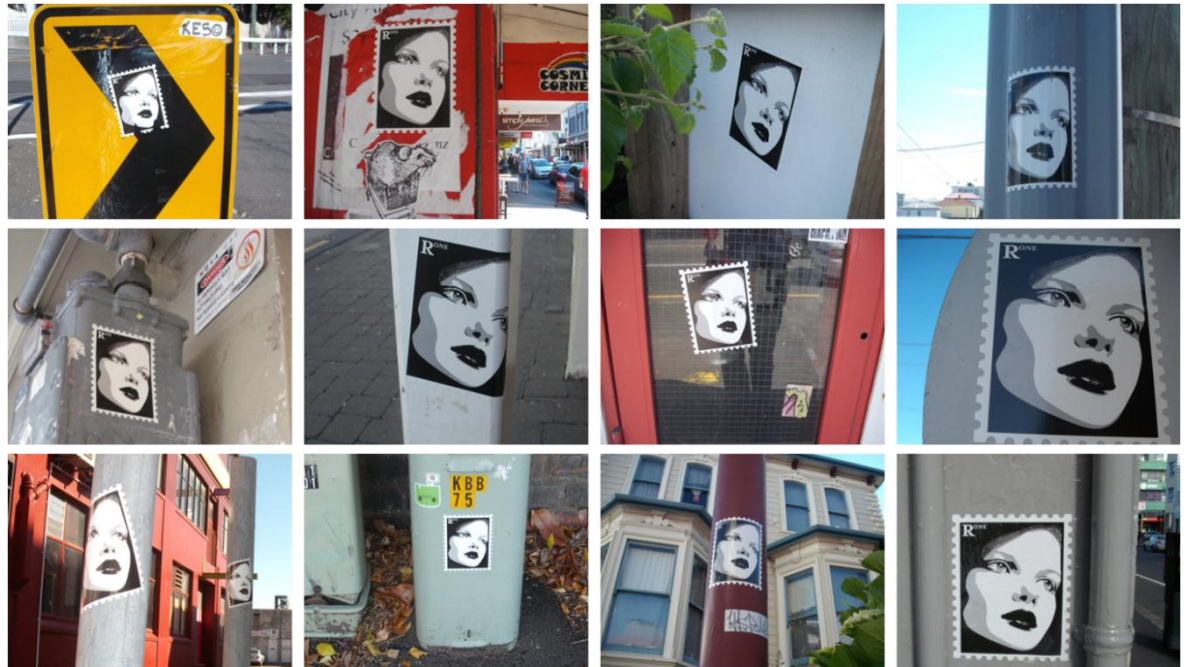
Figure 5.22. **Rone's stickers, Vivian Street, Cuba Street and Ghuznee Street**

Connected to this movement of graffitists, it was found that graffitists travel across town, within towns, and even across countries (such as Rone) to write their graffiti (Lindsey & Kearns, 1994). The movement of graffitists across Wellington was supported by Community Sergeant Boyce (2010) who stated:

> We've got through reports or whatever that someone living in Newtown or a southern suburb is travelling to the train station, or to the bus depot and then travelling and leaving his or her mark along the way … We know it's going from central city out and we also know that it's coming in through some of the users and some of the people who we trespass from … the trains … coming into an activity centre or an alternative education place.

CLAIMING AND RECLAIMING SPACE

Graffitists in Wellington are territorial about the spaces in which they write, although not in terms of marking out areas as Ley and Cybriwsky (1974) state, but

instead attempting to control walls. There was found to be control over areas to do graffiti and these areas were seen as belonging to particular graffitists or crews. The spots where this claiming and reclaiming occurred ranged from permitted sites to illegal sites, such as Left Bank where the tags that were placed over top of the piece with the letters SYFA were then crossed out and SYFA was written again on top. Drypnz (2010) stated:

> There are a few people who sort of like ruin stuff and that just gives us an excuse to go and paint over our own stuff or if your friend kind of wants to paint that spot and you're like yep yep go and go do that.

When I discussed a photograph of a piece that had been tagged over with WgtnWallStreet (2010), he stated that if the author saw that someone had tagged on it, "it's almost like he's allowed to go back and paint over it because it's been ruined". In addition other spots were seen as out of bounds for doing graffiti as they were claimed and controlled by others. For instance Aiole (2010) had been chased away from doing his graffiti at the Skate Park by the "locals" there. Reclaiming graffiti space from others was illustrated by Ghstie (2010) who stated:

> We originally painted that and some kids tagged over it and I went back and did a real quick one just to sort of reclaim my spot and let the kids know not to fuck with me.

In reference to Left Bank, WgtnWallStreet (2010) mentioned that:

> It's probably good that the kids are going to like a centralised kind of place to paint because it kind of keeps them off everyone else's wall and it's like a practice space.

This suggested that Left Bank was not claimed by anyone, but used as a place to tag without getting in anyone's way or creating any friction by going over the top of someone else's graffiti. This in turn would explain the high frequency of changes of graffiti along the sides of the Left Bank Alley.

Graffitists do not always reclaim space from other graffitists; they also try to reclaim public space on behalf of the public from private and commercial interests. Tom's and Ghstie's graffiti attempt to this:

I think public space should be there for public voices and anyone to have their say as to what's going on. Otherwise we'd be living in a pretty controlled society. So I basically think that it's just a reminder to the public that they have the power to do what they want in their space as well … My whole stance on it is with being bombarded with a lot of adverts and stuff that you don't really want to see on the streets why I can't get my stuff up there as well and … make people giggle … Basically try to provoke some reaction with the public and remind people that public space is for the public to use … It's not just for corporations to pay a lot of money and attract you to toothpaste or breath freshener.

Tom, who did the paste-up of the man with the tie (Figure 5.23), when asked for the reasons behind this work, responded:

I've got this thing about phantom billboards at the moment and just the whole advertising aspect of New Zealand and how advertisements are becoming so widespread and so many different locations. The roads … going out to the Hutt you see just huge billboards coming up in front … It's kind of distracting and there's all these driving restrictions saying you should keep your eyes on the road and then they're placing these huge billboards, it's like trying to attract so much attention off the road … I kind of like playing on that aspect of ripping it down and taking it and then reusing it in my own work … and using it aesthetically to kind of play on that.

Figure 5.23. **Paste-up by Tom, Ghuznee Street**   92

Tom literally rips down advertising posters and then uses them in his graffiti. He transforms public space and expresses his criticisms of the dominance of commercial advertising in public spaces which are becoming more privatised, segregated, exclusionary, and where space is a commodity that needs to be bought (Ferrell, 1995; White, 2001). Tom's graffiti, which are paste-ups, fits the description given by White (2001 p. 254) of protest graffiti as being "political in nature, but tends to have specific issues and specific targets directly related to the form and content of existing commercial signs". This type of graffiti highlights the perceived offensive nature of mainstream commercial objects in public spaces (White, 2001).

Graffiti disrupts dominant hegemonic interpretations of what is deemed appropriate in particular spaces (Cresswell, 2008). Through their acts of resistance, graffitists seek to appropriate space and make new spaces where commercial advertising is not so visible (Pile, 1997). In this sense graffitists seek to disrupt the order of authority and to reclaim the public space from which they feel excluded (Ferrell, 1995). Although by doing graffiti they are also profoundly out of place in the urban environment, and "fail to observe and be constrained by some very established notions of the appropriate use of and behaviour in urban spaces" (Docuyanan, 2000, p. 105-106).

To express his views, Tom (2010) had placed these paste-ups in locations where there is a high volume of foot traffic.

> I think with my stuff recently I wanted to make it site specific because I'm wanting people to see it and the content based around it and take something from it. So I mean location is really key for some of the paste-ups and stuff we were doing. (Tom, 2010)

Over a period of three months, Tom's paste-up weathered and began to look even more like the advertising below it, fitting in with the wall around it (Figure 5.24). This ephemeral nature of graffiti was noted by Ghstie:

The temporary nature is the beauty of it for me in a way because especially with paste-ups they tend to sort of rot and decay and half tear down and sometimes that even looks better. (Ghstie, 2010)

While the graffitists interviewed get annoyed when their graffiti is tagged on, or painted over, they get their main happiness from the practice of doing graffiti, not its longevity. "I like the temporary aspect of it all and that it doesn't last" (Tom, 2010). Tom's and Ghstie's views contrast with Ferrell and Weide's (2010) who argue that graffitists choose places according to their anticipated longevity and durability. However, the longevity of graffiti is a consideration for some graffitists, as discussed previously.

Figure 5.24. **Changes to Tom's paste-up over 3 months, Ghuznee Street**

When compared with earlier statements about graffitist's desire for political impact, there is a paradox here of wanting to make a political statement, but not expecting it to last. However, the temporary nature of graffiti means that:

If you find a good spot put something up there and in months time it's fallen down it means you can go back there and hit the spot again with something that's better or it's like the second generation of that. (Ghstie, 2010)

This temporality is a key part in the cycle of graffiti and contributes to the progression of graffiti (Schacter, 2008). Additionally, the temporary nature of graffiti is expected and accepted by graffitists; "it's inevitable that your stuff's going

to get covered" (Aiole, 2010). For Drypnz (2010) even when his work is painted over it is still there on that wall:

> It's always going to be on the wall ... it's always going to be on those bricks and it's always going to be on that wall, even though there is layers ... I already know like things are underneath so it's layered up, it's exciting.

For Drypnz (2010), when his work is gone over by another graffitist it is not "necessarily ruined if someone comes and alters it. It's just a different layer" (see Figure 5.25). This idea of layers is particularly interesting and aligns with the city surfaces as being seen as canvasses. These canvasses are constantly in flux and are in a cycle of temporality where painting and repainting occurs frequently. The graffitists I interviewed viewed the removal or destruction of their graffiti by other graffitists or authorities as an opportunity to do something better in that same spot. Therefore, the prevention methods focused on by local authorities are not necessarily effective because it does not bother the graffitists if their graffiti is covered and some of them like its temporary nature. This attitude contrasts markedly with that of urban developers and planners who desire permanence in the landscape (Glynn, 2009). This may be a point of difference and tension between authorities and graffitists as through their acts of visual transgression graffitists reshape place-identities and consequently remake places (Glynn, 2009).

Figure 5.25. **One of Drypnz layers now covered, Opera House Lane**

The Wellington research showed that motivations for doing graffiti were mostly positive, including pride and pleasure (Halsey & Young, 2006). While there was some suggestion from the graffitists that they were doing graffiti because of boredom, most of the reasons for doing graffiti were the positive and empowering feelings it provided. This is illustrated by the following statements:

> It's definitely better than any drug out there … It's a mixture of the two just straight adrenalin and I don't know, happy I guess … It's so frustrating, but at the same time really rewarding. (Aiole, 2010)

> It was just more of a fun thing I think and a cure for boredom … You always get a bit of a rush if you're in somewhere you're not meant to [be]. (Ghstie, 2010)

For Drypnz (2010) doing graffiti is "good fun and a good way to express myself … There is like quick application and then adrenalin". The mention of adrenalin reflects Ferrell's (1995) findings that excitement and an adrenalin rush are felt when doing graffiti.

Furthermore, doing graffiti is a physical challenge:

> When you're reaching up with an eight foot broom that's covered in glue and dripping on your head and you're making sure that the paste-up doesn't fold over and destroy it is quite a challenge and just walking away and seeing your finished product up there, is quite, I don't know, I always have a giggle I think. (Ghstie, 2010)

A corporeal pleasure is delivered to the graffitist by the physical act of writing; "writing, with pen or spray can, and seeing the word or image take shape on the selected surface is thus a powerful physical experience for the writer" (Halsey & Young, 2006, p. 282).

Both Aiole and Tom mentioned that doing graffiti was because of the "freedom of it" (Tom, 2010).

> Just being able to do whatever you want, you know because there are no set rules. I'd say it's just the freedom to do whatever you want, you know there's

no one in a gallery standing there looking at your stuff saying "why did you do that?" or whatever. But within the subculture obviously there are people that judge you based on what you do. (Aiole, 2010)

This feeling of 'freedom' may be the result of not being constrained by dominant visions of appropriate behaviour in urban space (Cresswell, 2008). But coupled with this, graffitists are constrained by their own set of rules to be followed in the graffiti subculture.

The graffitists I interviewed often do graffiti with their friends and do collaborations together (see Figure 5.26) and this "sociality of *shared peer activity*" was given as another important reason why they did graffiti (Halsey & Young, 2006, p. 281 emphasis in original).

> Whenever I go do murals in the street we create together and have good fun. That's the best. That's what's nice about it ... You are able to create with your peers a whole lot more often than any other sort of fine art like counterpoint and its going and being social and having a good time, and creating with people that are your friends and sort of having a good time, it's quite nice (Drypnz, 2010)

Figure 5.26. **Part of a collaboration mural by Ghstie (left) and Drypnz (right), behind the Opera House**

Graffitists also feel pride, satisfaction and a "sense of accomplishment ... upon completing a piece" (Halsey & Young, 2006, p. 279).

> If I'm actually painting a legal wall I have more of a feeling of reward and satisfaction after I've completed something that I think looks really good. That I've taken the time to do and uses a vast amount of colours and has a lot of pop. Especially large scale stuff like the Taranaki Street wall ... that was a huge undertaking yeah its massive (Ghstie, 2010) (see Figure 5.27).

Figure 5.27 Taranaki Street wall with Ghstie's character centre

The increasing level of ability felt by the graffitists as they progressed was also given as another reason to continue doing graffiti. This was indicated by WgtnWallStreet (2010) who said:

> Some people are made to paint. Like there's quite a few young guys in Wellington that are painting illegally as well, that started out quite bad and they progressed really fast and I think they must have seen that they could progress ... so they go out and paint more.

The powerful positive motivations, such as pleasure, pride, the physical challenge, and socialising with friends which come from doing graffiti mean that even in the

face of increasing anti-graffiti strategies, graffitists may not stop as these feelings override the possibility of getting caught.

In contrast to the mainly positive statements for doing graffiti given by the graffitists, when City Safety Advisor Titcombe (2010) was asked what she thought were the reasons for doing graffiti, she responded, "boredom. They think it's cool, social acceptance, small mindedness. I mean there's various reasons. I'm not sure why people do it. Peer pressure, trying to rebel". Her view reflects commonplace assumptions driving graffiti management policies, around the world. Halsey and Young (2006, p. 279) note "the writer's supposed boredom, or the writer's desire to damage and deface, or the writer's lack of respect for others' property" are often cited by officials as the reasons informing graffitists actions. The comments by City Safety Advisor Titcombe suggest that misunderstandings exist about the reasons why people do graffiti, between those who do graffiti, and those who try to control and manage graffiti. It also suggests that some graffiti policy is based on these stereotypes and assumptions rather than findings from research with graffitists themselves.

Aiole, Drypnz, Ghstie, Tom all do art on the street and art inside, either for showing in galleries, as part of their study, or for their walls. Drypnz (2010) in particular is a "showing international artist" but also does graffiti on the street. For him, reasons for doing art on the street as opposed to doing it inside on canvas were that:

> I can work large scale, and it's kind of that much more fun doing it … being way more expressive … it's more exciting. Its way more exciting and … people are going to see it … and it's temporary as well … It's good fun when you have people sort of … becoming passionate about something they would never become passionate about if it was just in a gallery or just in a studio.

One of the main differences between street art and hip-hop style graffiti is the level of positive interaction with the public. With hip-hop style graffiti (typography based) members of the public walk past and see only a vandalised wall of unreadable and obscure scribble (Macdonald, 2001). In contrast, street art, such as Drypnz (for example see Figure 5.25) is predominantly image based and most often

placed in locations where the public can see it, and they also they like the idea that the public can become passionate about it.

Other reasons for doing graffiti on the street as opposed to doing it on canvas which were stated by the graffitists interviewed, were because there is a larger audience who are going to be critiquing it and there is a greater level of interaction with a wider cross section of the public. "I like the interaction with the public as well, as I said before if it makes someone giggle or a smile or have a little a laugh that's cool" (Ghstie, 2010). Reasons for doing art on the street as opposed to doing art inside in a studio were not found in the international literature I reviewed. The motivations (such as the adrenalin rush gained) associated with doing graffiti on the street made it preferable over doing it elsewhere for the graffitists interviewed. Moreover, overcoming the challenges of using the city surfaces as canvasses, working large scale, and the access to more diverse audiences made doing graffiti on the streets more exciting.

Graffiti as a form of expression was one view articulated by the graffitists interviewed. This was in terms of both artistic expression and using graffiti to express personal views and thoughts. "If you've got a message you have to find a way of getting it out there so why not use all mediums to [do so]" (Ghstie, 2010). Drypnz (2010) stated "I just want to express myself in particular ways and in different ways". For Drypnz this was realised through using the city as "a canvas ... a different platform to take my art ... and explore myself and how I could develop as an artist". There was also a different intention expressed with doing street art in that "you're not just trying to get your name up and be king and it's not that egotistical really it's more of just getting stuff out there" (Ghstie, 2010). Getting your message out there and connecting with the public constitutes a form of sociality with the public (Halsey & Young, 2006).

BECOMING A GRAFFITIST

Tagging was said to be the starting point for many of the graffitists interviewed. Even those who are now doing more street art graffiti as opposed to traditional hip-

hop graffiti mentioned tagging as a starting point for their graffiti development. It is important to recognise that tagging, the style of graffiti most associated with vandalism, is the first step in the development of many graffitist's 'careers'. This progression or development of skill means that younger people do tags more frequently and as their experience grows they progress to doing other more skilful forms of graffiti.

> When I first started out I started out how everybody else usually starts out tagging and stuff and then I moved on from that because I had ... a background in professional practice studio sort of stuff so I approached it more as an art form instead of just destroying things. So I moved into creating large scale murals quite quickly and it's progressed by doing that overseas and showing things in galleries (Drypnz, 2010).

However, tagging was not a starting point for all of the graffitists interviewed. Ghstie was working as a graphic designer and it was suggested by a friend who did tagging and 'bombing' that he put characters from his sketch book onto the street. For Ghstie (2010) the progressions went from starting out illegally "and then getting you know to the point where people saw my work and started ringing me up to actually do legal stuff and paying me to do it". Therefore, becoming a graffitist is a heterogeneous event; "subtly yet importantly nuanced for each and every writer" (Halsey & Young, 2006, p. 276).

For those who do graffiti, particularly hip-hop style graffiti, there is a progression from tagging to throw-ups to doing pieces that closely mirrors research on the graffiti 'career' (Lachmann, 1988). As the skill develops, the artist becomes more experienced and does more elaborate graffiti (Lachmann, 1988). This progression was described by WgtnWallStreet (2010):

> Normally people start out tagging, and they progress to like doing a throwie [throw-up] which is just like a basic ... one colour fill. They put on the wall one colour and then they outline with another colour and then they'll move on ... usually they'll do a piece which is more of a elaborate kind of harder to read and takes a lot of practice to do that kind of thing.

When the progression to other forms or styles of graffiti occurs it does not necessarily replace the practice of tagging for some individuals. "I still go tagging, like you can't, you can't shake that off ever, you know, that's where it starts. It's

where every graffiti writer should start" (Aiole, 2010). I also witnessed this aspect during my observations where the same name was tagged and also pieced. International literature did not explain whether with the development of skill and practicing more elaborate forms replaced the other less skilful forms of graffiti. However, it is indicated by Lachmann (1988) that the progression along the graffiti 'career' is a linear one. Perhaps for some of the graffitists interviewed here, the adrenalin rush felt when tagging illegally, and also the emotional attachment to tagging, means they continue to engage in tagging even though they have progressed to other forms of graffiti.

The importance of mentors is stressed in international literature where they are deemed vital for graffitists to progress through the graffiti 'career' and move from tagging to piecing (Lachmann, 1988). In Wellington, the lack of apparent mentors and their importance was expressed by the graffitists I interviewed:

> I think it's good to have mentors. For a lot of the people doing it these days there is no respect or anything, yeah, and so then there is no improvement of them, they don't get any better because they are not learning anything. (Tom, 2010)

> I'm so frustrated these days. It's just kids they don't have any respect. There's no respect for anyone and there's no one to school them you know. I'm still young but I started at a really early age and I had someone way older than me bring me up and I still believe in that. That's why I have someone that I'm trying to train up and steer away from just going down the wrong path and not turn out like a complete dick. (Aiole, 2010)

These comments suggest that taggers need mentors to progress and to improve and to learn to respect the work of others. Lachmann (1988) expressed that the vast majority of taggers *do not* move up through the graffiti career and become more skilled and start doing more elaborate pieces. Mentors would make the progression from tagging to piecing quicker, and having mentors would also help with the transfer of the subculture rules and not doing graffiti on private property, but in legal areas. This is presumably the aim of mentor programs such as Project Legit in Christchurch.

Graffiti Rules and Rivalries

During the observations I noticed that some of the pieces and murals were tagged on. When I asked how the graffitists felt when someone had gone over their work Ghstie (2010) expressed that:

> It used to bother me but ... since I've been in Wellington I've just decided there's no real point. If someone does go over me and perhaps I've organised the place or got permission to paint then I just see it as a free card to go and paint something again ... I think the fact that I don't write a name on any of my work there's nothing really for the taggers or anyone to associate me to a crew or anything like that, so they tend to leave me alone a little more which is kind of cool. But I don't know in some instances it pisses me off especially when you've put a lot of work into it. But ... as I said its public space so anything can happen so you've got to take it lightly, you can't be precious.

There are power relations between graffitists where a cycle of going over graffiti exists similar to the removal of graffiti by property owners and the Council. Drypnz (2010) stated that:

> It just makes me laugh when its crap, when it doesn't make any sense and you see someone going over something and then they get annoyed when someone else goes over them you see this huge circle ... it's never going to stop.

When asked if there are rules to doing graffiti, Drypnz (2010) replied:

> There are rules, but no one takes account of them in Wellington. It's the naivety of the scene, but usually its sort of whenever you go over someone else's work ... it better be extremely better than someone else's.

Similarly, for Aiole (2010) there are rules:

> If you go over someone you have to do something better ... There's no logical reason why you want to cover something that you know you can't beat. It's just fucking stupid.

When going over does occur, the reasons given for this are rivalry and jealousy; "number one reason just jealousy coz it doesn't make any sense why would you go over someone that you are not better than" (Aiole). Jealousy was also given as a reason for why crossing out happens:

> Like crews cross out other crews because they're jealous of the fact that they're getting up so much more, they're doing a better job than them and certain groups. (Ghstie, 2010)

There are also sometimes conflicts between the different graffitists based on the type of graffiti they do. For instance, when I asked Ghstie (2010) if there was still a level of respect in Wellington towards some pieces, he replied:

> Nah it's all pretty fucked up in general ... Taking a photo of it is probably the best. I don't know there are some people who respect ... what we do, but they may not like the fact that we're street artists or what we do, but they still respect us in that vein and will not touch our work or anything. But I think there's just an overwhelming army of little idiots tagging everything. It's just there is no respect ... the only thing you can do is keep on persevering until hopefully they realise that we're here to stay and we will continue what we're doing and we'll basically just ignore them.

In contrast to what was said in international literature that "tagging on a finished piece is very disrespectful" (Docuyanan, 2000, p. 112) going over or crossing someone out happens numerous times in Wellington. Although going over the top of someone else's graffiti may not always be because of animosity, it can be because there is a lack of space, or the graffiti has already been ruined, or the graffitist thinks they can outdo or better the original graffiti (Schacter, 2008).

I found several examples in the observations where additions of graffiti were interactions with the original graffiti. For example with a SATG tag someone had added words after each of the letters (see bottom left of Figure 5.28). When asked about it WgtnWallStreet (2010) replied:

> Yeah I think even though it's sad that someone did that to his piece, I think it's funny coz whoever that person was that wrote that actually took the time out to almost interact with the piece and that's why it always cracks me up when I see that someone... like almost translated what they think it should be.

This example shows that graffiti is used to interact with other graffitists and that it can be used to communicate thoughts and feelings (Alonso, 1998). It also illustrates the interactions between different graffitists and shows that "hip hop graffiti functions as an ongoing public conversation, a cycle of symbolic interaction, among writers" (Ferrell, 1998, p. 590).

During the observations it was noticed that quite a few of the tags had lines through them. One particular tag (SATG) (see Figure 5.28) was crossed out numerous times within the city. This prompted me to ask during the interviews about the crossing out of graffiti and to explore the reasons why it occurs. A few of them said that Wellington lacked respect and that the crossing out is "always going to happen in a city so small" (Aiole, 2010).

> I think the reason why they crossed them out is he's everywhere and you see it everywhere ... I think everyone knows each other and that's why I think there's probably more animosity toward each other than there should be only because its small like that's like all the SATGs getting crossed out like the prime example of how small the graffiti scene is in Wellington (WgtnWallStreet, 2010).

Figure 5.28 **SATG tags crossed out, various locations, Te Aro, Wellington**

In Wellington rivalries were found between crews; "there are several rivalries at the moment and as much as I don't want it to be there it's always going to be there" (Aiole, 2010). The crossing out of other's work can accelerate to the point where graffitists are constantly targeting another's graffiti by crossing it out or placing graffiti over the top (Schacter, 2008). Violence in relation to graffiti most often occurs in response to the crossing out of one crew member's work by another

(Halsey & Young, 2006). Violence was mentioned by Community Sergeant Boyce (2010) "we know there's been some assaults through various crews versus each other". Thus, there are complex and tangled politics of domination and resistance concerning graffiti in urban places (Cresswell, 1996; McDowell, 1999). Within the subculture, powers are entangled and constantly present (Panelli, 2004). In spaces where graffiti is not removed boundaries of social space are transgressed by other crews in the form of crossing out and going over.

GRAFFITI DISCOURSES, CRIMINAL ELEMENTS AND CURRENT GRAFFITI STRATEGIES

This section uses the information gathered from the semi-structured interviews to explore graffiti as art and/or vandalism. This section also examines the possible links with crime and the current strategies of dealing with graffiti in Wellington by removal and the provision of legal walls.

DISCOURSES OF GRAFFITI

The graffitists interviewed (who all do pieces or street art) thought their graffiti was art (Halsey & Young, 2006). However, tags and throw-ups were also appreciated. This appreciation was justified on the basis of location, the aesthetics of the tag or throw-up, and the stylised nature of the writing. In particular this was in regards to having "can control" (WgtnWallStreet, 2010) and "a good hand style" in a "nice location" (Aiole, 2010). When asked why he liked a certain throw-up Ghstie (2010) stated:

> Because I can tell how he did it, how he used the can and the nozzle and what nozzle he used and how quickly he did it and how tight it is in regards to his line work which is really amazing, and also the fact that it is quite high too.

In Halsey and Young's (2006) study similar results were found in that graffitists thought that the impact of their graffiti on the environment and their intent had bearing on whether they thought it was art or vandalism.

While the graffitists liked certain tags and throw-ups, there was some indication given that tagging was considered vandalism;

> How is it a crime if I spend 150 dollars … of my own money to make something for no one, it's ridiculous, it's not vandalising, maybe if I go out tagging. If tagging then surely it's hard because you grow up in this culture of tagging and stuff so you can't see it as vandalism and still be a tagger (Aiole, 2010).

Because the graffitists interviewed still go out tagging on occasion there was a complex layering in their responses to the art and vandalism dichotomy. The graffitists interviewed thought that their graffiti was art, but they also appreciated some tags and throw-ups and also considered some tagging as vandalism. Thus, there are multiple discourses and ways of reading graffiti and individual graffiti is judged in different ways depending on personal interpretations.

The graffitists interviewed all considered their graffiti to be art because feelings of damaging property or destroying someone's wall were absent in their views from the practice of graffiti. "You don't feel like a criminal when you are doing it. There's no thought of shit I'm just destroying this guy's property" (Aiole, 2010). "I'm not really a vandal in that I wouldn't go round and destroy the city" (Ghstie, 2010). The graffitists expressed a difference between their graffiti which they believed added to the city, and vandalism; "I don't condone scratching into windows and just straight vandalism like" (Aiole, 2010). These statements align with White (2001, p. 256) in that graffiti "is generally creative and is not intended to destroy existing surfaces".

Moreover, the graffitists mentioned a few times that graffiti does not harm anyone (Aiole, 2010; Drypnz, 2010; Tom, 2010). Instead there was a feeling that doing graffiti was adding to the urban aesthetic in brightening up an area, invoking a response, and creating awareness of issues, such as the widespread occurrence of advertising. In contrast, City Council Safety Advisor Titcombe (2010) expressed that if graffiti is done without permission, it is vandalism no matter what it looks like.

> Well first and foremost we're quite strong on our opinions ... that it's illegal if it's done without permission ... and as far as the police are concerned it's vandalism or wilful damage so we encourage its removal most often than not people want it removed.

The view that graffiti is vandalism mirrors international literature which states that city authorities assert the destructiveness of graffiti and strive to remove it from the landscape (Schacter, 2008). Safety Advisor Titcombe (2010) even wanted the legal walls removed from the city.

In a subsequent interview with Community Sergeant Boyce and Community Constable Gowans from the New Zealand Police, the words art and talent were used to describe one of the works by Ghstie (see Figure 5.29).

> I could probably agree that is the face has got a bit of talent to it, but the law doesn't differentiate between what's good. You'd like to be able to think that you can have some more dialogue with someone who's doing that art compared with that [points to photo of tagging at Left Bank] (Community Sergeant Boyce, 2010).

In addition Community Constable Gowans (2010) stated:

> You don't see this person [regarding Ghstie's paste-up] possibly climbing up onto a roof to stick this to the side of someone's building. You see them possibly putting it in places where people can see their art.

From the observations Ghstie's paste-ups were found in the public view where people can see them (see Figure 5.30). The view of some graffiti being artistic contrasted with international graffiti research, which stated that authorities, including police, view graffiti as strictly vandalism (Docuyanan, 2000).

Figure 5.29. **Pencil drawing paste-up by Ghstie on empty billboard, Cuba Street**

Figure 5.30. **Another of Ghstie's paste-ups on the back of a billboard, Dixon Street**

The responses from Community Sergeant Boyce and Community Constable Gowans in regards to Ghstie's graffiti imply that there are distinct differences in the artistic merits of graffiti which are usually based on the types of graffiti. Additionally, they implied that there are differences in criminal elements associated with types of graffiti by saying that the author of artistic graffiti would not climb up on a roof to place their art. Due to the different types of graffiti, and the opinion that some graffiti (such as Ghstie's in Figure 5.29) is considered more artistic than others and has less of a criminal element attached, reactions to graffiti as uniform vandalism may be an unhelpful approach. Therefore, some types of graffiti evoke more safety concerns, and categorising graffiti is a worthwhile task for councils to do in order to put in place priorities for graffiti removal based on the type of graffiti that causes greater community concern (Austin & Saunders, 2007). For instance, this may lead to a focus on tagging as it is the style that is most associated with vandalism (both with graffitists and authorities).

Graffiti can be considered both art and vandalism. However, some types of graffiti based on intention, location, aesthetics, and skill required can be thought of as more artistic. Instead of grouping all graffiti as either art or vandalism, types of graffiti lie upon a continuum of art and vandalism where some would be considered "scribbling" and "pollution" and others can be seen as having "talent" or being "art" (Community Sergeant Boyce, 2010; Community Constable Gowans). Therefore graffiti is highly diverse and should not be treated as homogenous, but treated on a local level with acknowledgement for the graffitists' desire for expression (Halsey & Young, 2002; White 2001).

Although it was acknowledged by Community Sergeant Boyce and Community Constable Gowans that some graffiti takes talent and could be described as art, "a lot of what we see is just *visual pollution*. It's just scribbling" (Community Sergeant Boyce, 2010, emphasis added). The mention of visual pollution by Community Sergeant Boyce echoes Cresswell's (1996) suggestion that graffiti is linked to dirt and pollution by the authorities, and therefore they believe it needs to be expelled from the community. Graffiti as being linked to dirt and disease, which proliferate if not removed, is espoused by the "clean up graffiti before it spreads" advertising by the Wellington City Council (Wellington City Council, 2010). Moreover, Ghstie

and Drypnz mention the word "clean" in describing walls *without* graffiti which further reinforce the discussions on the discourses of graffiti by Cresswell (1996) and Schacter (2008).

The discourses of graffiti play an important role in the formation and maintenance of the meaning of a place (Cresswell, 1992). Locations with graffiti are seen by many members of the public and authorities as places where crime occurs. The dominant discourse of graffiti is that it is vandalism and graffiti is described as dirty, while places without graffiti are considered clean. Additionally, the places where graffiti is located, either in the gallery or in the street, affect the discourses and judgements surrounding the value of the graffiti (Cresswell, 1992). If graffiti is placed inside a gallery, it is art. The graffitists interviewed do place their graffiti in art galleries where it is judged as art and is 'in place' (Cresswell, 1992).

GRAFFITI AND CRIME

In the interviews with the police and graffitists I asked about the links between graffiti and crime. In writing graffiti in illegal places, graffitists are undertaking a criminal activity through damaging another's property. Crimes associated with doing graffiti include:

> The theft of marker pens, spray-paints obviously they're getting used in inappropriate ways. There's … an issue of trying to be a point of difference so people [are] climbing on motorways, under bridges, over bridges, on buildings. (Community Sergeant Boyce, 2010)

When asked if graffiti being associated with crime was a well-founded assumption Ghstie (2010) replied:

> I guess so in some ways because you know you have to trespass or you're damaging public property … But the way that I look at it is the places where I put my graffiti is in spots that aren't being used by anyone, they're just bland blank spots, so why can't they be used for something and quite often I've put something up in the blank spot and then weeks later an advertisement's gone up there because the advertisement people obviously think that's a pretty good location for an ad.

These comments provide similarities with Alonso (1998, p. 11) in that "activities involved with writing graffiti appear to be their only criminal behaviour". However, when I asked City Safety Advisor Titcombe (2010) her opinion on Left Bank Alley she stated that the property owners do not like it because:

> There's the noise at night and there's people hanging round drinking and doing it at night which obviously they don't like around their premises. So there's, you know, there's the petty crime and vandalism stuff which goes hand in hand with it.

This association made between graffiti and other petty crime and vandalism contributes to the discourse of graffiti as vandalism, and the assumption that locations with graffiti are places where crime occurs.

However, when asked if it was a safety issue having graffiti present or whether it was just a perception of safety issues, City Safety Advisor Titcombe (2010) responded:

> It's a perception of safety. All of our surveys and our residency survey that we do every second year show that people feel unsafe when there's graffiti around so it's not necessarily that it is unsafe, it's that people perceive the area to be unsafe when there's graffiti around.

This statement by City Safety Advisor Titcombe corresponds with Doran and Lees' (2003) research that graffiti was found to increase fear of crime among residents. However, it is important to note that people's perceptions of crime in areas with disorder such as graffiti do not correlate with actual crime rates which are usually lower than they were perceived (Cox et al., 2009).

When asked if those who do graffiti become engaged in or do other crimes, Community Sergeant Boyce (2010) stated:

> You've got the wannabe gangsters … and some of the kids that … have been doing graffiti for a number of years since adolescence I guess. We know that they have now moved into burglaries or unlawful taking.

Conversely, Community Sergeant Boyce and Community Constable Gowans went on to say that doing graffiti was not necessarily a precursor to more serious

offending. This related to Halsey and Young's (2006) argument that even though graffitists may be involved in other types of crime that "this should not be taken to mean that graffiti 'causes' or leads to other crime. Nor should it be supposed that other types of crime lead to, or cause, graffiti" (Halsey & Young, 2006, p. 290). There is no proven research which states that there is a causal link between graffiti and other crimes (not associated with the practice of graffiti) or that graffiti will lead to more crimes being committed, but there are a number of assumptions. City Safety Advisor Titcombe assumes that the presence of graffiti leads to crime by her comment that "there's the petty crime and vandalism stuff which goes hand in hand with it" and it is these kinds of assumptions that drive local and central government responses to graffiti.

REMOVAL OF GRAFFITI AND LEGAL WALLS

The opinions about how successful the policy of removing graffiti by painting over it differed between the graffitists and City Safety Advisor Titcombe. When asked if there is a policy intervention that was better than others City Safety Advisor Titcombe replied:

> If I had to pick one I would say quick removal. It seems to be the most effective. If you keep on top of it eventually they just seem to give up or go somewhere else anyway, so I'd say that's probably one of the most effective things.

This statement assumes that graffitists' main motivation for doing graffiti is fame and how long their graffiti is 'up' and "that prompt cleaning will deter subsequent writing" (Halsey & Young, 2002, p. 177). While the longevity of graffiti and fame may be a motivation for some graffitists, the graffitists I interviewed did not give fame as a reason for doing graffiti. Instead some of them expected and liked that graffiti was temporary, and therefore would not stop doing graffiti if it was painted over. For graffitists who want longevity for their work, instead of doing graffiti in places where it will be removed, they place it in inaccessible locations or specialised places where it is not removed. Moreover, while one graffitist may stop doing graffiti in an area that was constantly being painted over, another would possibly start. Furthermore, if graffitists claim space by doing graffiti they would

continue to reclaim that space and possibly continue to do so because their graffiti is causing a reaction. Removal does, however, reduce the visibility of graffiti and therefore would increase perceptions of safety as discussed in the previous section.

In contrast to City Safety Advisor Titcombe, the graffitists I interviewed saw the removal of graffiti as a temporary measure and sometimes disappointing when certain graffiti was painted over.

> Painting over it is ... a temporary measure I don't think there's a permanent way to beat graffiti like they might install a camera, but it's not going to stop anyone. (WgtnWallStreet, 2010)

Similarly, Ghstie (2010) stated:

> In some ways it's a shame that you know they go over the history. For example you might have a build up of graffiti that's been there for three or four years or even longer and then all of a sudden it gets wiped out within a day. But at the same time that's the whole temporary nature of graffiti you can't get ... precious about it because at the end of the day it's a public space.

As discussed previously, the painting over of graffiti gave the graffitists a "fresh canvas" (Schacter, 2008, p. 47) as Ghstie (2010) said "as long as I've got a photo I'm not too worried it's basically just a fresh canvas". Furthermore, a photograph of the graffiti can be placed online and its temporality is no longer such an issue. The representations of graffiti on the internet work to legitimise the spatial practice of graffiti and also reshape place-identities and thus remake places (Glynn, 2009; Hubbard et al., 2001; Lefebvre, 1991).

The removal of graffiti was seen by Drypnz (2010) as:

> Not a good thing [because] it shows that even on the small scale of self expression they're [the government is] trying to control you and even when there is so many walls where there is nothing going on it's a shame when someone wants to take the time to ... create a mural ... Like tagging I guess it sometimes makes sense, but larger scale murals it's kind of like ooh it's pointless and it detracts from the growth of a movement that's inevitable anyway ... A large majority of the public enjoy public art ... but ... then it's a few that ... say like no it devalues our space ... that are able to control it .

Power arrangements within places deem what behaviours are acceptable (Cresswell, 2008; McDowell, 1999). The removal of more elaborate graffiti was pointless because from Drypnz's perspective the public liked it, and if left the graffiti that replaced it would be better.

The Council making mismatched squares all over the city to remove the unwanted 'out of place' graffiti was seen as "cleaning up the city, but at the same time making a lot of grey squares all round the city to make it a duller place" (Ghstie 2010). "I don't like how they … just have the patches of different shades of buff. That's so shit" (Tom, 2010). Coupled with this Drypnz (2010) stated that:

> Especially for me it's sort of I want to be able to walk down the street and see colourful walls I don't care if it's me doing it or somebody else doing it I'd rather see and have something interesting to look at.

The removal of graffiti was seen as making places dull and was similar to White's (2001) observation that removal made places sterile, unfriendly, and no longer enjoyable for young people. Graffiti "transforms otherwise sterile urban spaces into contemporary public places" (Taylor, et al., 2010, p. 138).

Moreover, measures such as removal and policy changes that further criminalise graffiti are met with an increase in graffiti (see Figure 5.31). Spaces that the Council paints over are often retagged. This is because these spaces often have mismatching paint and it is obvious to graffitists that the Council has painted over it, and to counter this they do it again in the same location. The increase in graffiti as a response to increasing anti graffiti stances was illustrated by WgtnWallStreet (2010) who stated:

> I found that when they were … going to pass the bill where you had to be eighteen to buy spray-paint … there was a shitload of graffiti when it was in the news and I think that's because … the taggers and the painters didn't want it to happen.

The use of stickers and markers has possibly increased with the restrictions on under 18 year olds buying spray-paint. This finding is similar to White (2001) and Ferrell's (1997) research in that more control in terms of anti-graffiti measures and crackdowns are matched by the amplification of graffiti activity and "have a

tendency to reinforce the resolve of graffitists to answer back through any means available" (White, 2001, p. 246). It also relates to Alonso's (1998) research that found that as new strategies are implemented to reduce the incidences of tagging, graffitists constantly figure new methods to counter them. This indicates that more work needs to go into thinking about graffiti, and possible reactions to it, instead of, for instance increasing fines or jail time for getting caught which may just further exclude those who do graffiti, unfairly penalise people with artistic ability, and make them respond with more graffiti (Ferrell 1997; Halsey & Young, 2002; White, 2001).

Figure 5.31. **Graffiti against authority, Vivian Street**

I asked the graffitists what should be done (if anything) about graffiti. In response, Ghstie (2010) replied "I think it's the tagging aspect of it [that] is obviously the eyesore upon the city... What can be done about it? I've got no answers to that really". To the same question, Drypnz (2010) replied:

> There's always going to be places where there's going to be tagging ... There's people who are going to feel more and more alienated in the space they are meant to be a citizen of. I guess ... the sooner like you are able to ... accept the

positives of self expression and like art work on the street or not necessarily even art work, but ... the more quality will come out of it.

Arrangements of power within places construct boundaries where people can feel excluded and alienated. Graffiti may be a response to that alienation and by doing graffiti space is reshaped (Schacter, 2008). Therefore, Drypnz's idea is that if the government and society accept the positives of graffiti, more quality graffiti will be created. By doing graffiti, graffitists "actively aimed to modify and transform their environment to make it more personal, more inalienable; they wanted an active role in producing and constructing their lived-in surroundings" (Schacter, 2008, p. 51). Additionally, there is always going to be graffiti and it is seen as "something that can't really be controlled" (Ghstie, 2010). This suggests that acceptance of the graffiti culture (such as community education, mentors and murals) may be a more successful strategy as it is inclusive. Consequently, more quality graffiti may be produced as graffitists improve their skills, and they may also do their graffiti in more appropriate locations.

In terms of the two legal walls (Skate Park at Waitangi Park and Toi Poneke (see Figures 5.32 and 5.33) on Abel Smith Street) in Wellington City, none of those interviewed favoured them. These walls may be removed if Wellington wishes to align itself with Government policy (Ministry of Justice, 2008a). The removal of legal graffiti walls was strongly advocated by Wellington City Council City Safety Advisor Titcombe (2010) during my interview with her:

> I don't think [legal] graffiti walls are creative at all. I think when you go and look at them most of it is just scrawly tags, it's not in any way shape or form art walls ... There's one at [Toi] Poneke and there's one down at Waitangi Park they're the two sanctioned ones. I would like to see them removed. I don't think there should be legal graffiti walls ... The STOP strategy, the Government STOP strategy doesn't recommend them either so that was actually put up before my time and I wouldn't want to see any more.

The main reason why authorities did not like the legal walls is that areas around the legal walls get tagged.

> You say to someone you can spray on this then what do they do? They spray on the footpath, they spray on the planter boxes, they spray on the skate park

you know ... we're not working with a group of people that think, "that's cool; we'll just spray something on one place" (Community Constable Gowans, 2010).

Moreover, City Safety Advisor Titcombe (2010) stated "what we've seen anecdotally is all around it they're just attracting graffiti ... it's not sticking to the wall at all".

Figure 5.32. **A piece at Toi Poneke, Abel Smith Street**

My own observational data showed that while there were tags around and on the designated walls or panels, the majority of the graffiti consisted of complex pieces. The views about the graffiti not sticking to the walls contradicts quite significantly from the research of Halsey and Young (2002) who stated that the provision of sites for graffiti concentrates graffiti in those areas and reduces random tagging. In addition, councils in Australia have reported lower rates of tagging through the provision of legal walls. Increasing legal places for graffiti was a popular suggestion given by youth participants in the research by Cox et al. (2009). Removing legal walls as advocated by City Safety Advisor Titcombe may actually have the unintended consequence of increasing graffiti around Wellington's CBD as

it would not only be seen to be a force of control to be countered by graffitists, but also because the resulting pleasure experienced from doing graffiti would mean that these people would do it elsewhere. At the moment providing graffiti walls does the opposite by offering a place where graffiti is localised.

Figure 5.33. **Another piece at Toi Poneke, Abel Smith Street**

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Graffiti gained popularity among youth in urban neighbourhoods of New York and Philadelphia from the late 1960s to early 1970s. Since the 1980s, graffiti in New Zealand has proliferated as an aesthetic phenomenon in most urban areas. In New Zealand, recent events amplified by the media have heightened the perception that graffiti is a serious and growing problem. As a result, the New Zealand government has responded to graffiti more in recent years. However, these responses have not been based on research, but assumptions, as academic and policy research regarding graffiti in New Zealand is limited. International literature on graffiti explores graffiti as a way of transforming place, a marker of territory, a complex subculture, and its criminological aspects.

This research aimed to investigate the geographies of graffiti by examining its visual, spatial, and temporal aspects within a section of Wellington City. It also aimed to find out the motivations of graffitists, how they approached urban space, and the rules they followed when doing graffiti. Alongside this, it examined the discourses of graffiti, the alleged links with crime, and responses to graffiti in Wellington. Parallels were made between international research and findings in Wellington. The theoretical framework drew from critical geography writings on place, space, discourse, and power. Two qualitative methods, observations and semi-structured interviews, were used to collect data. I drew on post-structural epistemologies with regards to interpretations of space. In particular, the theory that space is a social construction that is made real through the circulation of certain discourses.

In the research area of Te Aro, a section of Wellington's CBD, graffiti was widely apparent. The research found that graffiti in Wellington varied visually and that graffiti is a diverse and ubiquitous phenomenon. The types of graffiti found consisted of pieces, throw-ups, tags, street art, protest graffiti, political graffiti, and yarn bombing, all done in a range of different mediums, colours, and individual styles. Graffiti was present on numerous structures, such as drainpipes, doors, walls, and fences. Graffiti is located in many different places, along streets, down

alley ways and behind buildings, and as a result, it is difficult to make any conclusions concerning the spatial location of graffiti. However, the different forms of graffiti have different audiences and are often located in different places. Street art, political graffiti, and tags were seen in places along transport routes and within the public view more than pieces and throw-ups. For instance, Tom's and Ghstie's graffiti is located at eyelevel in public places and aimed at a general audience. Most pieces and throw-ups are located in either legal spots, or illegally placed behind buildings. Alternatively, throw-ups are located up high in the heavens where the people who would notice them would be those with a graffiti gaze, primarily graffitists.

Graffiti was most commonly found down alleyways and behind buildings in *specialised places* where the general public did not frequent. In these *specialised* and marginal places, in dark and dirty locations, graffiti is not always removed because there is a lack of control over these spaces. In these places, graffiti fits in with its surroundings of dirt and helps to maintain the notion of graffiti being associated with crime, and the people who undertake the act as criminals. This is because peoples' perception of place is crucial in shaping the way they characterise places and the people who frequent them (Cresswell, 1996). Socio-spatial boundaries are constantly transgressed by graffitists as they place their graffiti within the public's view and in inappropriate places. In spaces with more social boundaries and control from the hegemonic powers, such as those areas visible to the general public, graffiti is unwanted and removed 'before it spreads'.

The observations at the four sites showed that graffiti is ephemeral; it gets painted over by the Council or property owners, tagged on or replaced by other pieces, or crossed out. Graffiti also gets weathered by the sun, wind, and rain. The sites showed a continuous process of additions of graffiti coupled with many walls being in a constant state of flux, being painted and repainted. Some of the sites were more popular than others for doing graffiti, and additions of graffiti occurred frequently. For example, Left Bank Alley had the most graffiti changes. There was also a pattern to the replacement of pieces, (particularly at the Skate Park) where tagging started around the outside of a piece until tags had encroached on the piece

121

enough for it to be deemed ruined. The original pieces and the tags over them were then replaced by another piece. There are also spaces of hierarchy, for instance, at the Wellington Skate Park; pieces are placed in the best locations out in the open while tags are placed on the wall facing away from the Skate Park. There are places where graffiti is a signifier for placing certain types of graffiti, as behind the Opera House there are places for tags and places for pieces. The Council painted over graffiti at one of the sites and tags returned within a week of it being painted. Graffiti is an ongoing visible presence that is *not* going to stop appearing on walls in urban spaces.

I would argue that graffitists not only see the city surfaces as potential canvasses, but that they see spaces of privilege, hierarchy, interactions and negotiations, they think about where they are going to place their graffiti, and ways that circumvent those spaces. They see city surfaces as endless opportunities to undertake graffiti and are constantly looking for new places to 'put up' their graffiti. Additionally, they read the urban environment differently and they have an intimate knowledge of the city. For many of the graffitists interviewed, the urban environment was used as a different platform to take their art and graffiti was used as form of self expression. Rather than detracting from, or destroying the urban aesthetic, they see graffiti as brightening up an area and they used urban spaces as an avenue to show art, disrupt authority, reclaim public space, and socialise and have fun with friends.

The graffitists interviewed carefully considered where they were going to place their graffiti based on considerations for property, the intended audience, the meanings of their graffiti and their observance to the graffiti rules. Graffitists are not constrained by the rules of appropriate behaviour. They used trangressive behaviours to remind the public that public space is for the public, not just for commercial interests. Through their acts, graffitists challenge the expectations around appropriate behaviour and work to reclaim space, not just from commercial interests (in the case of Ghstie and Tom), but also from other graffitists, and made their presence known through their actions.

Graffitists use the city as a playground, marking out places of control and hierarchy, and when their graffiti is ruined they work to reclaim that spot. The attempts by graffitists to control space mirror authorities and property owner's attempts to control walls and space by painting over the offending graffiti. Within the graffiti subculture there are complex power arrangements and spaces of privilege, negotiation, and competition. A tagger may transgress the graffiti rules by placing a tag over top of some else's piece, but that space will be reclaimed. The use of space by graffitists was found to be an issue of territoriality and control in Wellington, as the graffitists had certain walls where they painted and repainted if they were tagged on.

The findings from this research shared similarities with what has been documented in international graffiti research. For instance, similarities exist with regards to the subculture rules, the progression from tagging to throw-ups to piecing and that the motivations for doing graffiti are largely positive. However, it was found in Wellington that even though graffiti rules do exist and are known by the graffitists interviewed, young taggers did not follow them closely, if at all, whereas the older more established graffitists did. This is argued to be because taggers are new to the subculture and may not have learned the rules yet. It was noted by the graffitists that the taggers sometimes lacked mentors and therefore they did not progress to other types of graffiti. Within the graffiti subculture there is a hierarchical system where older more skilled graffitists school new ones who start out tagging, as in Aiole's (2010) case where he was schooling someone "to not turn out like a dick". Becoming a graffitist is a heterogeneous event, but there is a pattern to the development of graffiti where one goes from tagging, to throw-ups, to piecing.

The reasons given for doing graffiti were mainly positive, such as doing graffiti with friends and the pleasure derived from seeing the finished product (Halsey & Young, 2006). Graffiti was a form of expression and city surfaces were chosen as a canvas to convey this expression. For Drypnz, the street was a preferable canvas because he could work large scale, the public became passionate about his work, and he got to socialise with his friends. For the graffitists interviewed, graffiti is not an anti-social activity; the act of doing graffiti with friends is one of the main motivations

for doing it. However, the comments by City Safety Advisor Titcombe which stated that graffiti was done because of boredom, small mindedness and trying to rebel, suggest that misunderstandings exist about the motivations for graffiti, between those who do graffiti, and those who try to control and manage graffiti. It also suggests that some graffiti policy is based on these stereotypes and assumptions rather than findings from research with graffitists themselves. Because of the largely positive motivations of graffiti, current responses to graffiti, such as its removal, are seen as temporary and graffiti will continue to occur.

Graffiti is both art and vandalism, but some is more artistic than others, and individual graffiti lies along a continuum between art and vandalism. The graffitists interviewed divided graffiti between art and vandalism. All of the graffitists interviewed thought that their own graffiti was art and some questioned how it could be a crime because it did not harm or hurt anybody. There was also some indication given by the graffitists that tagging was considered vandalism, although there was some appreciation for tags and throw-ups. The findings from Wellington show that graffiti is not always seen as vandalism by the authorities, as Community Sergeant Boyce and Community Constable Gowans did suggest that some graffiti can constitute art. Due to this, different types of graffiti evoke different responses depending on where it sits between art and vandalism. Additionally, some types of graffiti (tagging in particular) have more criminality attached to them and result in different levels of safety concerns. Thus, it is worthwhile to categorise graffiti and place priorities on removal based on types of graffiti which cause more community concern.

The dominant discourse of graffiti is that graffiti is vandalism, dirty and linked with crime. Graffiti was associated with dirt and pollution by the authorities and blank walls were seen as clean and dull by the graffitists. However, if placed inside a gallery, graffiti becomes art and is accepted. Additionally, graffitists are assumed to be involved in other criminal activities and locations with graffiti are thought to be places where other crimes occur. Conversely graffiti is not necessarily a precursor to more serious offending and the illegal activities involved with doing graffiti, such as trespassing, may be the only illegal activities that graffitists engage in.

Furthermore, while the presence of graffiti may increase the fear of crime in an area, people's perception of crime are usually lower than those perceived.

Removal of graffiti was seen as a successful strategy by City Safety Advisor Titcombe, but a temporary measure by the graffitists. Removal may reduce the perception of safety concerns in an area, but it will also present a fresh canvas for graffitists. This approach also has the unintended consequence of providing more blank surfaces where graffitists can envision and do graffiti. Thus, a cycle of graffiti and removal occurs. For graffitists the removal of graffiti is an accepted and expected part of the cycle. In addition, the painting over of graffiti places more significance on the physical act of producing graffiti, rather than its longevity in the urban environment. Furthermore, graffitists will continue to do graffiti and devise other ways to reduce the temporality of their graffiti, if constant painting over by other graffitists or the Council occurs. For example, graffitists take photographs of their graffiti and then place these online, or if they want longevity in the urban environment they place their graffiti in inaccessible locations. Removal of graffiti may also make places sterile, boring, and dull.

On legal walls graffiti is allowed and it is 'in place', but graffiti is 'out of place' where spaces are wanted to be kept clean and blank, and here the Council removes graffiti 'before it spreads'. Both City Safety Advisor Titcombe and Community Constable Gowans expressed the view that the legal walls in Wellington were not successful as areas around the walls were tagged. However, these views contradicted from international research that legal walls concentrate graffiti in these areas, thereby reducing it in others.

This research has improved understandings of graffiti in Wellington and New Zealand. From this research I have shown that:

- Graffitists use, view, and read the urban environment in ways that result in them having an intimacy their surroundings.
- Graffitists think about where they place their graffiti with regards to property, location, observance to subculture rules and intended audiences.

- Graffitists claim and reclaim urban space from other graffitists or commercial interests and by doing graffiti they make their presence known.
- Graffiti is a meaningful and pleasurable activity; it provides powerful emotional and physical sensations, such as excitement and enjoyment, and doing graffiti is usually a social activity.
- Graffiti can be both art and vandalism and due to the differences in skill, intention, audience, location, and aesthetics of graffiti, individual graffiti lies upon a continuum of art and vandalism.

Moreover, policy responses to graffiti should take into account the complex and diverse nature of graffiti. Graffiti should not be taken as homogenous and responses to graffiti should not be based on stereotypical assumptions that construct those who do graffiti as vandals and criminals without any considerations for property. This means that more work needs to go into thinking about graffiti and policy responses otherwise graffiti policy will continue to be ineffective, and further marginalise those who do graffiti. Multiple understandings and ways of viewing graffiti exist, and these should be included in policy work. For instance, this could include community opinions on what graffiti (if any) is appreciated, and information from graffitists themselves so that misunderstanding and assumptions about graffitists can be reduced.

Several of the limitations of the research could be assisted with further research. More research on responses to graffiti both overseas and locally would assist in finding what works and what options could be taken to reduce, prevent or manage graffiti. Further investigations would be helpful concerning graffiti found within the suburbs to see whether graffiti occurs on residential property or if public infrastructure is targeted. Furthermore, it would be interesting and worthwhile to research taggers and their views, as this research focused on those who did street art and pieces. More investigation would also be helpful into the aspects of gender and ethnicity of graffitists and what role these factors play in doing graffiti.

This research encouraged looking at the urban environment of Wellington from a different perspective. The research involved looking at graffiti that is usually given little specific attention. By looking at walls up high, I began to notice more and

more works on the *sides* of buildings beside the road. This way of looking at the city is so much more engaging as I started recognising tags and through this seeing graffitist's movements throughout the city. Walking around the city and looking and trying to find graffiti was like a treasure hunt finding secret places. The interviews with the graffitists resulted in a new found appreciation of tagging and throw-ups as I started to understand and appreciate the ability it took to achieve the stylised nature of the writing.

To conclude, I leave you with three photographs, two that I took at the very beginning of my journey and one that I took during the last phase.
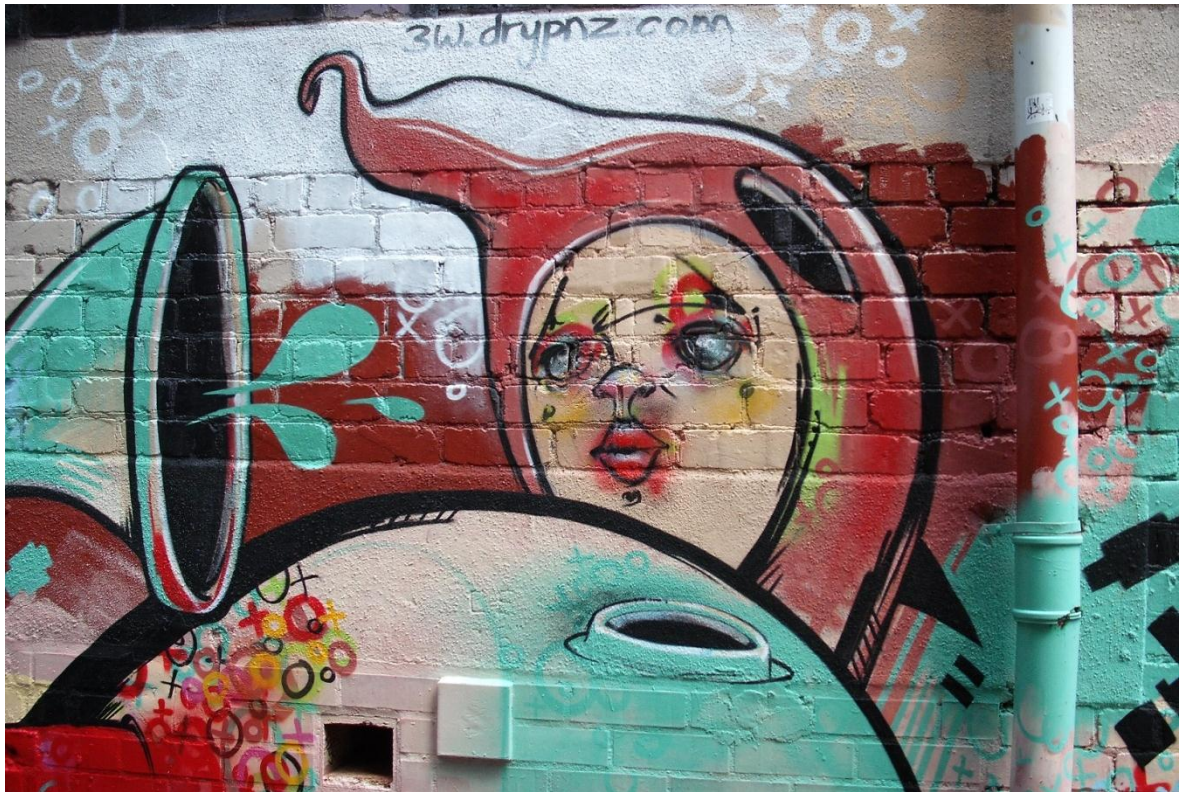

Figure 6.1. **Paste-up by Tom, Cuba Street**

Figure 6.2. **Part of Drypnz's mural behind Opera House**

Figure 6.3. **"A little nonsense now and then is relished by the stencil men"**
Oriental Bay

REFERENCES

Adams, K. L., & Winter, A. (1997). Gang graffiti as a discourse genre. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, *1*(3), 337-360. doi: 10.1111/1467-9481.00020

Alonso, A. A. (1998). *Urban graffiti on the city landscape*. Retrieved from http://www.streetgangs.com/academic/alonsograffiti.pdf

Austin, M. D. & Saunders, C. (2007). Graffiti and perceptions of safety: A pilot study using photographs and survey data. *Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture*, *14*(4), 292-316.

Banksy. (2001). *Banging your head against a brick wall.* London, England: Weapons of Mass Distraction.

Banksy. (2002). *Existencilism.* London, England: Weapons of Mass Distraction.

Banksy. (2006). *Wall and piece*. London, England: Century.

Borden, I. (2004). A performative critique of the American city: The urban practice of skateboarding, 1958-1998. In M. Malcolm, T. Hall & I. Borden (Eds.), *The city cultures reader* (2nd ed., pp. 291-7). London, England: Routledge.

Bradshaw, M., & Stratford, E. (2010). Qualitative research design and rigour. In I. Hay (Ed.), *Qualitative research methods in human geography* (3rd ed., pp. 67-76). Melbourne, Australia: Oxford University Press.

Brewer, D. (1992). Hip Hop Graffiti Writers' Evaluations of Strategies to Control Illegal Graffiti. *Human Organization*, *51*(2), 188-196.

Brown, W. (1978). Graffiti identity and the delinquent gang. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology, 8*, 46-48. doi: 10.1177/0306624X7802200105

Bryman, A. (2008). *Social research methods* (3rd ed.). Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

Carrington, V. (2009). I write, therefore I am: texts in the city. *Visual Communication*, *8*(4), 409-425. doi: 10.1177/1470357209343356

Castleman, C. (1982). *Getting up: Subway graffiti in New York*. London, England: MIT Press.

Christchurch City Council. (2009). *Project Legit*. Retrieved from http://www.ccc.govt.nz/homeliving/makeaqueryorreportaproblem/graffititagging/projectlegit.aspx

Cooper, M., & Chalfant, H. (1984). *Subway art*. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company.

Cope, M. (2010). Coding qualitative data. In I. Hay (Ed.), *Qualitative research methods in human geography* (3rd ed., pp. 223-233). Melbourne, Australia: Oxford University Press.

Cox, J., Hutton, F., & Rowe, M. (2009). *Tagging and graffiti: Attitudes and experiences of New Zealanders*. Retrieved from http://www.victoria.ac.nz/sacs/staff/publications/Tagging_report_final_December_2nd_2009_.pdf

Crang, M. (2010). Visual methods and methodologies. In D. Delyser, S. Herbert, S. Aitken, M. Crang & L. McDowell (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative geography* (pp. 208-224). London, England: Sage.

Craw, P. J., Leland, L. S., Bussell, M. G., Munday, S. J., & Walsh, K. (2006). The Mural as Graffiti Deterrence. *Environment and Behaviour*, *38*(3), 422-434. doi: 10.1177/0013916505281580

Cresswell, T. (1992). The crucial `where' of graffiti: A geographical analysis of reactions to graffiti in New York. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, *10*(3), 329-344. doi: 10.1068/d100329

Cresswell, T. (1996). *In place/out of place: Geography, ideology, and transgression*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Cresswell, T. (2008). Place: encountering geography as philosophy. *Geography, 93*(3), 132-139.

Del Casino, J. (2009). *Social geography: A critical introduction*. Oxford, England: Wiley-Blackwell.

Dickens, L. (2008). Placing post-graffiti: the journey of the Peckham Rock. *Cultural Geographies*, *15*(4), 471-496. doi: 10.1177/1474474008094317

Docuyanan, F. (2000). Governing graffiti in contested urban spaces. *PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review, 23*(1), 103-121. doi: 10.1525/pol.2000.23.1.103

Doran, J. B., & Lees, G. B. (2005). Investigating the spatiotemporal links between disorder, crime, and the fear of crime. *The Professional Geographer, 57*(1), 1–12. doi: 10.1111/j.0033-0124.2005.00454.x

Driscoll-Woodford, H. (2010, January 21). Don't bank on Frimley graffiti being a Banksy! *BBC*. Retrieved from http://news.bbc.co.uk

Dunn, K. (2010). Interviewing. In I. Hay (Ed.), *Qualitative research methods in human geography* (3rd ed., pp. 79-105). Melbourne, Australia: Oxford University Press.

Ferrell, J. (1993). *Crimes of style: Urban graffiti and the politics of criminality*. New York, NY: Garland Publishing.

Ferrell, J. (1995). Urban graffiti: Crime, control, and resistance. *Youth and Society*, *27*(1), 73-92. doi: 10.1177/0044118X95027001005

Ferrell, J. (1998). Freight train graffiti: Subculture, crime, dislocation. *Justice Quarterly*, *15*(4), 587-608. doi: 10.1080/07418829800093911

Ferrell, J., & Weide, R. D. (2010). Spot theory. *City*, *14*(1), 48-62. doi:10.1080/13604810903525157

Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings 1972-1977*. London, England: Harvester Press.

Fredrick, U. K. (2009). Revolution is the new black: Graffiti/art and mark-making practices. *Archaeologies*, *5*(2), 212-237. doi: 10.1007/s11759-009-9107-y

Glynn, K. (2009). Contested land and mediascapes: The visuality of the postcolonial city. *New Zealand Geographer, 65*(1), 6-22. doi: 10.1111/j.1745-7939.2009.01144.x

Gomez, M.A. (1993). The writing on our walls: Finding solutions through distinguishing graffiti art from graffiti vandalism. *University of Michigan Journal of Law Reform, 26*(3), 633–707.

Green, J. A. (2003). The writing on the stall: Gender and graffiti. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 22*(3), 282-296. doi: 10.1177/0261927X03255380

Halsey, M., & Young, A. (2002). The meanings of graffiti and municipal administration. *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, *35*(2), 165-186. doi: 10.1375/acri.35.2.165

Halsey, M., & Young, A. (2006). 'Our desires are ungovernable' writing graffiti in urban space. *Theoretical Criminology, 10*(3), 275–306. doi: 10.1177/1362480606065908

Hopkins, P. E. (2007). Positionalities and knowledge: Negotiating ethics in practice. *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies, 6*(3), 386-394. Retrieved from http://www.acme-journal.org/index.html

Hubbard, P. J., Kitchin, R., Bartley, B., & Fuller, D. (2002). *Thinking geographically*. London, England: Continuum.

Innes, M. (2004). Reinventing tradition? Reassurance, neighbourhood security and policing. *Criminal Justice*, *4*(2), 151-171. doi: 10.1177/1466802504044914

Irvine, K., & Tan, L. (2010, November 27) Tagger's killer goes free after 2yrs in jail. *New Zealand Herald*. Retrieved from http://www.nzherald.co.nz

Kearns, R. A. (2010). Knowing seeing? Undertaking observational research. In I. Hay (Ed.), *Qualitative research methods in human geography* (3rd ed., pp. 192-206). Melbourne, Australia: Oxford University Press.

Kostka, R. (1974). Aspects of graffiti. *Visible Language, 8*(4), 369-375.

Lachmann, R. (1988). Graffiti as career and ideology. *American Journal of Sociology, 94*(2), 229–50. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublication?journalCode=amerjsoci

Laing, J. (2010, October 20). Has Banksy left his mark at a Torquay hotel? *BBC*. Retrieved from http://news.bbc.co.uk

Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The production of space*. Oxford, England: Blackwell.

Lefebvre, H. (2003). *The urban revolution*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Ley, D., & Cybriwsky, R. (1974). Urban graffiti as territorial markers. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, *64*(4), 491-505. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8306.1974.tb00998.x

Lindsey, D. G., & Kearns, R. A. (1994). The writing's on the wall: Graffiti, territory and urban space in Auckland. *New Zealand Geographer, 50*(2), 7-13. doi: 10.1111/j.1745-7939.1994.tb00412.x

Little, R., & Sheble, M. (1987). Graffiti vandalism: Frequency and context differences between the sexes. *American Journal of Criminal Justice, 11*(2), 217-226. doi: 10.1007/BF02885658

Local Government Act 2002.

Lynn, N., & Lea, S. J. (2005). Racist' graffiti: text, context and social comment. *Visual Communication*, *4*(1), 39–63. doi: 10.1177/1470357205048935

Macdonald, N. (2001). *The graffiti subculture : Youth, masculinity and identity in London and New York*. New York, NY: Palgrave.

MacDowall, L. (2006). In praise of 70K: Cultural heritage and graffiti style. *Continuum*, *20*(4), 471-484. doi: 10.1080/10304310600987320

Manco, T. (2004). *Street logos*. London, England: Thames & Hudson.

Manco, T. (2006). *Stencil graffiti*. London, England: Thames & Hudson.

Mason, J. (2002). Observing and participating. In J. Mason (Ed.), *Qualitative researching* (2nd ed., pp. 84-102). London, England: Sage Publications.

McDowell, l. (1999). *Gender identity, place: Understanding feminist geographies*. Cambridge, England: Polity Press.

McHoul, A., & Grace, W. (1993). *A Foucault primer: Discourse, power and the subject*. Melbourne, Australia: Melbourne University Press.

Ministry of Justice. (2006). *Knowhow beat graffiti guide.* Wellington, New Zealand: Author.

Ministry of Justice. (2008a). *STOP strategy: A strategy for change 2008–2011.* Wellington, New Zealand: Author.

Ministry of Justice. (2008b). *How to STOP graffiti guide.* Wellington, New Zealand: Author.

Moseley, W.G., Lanegran, D. A., & Pandit, K. (2007). *The introductory reader in human geography, contemporary debates and classic writings.* Oxford, England: Blackwell.

Murray, S. (2009, May 21). NZ's graffiti world champs excluded from 2009 competition. *3News.* Retrieved from http://www.3news.co.nz

O'Donnell, E. (2007). *InForm: New Zealand graffiti artists discuss their work.* Auckland, New Zealand: Raupo Publishing.

Panelli, R. (2004). Power. In R. Panelli (Ed.), *Social geographies* (pp. 159-180). London, England: Sage.

Pile, S. (1997). Introduction: Opposition, political identities and spaces of resistance. In S. Pile, & M. Keith (Eds.), *Geographies of resistance* (pp. 1-33) . New York, NY: Routledge

Porirua City Council. (2011). *Community mural project.* Retrieved from http://www.pcc.govt.nz/News---Events/Latest-News/Community-Mural-Project

Schacter, R. (2008). An ethnography of iconclash: An investigation into the production, consumption and destruction of street-art in London. *Journal of Material Culture, 13*(1), 35–61. doi: 10.1177/1359183507086217

Sibley, D.(1995). *Geographies of exclusion: Society and difference in the West.* London, England: Routledge.

Sliwa, M., & Cairns, G. (2007). Exploring narratives and snte narratives of graffiti artists: beyond dichotomies of commitment and detachment. *Culture and Organization*, *13*(1), 73-82. doi: 10.1080/14759550601167321

Smashproof. (2009). *Brother.* Auckland, New Zealand: Universal Music. Retrieved from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yooqIsQnjME

Smashproof break chart record. (2009, April 29). *New Zealand Herald.* Retrieved from http://www.nzherald.co.nz

Spocter, M. (2004). This is my space: Graffiti in Claremont, Cape Town. *Urban Forum*, *15*(3), 292-304. doi: 10.1007/s12132-004-0005-5

Statistics New Zealand (2010). *Crime and justice*. Retrieved from
http://www.stats.govt.nz/

Sultana, F. (2007). Reflexivity, positionality and participatory ethics: Negotiating
fieldwork dilemmas in international research. *ACME: An International E-Journal
for Critical Geographies*, *6*(3), 374-385. Retrieved from http://www.acme-
journal.org/Volume6-3.htm

Summary Offences (Tagging and Graffiti Vandalism) Amendment Act 2008.

Taggers face clean-up, and big bills. (2010, July 16). *New Zealand Herald*. Retrieved
from http://www.nzherald.co.nz

Tagger goes to prison for painting spree at 22 sites. (2010, March 6). *New Zealand
Herald*. Retrieved from http://www.nzherald.co.nz

Taggers held captive, filmed, forced to dance – Video. (2010, September 7). *3 News*
Retrieved from http://www.3news.co.nz

Taki 183' spawns pen pals (1971, July 21). *New York Times.* Retrieved, August 24,
2010 from http://taki183.net/_pdf/taki_183_nytimes.pdf

Tapaleao, V. (2009, February 7). Tagger killing now a music video. *New Zealand
Herald.* Retrieved from http://www.nzherald.co.nz

Taylor, M., Cordin, R., & Njiru, J. (2010). A twenty-first century graffiti classification
system: A typological tool for prioritizing graffiti removal. *Crime Prevention and
Community Safety, 12*(3), 137–155. doi:10.1057/cpcs.2010.8

Thomson, R. (2010, December 9). Graffiti vandalism on the rise in Wellington*.
Dominion Post.* Retrieved from http://www.stuff.co.nz/dominion-post

Vote to decide Banksy work future. (2009, October 6). *BBC*. Retrieved from
http://news.bbc.co.uk

Wellington City Council. (2008). *Tawa residents offered $100 to 'dob-in a tagger'*.
Retrieved from http://www.wellington.govt.nz/news/display-
item.php?id=3362

Wellington City Council. (2009a). *Graffiti removal campaign*. Retrieved from
http://www.wellington.govt.nz/projects/new/graffiti.html

Wellington City Council. (2009b). *Wellington City Council annual plan 2008/09*.
Retrieved from
http://www.wellington.govt.nz/plans/annualplan/0809/pdfs/2008-
2009annplan.pdf

Wellington City Council. (2010). *Overview*. Retrieved from
http://www.wellington.govt.nz/aboutwgtn/glance/index.html

Wellington City Council. (2011) *WebMap*. Retrieved from
http://www.wellington.govt.nz/maps/webmaps/webmap/wccmap.html

White, R. (2001). Graffiti, crime prevention & cultural space*. Current Issue in
Criminal Justice*, *12*(3), 253-268.

Wilson, J. Q & Kelling, G. (1982). Broken windows. *The Atlantic Monthly*. Retrieved
from http://www.theatlantic.com/

Wollan, M. (2011, May 18). Graffiti's cozy, feminine side. *The New York Times*.
Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com

Young, A. (2004). *Judging the image : Art, value, law*. New York, NY: Routledge.

APPENDIX A

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON
Te Whare Wānanga o te Ūpoko o te Ika a Māui

Participant Information Sheet

Research Title: Geography of Graffiti

Researcher: Michaela Des Forges: School Geography, Environment and Earth Sciences, Victoria University of Wellington

I am a Masters student in Geography at Victoria University of Wellington. As part of this degree I am undertaking a research project leading to a thesis. The project I am undertaking is on graffiti and it will aim to:
- Explore the different types, methods and classifications of graffiti
- Investigate parallels between international research on graffiti/graffiti artists and graffiti/graffiti artists in Wellington
- Examine the visual, spatial, and temporal aspects of graffiti in Wellington

To collect data on this topic, I am interviewing people involved in doing or regulating graffiti to gather information and opinions. Victoria University requires ethical approval to be obtained for research involving human subjects.

Your participation in this interview should take no longer than an hour. The interview will be recorded with your consent. Your personal details will be kept confidential, and information you give will not be attributed to you in any way. Disclosures of criminal offending will be kept confidential as far as possible. Information about criminal offending would have to be disclosed to police if asked. I would like to quote you if necessary but your identity will remain confidential and your real name will not be used in the thesis or any publications arising from the research. If you wish you can put forward a pseudonym that I can use when I quote you. If you change your mind about your opinions and interview data being used in this research project please contact me to withdraw within two weeks of the interview.

The information from this interview will be used in the researcher's thesis and on completion of it; a copy of the thesis will be deposited with Victoria University Library. The research may also be published in conference papers, academic or professional journals or used at a later date to inform further research. The data will be kept for three years after the completion of the thesis and will then be destroyed. A summary of the findings will be made available to you at the conclusion of the research if you are interested.

If you have any questions or would like to receive further information about the project, please contact me by email at: desformich@myvuw.ac.nz

Michaela Des Forges	**Sara Kindon** (supervisor)	**Fiona Hutton** (supervisor)
Phone: 0273557496	Phone: (04) 463-6194	Phone: (04) 463 6749:
desformich@myvuw.ac.nz	Sara.Kindon@vuw.ac.nz	fiona.hutton@vuw.ac.nz

APPENDIX B

Graffiti Research Consent Form

I understand and have had explained to me the reasons for this research project and I have had a chance to raise any concerns I might have and to have my questions about the research answered clearly. I understand that:

- The interview will be electronically recorded

- I can stop participating at any time for any reason

- I do not have to answer any question I feel uncomfortable with

- Any information I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and her supervisors

- My opinions will not be attributed to me in any way that will identify me

- A summary of the findings will be made available (posted online) at the conclusion of the research

- The researcher may use this material in her thesis and to write articles at a later date

- The tape recording of interviews will be electronically wiped three years after the completion of the thesis and all research information associated with them will be destroyed

- After the interview is complete, I have up to two weeks to withdraw the information I have given. The interview recording will be electronically wiped

I agree to participate in this research

Signed ……………………………………..   Date……………………

APPENDIX C

Questions for semi-structured interviews
Interviews are semi-structured, variations of these questions and other questions relating to graffiti may be asked. Photographs may be used to elicit some responses but those questions will not be known until after the observation data has been gathered.

Questions for semi-structured interviews with graffitists
Personal Questions
1. What is your history with graffiti? How long have you been doing it?
2. What do you do? How old are you?
3. Why do you do graffiti? What/who inspires you?
4. How did you get involved?
5. What kind of graffiti do you do? Why?
6. What methods do you use?
7. How do you get your supplies?
8. How do you feel when doing graffiti?
9. When do you do graffiti?
10. Can you talk me through a typical evening/time?
11. Have you ever been caught or had a narrow escape?
12. Do you see a time when you will stop?

Definition Questions
13. How do you or would you define graffiti? / Can you explain what graffiti is?
14. Are there different types of graffiti? If yes, please explain
15. What do you think about the different types of graffiti? (Probes: Do you think graffiti is a problem? Are some types better than others?)

Place/space Questions
16. What structure do you prefer to graffiti on?
17. Where are the best places to do graffiti? Can you explain?
18. What do you think about legal graffiti walls?
19. How do you view the city? (Probe - Do you think you view it differently or have a different view of property from others in the city?)

Subculture Questions
20. Who do you do graffiti with?
21. Is there a distinct graffiti subculture? Explain.
22. Do many girls do graffiti?
23. What is the role of girls in the subculture?

Policy Questions
24. What would you suggest be done (if anything) about graffiti?
25. What is your opinion on current graffiti strategies? i.e. the Council painting over, restrictions on spray-paint etc.
26. What policy/intervention would you say is the most successful in reducing graffiti?

Questions for semi-structured interviews with Police and Council
1. How do you or would you define graffiti? / Can you explain what graffiti is?
2. Are there different types of graffiti? If yes, please explain

3. What do you think about the different types of graffiti? (Probes: Do you think graffiti is a problem? Are some types better than others?)
4. What are the characteristics of the people who do graffiti?
5. What would you suggest be done (if anything) about graffiti?
6. What is your opinion on current graffiti strategies? i.e. the Council painting over, restrictions on spray-paint etc.
7. What policy/intervention would you say is the most successful in reducing graffiti?
8. Why do you think the policies in place are helping to reduce or prevent graffiti?